

Language learning anxiety Psycholinguistic Study

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ABSTRACT

Language is a multifaceted system that works as a means of communication. In order to communicate effectively, exchange ideas and emotions, every learner needs to master four skills, those skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are related to each other and they considered the key abilities that allow you express your ideas correctly and precisely. Language learners faces anxiety in learning a new language which eventually affect their ability of mastering those four skills. The current study sheds the light on such problematic issue. It elucidates the notion of anxiety and its various types and how does this term utilized in language four skills and what are the sources of anxiety and whether there are any ways to cope with these sources.

Key words: language, anxiety, listening, speaking, Reading, Writing.

قلق تعلم اللغة: دراسة في علم نفس اللغة

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الملخص

تعدُّ اللغة نظاماً متعدد الأوجه، الذي يمثل الوسيلة الرئيسة للتواصل. ولكي يحدث التواصل بصورة فعالة، لنقل الأفكار والمشاعر بشكل سليم، يحتاج كل متعلم أن يتقن أربع مهارات. وهي الاستماع التحدث، القراءة والكتابة. وتكون مرتبطة ببعضها البعض وتعدُّ من مهارات التعبير عن الأفكار بطريقة مميزة ودقيقة. يواجه متعلمو اللغة القلق عند تعلم لغة جديدة مما يؤثر في النهاية على قدرتهم على إتقان المهارات الأربع الخاصة باللغة. تهتم الدراسة الحالية بتسليط الضوء على هذه المشكلة الجدلية، وتوضح مفهوم القلق وأشكاله المختلفة، وكيف يبرز

هذا المصطلح في المهارات اللغوية الأربع وماهي مصادره وفيما إذا كان هناك أي طرق للتعامل معه.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة، القلق، الكتابة، القراءة، التحدث، الاستماع

Introduction

Anxiety is a normal reaction of the body to danger whenever you encounter a threat or a stress frustration your body's automatic response is anxiety it is quite normal and all of us experience it at one point or the other through our lives. (Rockefeller: 2016:3) Curtiss and klemanski (2016:7) have found out that anxiety is a negative mood state often accompanied by physical symptoms referred to as physiological arousal. This negative mood state is further characterized by nervousness, Apprehension, and negative beliefs about the future; as well as emotional responses (such as fear; sadness; and anger) and behavioral responses such as avoiding situations or objects that make you anxious). The decisions that the individuals make, the ventures they undertake, and the actions they avoid are all partially determined by the motivations to avoid or diminish feeling of anxiety (Glenn, 1990:3). Mastering language skills are the most difficult for language learners. They are complicated processes since they require a high level of language control. Understanding student's writing – listening–reading and speaking problems is crucial for improving the quality of language skills. one of these problems is anxiety, which causes students to fail in acquiring any language. learners face barriers which prevent them from mastering correct language and those barriers cause anxiety. The current study is significant for the psycholinguistic studies; because it concerns with one of the learner's psychological variables which is anxiety. Moreover, this study will be considerable interest to language educators and students because of the negative impact of language anxiety; not only on the area of language performance, but also on student's attitudes and perceptions of language learning in general

1-1 The notion of anxiety

Anxiety is defined as “a painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill” (merriam–webster, 2012). anxiety is a universal human emotion.it alerts us to potential threats and motivate us to prepare for challenges. simpson et al. (2010: 1)

The physical and mental tension of anxiety is similar to fear, but with anxiety, there is not usually any actual danger to trigger the feeling comes from the anticipation of future danger the concern that one does not have what it takes to deal with it. usually, your body switches in to fight or flight mode only when there is something to fear, when you feel scared without real danger, that's called anxiety (miller: 2008:2)

Starcevic (2005:1) defined anxiety as a condition characterized by pathological anxiety that has not been caused by physical illness, is not associated with substance use, and is not part of a psychotic illness.

Anxiety is a future–oriented mood state in which one is ready prepared to attempt to cope with up–coming negative events (like being worry for future test or exam). (Antony and McCabe 2004:7). if one were to put anxiety in to words one might say that terrible event could happen again and I might not be able to deal with it, but I have got to be ready to try. (Freeman and freeman 2012:11)

Davison et al (2008:154) states that anxiety is an emotion which is described by unpleasant feeling of fear and apprehension. when you are faced by threat, danger or negative events especially things you have little control on. (Antony & Norton, 2021:11). anxiety is an overall response of a person to danger or threat; every experience of anxiety includes a realization of danger and any future harm and even a physiological alarm. the feeling accompanying anxiety shows two reaction “fight or flight”. Moss (2002:1).

