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THE IMPACT OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY ON EFL LEARNERS' PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: This article studies the concept of foreign language anxiety, its causes, its effects, and its implications for teaching and learning foreign languages through a review of the literature. Language anxiety is one of the main factors that hinders learning and improving students' language skills, so its impact will be analyzed deeply, including some practical recommendations for teachers.

Key words: globalization, foreign language anxiety, foreign language teaching, foreign language learning, communication anxiety, concern over assessment, formative assessment.

Introduction.

Foreign language proficiency is now required for international collaboration and communication in the age of globalization. To interact with others in communication, commerce, scholarly discourse, and education, people must overcome linguistic and cultural boundaries. Foreign languages are still relevant in the age of globalization. However, when people study and utilize foreign languages, they frequently experience foreign language anxiety. In the fields of psychology and education, discussion of foreign language anxiety is essential. As a result of the particularities of the language learning process, foreign language anxiety is characterized as a distinct and complicated structure of self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with classroom language acquisition. Three variables connected to academic performance—concern over assessments, communication anxiety, and worry linked to an unknown foreign language test—are the root causes of foreign language anxiety. Academic, cognitive, and social effects are the three basic categories into which the effects of foreign language anxiety may be divided. Teachers need to place more emphasis on formative assessment and feedback than summative evaluation at the end of the term in order to lessen students' anxiety about making errors. As a result, it is advised that foreign language teachers encourage student engagement in class activities and create an environment that promotes and supports students' foreign language learning in order to lessen language anxiety. Different kind of formative assessments make learning process more easier and more enjoyable through interacting exercises in the classroom and it helps to reduce language anxiety together with language concern.

Literature Review and Methodology.

'Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (Hilgard, Atkinson, &

Atkinson, 1971 cited in Scovel, 1991: 18). Anxiety, as perceived intuitively by many language learners, negatively influences language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education (Horwitz, 2001: 113). Anxiety has been found to interfere with many types of learning but when it is associated with leaning a second or foreign language it is termed as „second/foreign language anxiety". Consideration of learners" anxiety reactions in learning to speak another language by a language teacher is deemed highly important in order to assist them to achieve the intended performance goals in the target language (Tanveer, 2007).

Regarding language anxiety, two basic questions need to be addressed here. First of all, what is language anxiety? And why is it so important to learning and speaking a new language? Secondly, how is foreign language anxiety different from the language anxiety in first language acquisition? Generally speaking, there are two approaches to the description of language anxiety: [1] Language anxiety in the broader construct of anxiety as a basic human emotion that may be brought on by numerous combinations of situational factors (McIntyre, 1995; McIntyre & Gardner, 1989: cited in Tittle, 1997: 11). For example, (a) a shy student may feel anxious when asked to give a short talk in front of the whole class; (b) Language anxiety as a combination of other anxieties that create a separate form of anxiety intrinsic to language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986: 128).

The later approach believes that there is something unique to the language learning experience that makes some individuals nervous. When this nervousness or anxiety is restricted to the language-learning situations, it falls into the category of specific anxiety. Psychologists use the term specific anxiety reaction to differentiate people who are generally anxious in a variety of situations from those who are anxious only in specific situations (1986:125). The intrinsic nature of language anxiety poses an additional challenge to language learners as well as teachers. The demand on communication in the modern language classes may enhance students" anxiety, as there are more chances for their weaknesses to be exposed in front of others. Consideration of learner anxiety in the modern language classroom is deemed highly essential in order to help learners develop their communication skills in the target language.

Discussion.

The consequences of FLA may be classified into three distinct categories: educational impacts, intellectual impacts, and social consequences [2]. The academic consequences encompass suboptimal outcomes, increased exertion perhaps stemming from excessive practice, and diminished competence in second language acquisition. According to previous research, there is evidence to suggest that poorer grades are often observed in the context of second language acquisition. Additionally, it has been found that excessive studying might result in higher effort, which in turn may lead to worse results than first anticipated [3]. Less self-assurance regarding their degree of expertise may be felt by learners. It's possible that the student won't do well on future quizzes or examinations to the point where they decide against attending school or enrolling in a second foreign language course. Impaired performance on activities requiring high levels of cognitive ability is the cognitive impact. One of the most harmful consequences that worrying about learning a foreign language may have on a language learner is having a preconceived concept of failure or an experience of failure in utilizing a second language. The learning process may be

influenced by several factors, affecting pupils from the beginning to the end. The primary role of this mechanism is to act as a barrier at the initial phase, impeding the flow of information into the cognitive processing system [4]. The presence of anxiety in the context of acquiring a foreign language has the potential to have adverse effects on the efficiency and precision of cognitive processes involved in knowledge acquisition and language processing. The retrieval challenges associated with retrieving previously acquired short-term information also impact communication during the output phase. FLA negatively affects how students connect and communicate with others on a social level. In circumstances where the target language is dominant, learners may experience a fall in linguistic confidence, which can result in greater levels of understanding. High-anxiety students may not want to socialize, which might increase their already elevated levels of worry by altering factors like motivation and attitude [5]. Anxious individuals become preoccupied with the immediate task and how they will perform, leading to a simultaneous consideration of the social consequences of their responses. Consequently, the prominence of self-related thoughts limits the availability of task-focused thoughts, thus detrimentally affecting performance [6].

Results.

The findings suggested that language anxiety can originate from learners‟ own sense of „self‟, their self-related cognitions, language learning difficulties, differences in learners‟ and target language cultures, differences in social status of the speakers and interlocutors, and from the fear of losing self-identity. Furthermore, considering the crucial role of teachers in second or foreign language pedagogy, a need was felt to investigate the beliefs and perceptions of language teachers about learning and teaching a second or a foreign language.

According to the study's findings, learners who experienced less anxiety employed learning tactics more frequently. Metacognition was the most commonly employed strategy category in the low anxiety group, followed by cognition and compensation. All three of these types were featured in the top three most commonly utilized strategy categories in the medium and high anxiety groups, albeit compensatory rather than metacognitive methods were more frequently employed. Chen discovered that among Taiwanese college students, memory was the strategy category that was least utilized. Regardless of the students' reported levels of competence or fear, social methods were employed the least. This outcome could be brought on by the participants' general lack of confidence while speaking English or by their inadequate exposure to the target language.

Conclusion

This paper offers a detailed examination of foreign language anxiety, encompassing its origins, consequences, and ramifications for the instruction and acquisition of foreign languages. Based on an extensive examination of relevant scholarly works, it becomes apparent that foreign language anxiety is a multifaceted and distinctive concept that encompasses several aspects such as perceptions of oneself opinions, views, and behaviors, all of which are associated with the process of acquiring a second language within an educational environment. The core causes of foreign language anxiety include three factors related to academic performance: worry about assessments, communication anxiety, and stress about an upcoming foreign language test. The three main categories into which the impacts of foreign language anxiety may be classified are academic, cognitive, and social. To reduce students' fear of making mistakes, teachers should

emphasize formative evaluation and feedback more than summative evaluation at the end of the semester. In order to reduce students' language anxiety, it is advocated that foreign language teachers stimulate student participation in class activities and foster an environment that fosters and supports students' foreign language acquisition.

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