1-2 Types of Anxiety

Anxiety disorders classified by the Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental health disorders (2022:221) into many types see figure 1:



Figure 1: Types of Anxiety Disorder

1.2.1 Agoraphobia

A type of anxiety which involves fears of being trapped, helpless or embarrassed, as when you fear of using public transportation, being in crowd, or being in open or even enclosed places.

1.2.2 Social Anxiety disorder

Described by fear in social situations when someone meet unfamiliar people. a person with this disorder has a fear of being rejected, humiliated or looked down by others in social interactions.

1.2.3 Generalized anxiety disorder

Related to persistent and huge worry which interact with daily activities such as job responsibilities, health, family, or even minor things

like car repairs, appointment or chores. This type may be accompanied by physical symptoms such as feeling on edge, restlessness, difficulty to concentrate, muscle tension or problems with sleeping.

1.2.4 panic disorder

The main symptom of this disorder is panic attacks which is a combination of both physical and physical and psychological distress.

1.2.5 Separation Anxiety Disorder

Individual with separation anxiety disorder is extremely fearful of being separated from those whom she or he is attached

1.2.6 Selective mutism

People with this disorder shows a lack of speech because they have a fear of negative evaluation, even though they speak in other situations related example can be found in children who have migrated to a country in which a different language is spoken children will show a refusal to speak such language because of the lack of knowledge about it.

1–3 Sources of language anxiety

Young (1991:427) highlights six potential sources of language anxiety some are related to learner, some with teacher, and some with instructional exercise:

1_Personal and interpersonal anxieties

such source of anxiety related to low self-esteem and competitiveness; it happens when learners compare themselves to an idealized people.

2_learner beliefs about language learning

different beliefs about language can cause anxiety. Some students believe that pronunciation is important, others prefer vocabulary, grammar, travel to a country of a target language, translation. Different opinions about language learning may leads to anxiety.

3_instructor beliefs about language learning

Instructor sets up a social context that have a great ramification for the learners, and such context is different from one instructor to another. Some of them believe in using intimidation, others believe that teachers should do most of the talking and teaching, and many strategies that effects learner language anxiety.

4_ Instructor _learner interactions

Such source of anxiety strongly connected to the harsh way of correcting student errors. Students complain from the way teachers correct mistakes which makes them looking "dumb" Infront of their colleagues. Students believes that some errors correction is necessary, but what is more necessary is the manner of correction.

5_Classroom procedures

This source of anxiety centers on forcing students to use the target language inside the class, moreover oral quizzes and presentations which makes them less comfortable.

6_ language testing

Language testing constitute another source of anxiety especially when students spend their time preparing specific material which they have taken in class and suddenly they shocked by test which has different material. This leads students not just for frustration but also to experience anxiety.

1.3 language skills anxiety

1.3.1 writing anxiety

General anxiety is an important factor which can affect attention and lead to deterioration in language achievement. Field (2004:15). According to Horwitz et al (1986:126) anxiety has an effect on communication strategies that students utilize in language class, one of these strategies is writing. Studies proved that students who have a high level of writing anxiety write shorter texts than those who tend to be calm and discipline.

Cheng et al (1999:436) concluded that some of the important factors which contribute to the experience of writing anxiety are low self-confidence, negative affect because of writing activity, and fear of evaluation. According to Rasool et al (2023:167) there are many factors that cause writing anxiety among them is the absence of writing practice throughout the academic career, strong dislike for writing, being afraid of criticism, anxiety of being judge.in addition individual differences are among those factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic background, harsh teaching methods. Ieki (1999:68) suggest certain techniques for reducing writing anxiety see figure 2:



Figure 2 : Techniques for reducing writing anxiety

1.3.2 Reading Anxiety

Reading anxiety is the anxiety that bring out in the course of reading second language texts. throughout such process students struggle to understand strange scripts, writing system, and cultural materials. As a result of such miscomprehension students become anxious and frustrated. (Saito et al,1999: 202–218).

Guimba and Alico (2016:44–59) highlighted three types of reading anxiety: **1) Top–Down Reading Anxiety**

in this type students have a fear for inability to grasp minor ideas in the text, in addition, they worried about inability to identify the main idea of a paragraph, furthermore they are anxious about incapacity to obtain the gist of the text.

2) Bottom–up reading

In this type of reading anxiety, students feel anxious when they lose the ability to understand the meaning of some words that they have look at already. Moreover, they have anxiety when they exposed to a wide number of unknown words. lastly, the struggle of pronouncing unknown words.

3) Classroom reading Anxiety

Classroom reading anxiety related to correcting mistakes, translation errors, and pronunciation which is assumed to be the most anxious matter in the classroom for the students.

Based on their research findings Mariam and Kepirianto (2021:86) identified eight factors that lead to students reading anxiety they are in figure 3:



Figure 3: Reading anxiety Factors

1.3.3 Listening Anxiety

Listening anxiety take place when students exposed to unfamiliar or difficult task. Low self-esteem and difficult listening tasks are the factors for such anxiety. (Vogley,1999:108)

Based on a careful analysis of statistics and series of interviews Zhai (2015:43) generalized the core sources of listening anxiety:

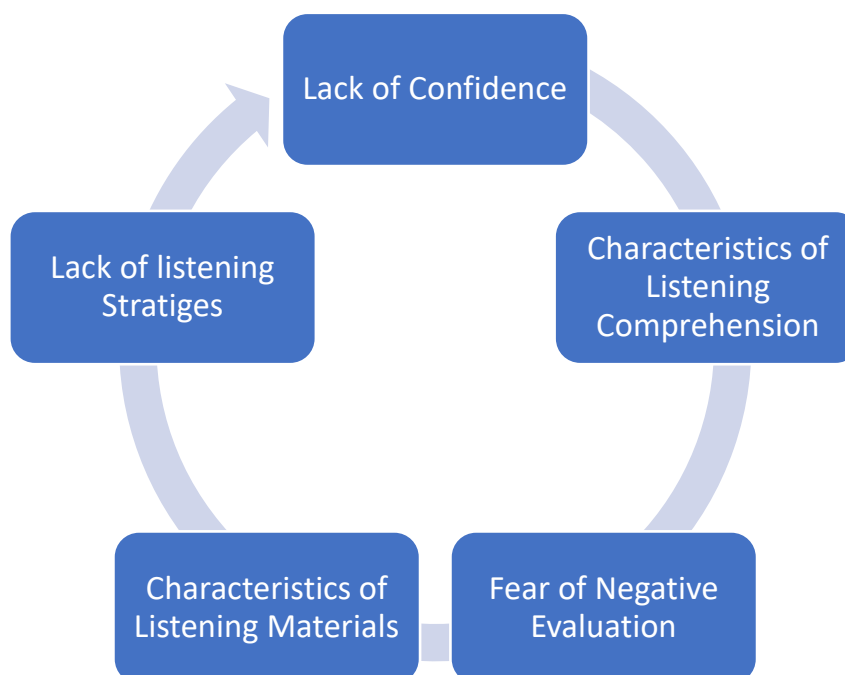


Figure 3: Sources of listening Anxiety

1.3.4 Speaking Anxiety

For many people, the possibility of having to provide a public speech or presentation is uncomfortable and may bring the symptoms of anxiety. (Thomas,2006:8). speaking in a new language is not easy for many students because it needs a high self-confidence and good proficiency. (Asysifa et al, 2019:581)

Altalhab and Alnahidh (2020:57) discussed the main sources of language speakig anxiety. see figure 4

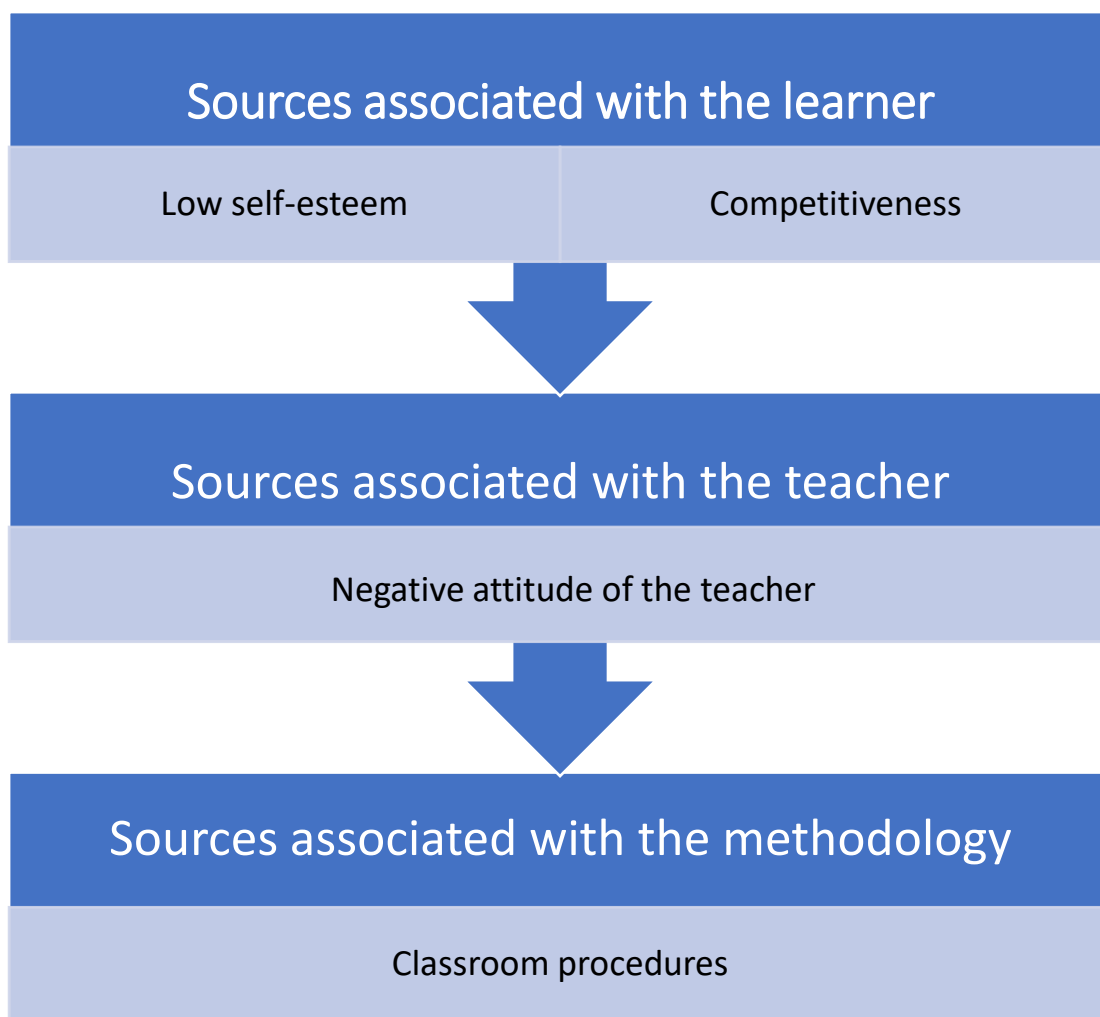


Figure 4: Sources of speaking anxiety

Altun (2023:106) provide some strategies for learners which can help them dealing with speaking anxiety

A–Practice regularly: speaking in target language is important to develop confidence in speaking skills and this can be done by using apps, tutor, online platform or even with a language partner.

B–Focus on Fluency, not accuracy: try to not focus on or give more attention to grammar rules while speaking since such thing causes anxiety.it is important to focus on sending the message effectively rather than focusing on avoiding mistakes because making a mistake is a natural part of learning a language.

C– Prepare for Speaking Situations: preparing your ideas before talking is a good strategy to lessens your anxiety. This can be done by practicing conversation, memorizing the main phrases, or rehearsing

presentations. This is very helpful to feel more confident and help to develop effective communication.

D–Gradual exposure: it is important to start learning language with low–pressure situations. This can be done by practicing language with a close friend who is supportive and encouraging because he can give your progress feedback and hence entering into more challenging situations.

E–Positive self–Talk: you need to talk to yourself positively such as saying you can do it or that making a mistake is normal part of learning a language. such strategy is useful to improve self–confidence.it helps you to take a risk and new challenges in language learning moreover it helps you overcoming your fears and become effective communicator in the target language.

F–Seek support: seeking support from others such as language counselors is a great idea for providing guidance and encouragement.

Conclusion

Language anxiety can affect everyone, whatever their age, language level, or their knowledge and experience. Learners need to be aware of language anxiety and its various sources so that they can exceed it and fulfill a higher progress in language learning. Students also need to be aware that when their fear is prevented their learning processes will be facilitated.

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