

Overcoming Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) (part 1)

外国語不安の克服

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Abstract

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has long known to be one of the crucial factors that will interfere with a person's performance in mastering a language other than their native language (Rokiah & Misieng, 2012). This article will discuss the theory of foreign language anxiety (FLA), its impact on language proficiency and the most likely causes of this anxiety. This paper will also examine whether a person's communication weakness is closely related to foreign language anxiety. The study will run on first-year students who will start a new semester session in April 2021. The proposed study will start in 2021 and will complete by the end of January 2022. The study will use the FLSCA questionnaire constructed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and students' ability level will be measured by the university yearly placement test. This study is more of action research where students' anxiety about English will be monitored according to stages, which are at the beginning and the end of the first term semester, and the beginning and end of the second term semester. The level of foreign language anxiety of students will serve as the basis for selecting suitable language teaching methods for the freshman. Test anxiety which is one of the variables in the theory of foreign language anxiety, will be avoided by replacing the English class examination throughout the semester with group work with group or pair work assignments.

本論文は、外国語不安 (FLA) の理論について述べたものであり、言語能力への影響、および外国語に対する不安に最も影響の高い原因に関し説明するものである。更にこの論文では、人のコミュニケーションの弱さが、外国語に対する不安と密接に関連しているかという点に関し、調査を行う。本研究の調査は、2021年4月から2022年1月まで約1年に実施する。調査方法は、Horwitz (1986) らによって作成された FLSCA 質問票による結果と、プレイスメントテストの結果で行うこととする。本研究は、アクションリサーチ方式を採用している。すなわち前期の開始時と終了時 (後期も同様に実施) に、学生の英語に対する不安を調査し、どのように変化するかを調査することとする。学生の外国語に対する不安レベルは、新入生にとってどのような教育方法が適しているのか判断する上での基準となる。外国語不安の一つである試験に

関しては、試験に変えて、グループワークやペアワークに変更することで、を廃止すれば回避されるものである。

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety (FLA), Communication apprehension, FLSCA, First-year,

Introduction

According to Atkinson (1991), anxiety is generally understood as an unpleasant emotion, characterized by phrases such as worry, fear, panic, restless, which are sometimes experience at different and various degrees. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) remains as one of the difficult problems that language instructor has to overcome. According to Cutrone (2009), the language anxiety in Japan is often stems from the cultural misunderstanding. Human always feels anxious when communicating with others, especially using different language. What is foreign language anxiety and how it leads to language learning demotivation? Foreign language anxiety is an unpleasant emotional state that causes fear or anxiety when speaking or expressing an opinion in public, both individually and in groups, indicating the inability to convey the message perfectly. The emotional level of first-year students is a fundamental issue to consider as the high school graduates' mental and emotional conditions are significant in handling the first-year depression and conflict after entering the university realm. Many graduates quit before completing their studies and obtaining their respective degrees. Undoubtedly the cause of the students' emotional stability plays an important role in the factors that causing students to give up their study halfway. Foreign language anxiety should not be underestimated, as an educator, it is vital to be aware of its existence and to understand it (Goshi, 2005).

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to identify the foreign language anxiety among first-year students and present ways to overcome the anxiety.

Objective of the Study

1. To identify the anxiety's level, type experienced by first-year students
2. To compare several types of language teaching methods that are suitable for students in order to help them overcome language anxiety.

Significance of the Study

This study is intending to determine the existence and level of anxiety on foreign language (English) among first-year students. The study results will provide an insight to the instructor to understand the

perception of the English language among the freshmen and provide a bridge to the instructor in deciding suitable methods to apply in the journey of guiding students to overcome the foreign language anxiety, in this case, the English language.

Research Question:

1. What is the (FLA) foreign language anxiety's level among the first-year students in the university?
2. What is the best method to overcome the FLA among the first-year students?

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

Xenoglossophobia, derived from Greek, is the scientific name of foreign language anxiety. It is a feeling that causes a person to feel uncomfortable, restless, worried, restless and apprehension when a person has to use a foreign language to perform a processor to achieve an objective. Foreign language anxiety is a common phenomenon among those who communicate using more than one language. When communicating using a foreign language, some people might feel the presence of anxiety and worry if the primary meaning or message is accurately conveying to the recipient. According to Du (2009), Gardner & MacIntyre (1993) view language anxiety as a feeling of severe fear experienced when a person is in a situation that requires him to use a language that he does not have the adequate capability to communicate fluently. According to Goshi (2005), in his study related to what teachers should do on language anxiety among university students, he noted that many studies related to foreign language anxiety often display a negative relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning. Nevertheless, if examined, the study results also suggest that language anxiety can lead to positive construction of foreign language proficiency. The anxiety of using a foreign language is not just focused on English alone. It happens to anyone who uses a second, third or subsequent languages in their life. In 1994, Aida, in her study of students learning Japanese, the results of the study showed a close relationship between anxiety and foreign language achievement of the target where the higher the level of anxiety of a student, the lower the test results or performance in foreign language communication. Aida (1994) also mentioned that except for the test anxiety; the communication apprehension dan fear of negative evaluation leads to foreign language anxiety which has no direct relation with the FLA (Foreign Language Anxiety) (Goshi, 2005). From the Wikipedia (2021), the feelings may stem from any second language context and the four language skills related to productive skills, i.e., speaking and writing skills or receptive skills such as reading and listening skills. Previous research shows that foreign language anxiety is an apparent problem in learning and teaching a foreign language. The world is inhabited by humans who use more than 7000 languages. According to psychiatrists, foreign language anxiety is unique anxiety and brings an inevitable

reaction. Some people experience this anxiety twice as much as others, where they will feel a high level of anxiety, and it occurs in many situations in their daily lives. Foreign language anxiety is anxiety that arises depending on a specific situation, and then it will strike those who do not have anxiety about other situational situations. For example, a teacher who is expert in his field may carry a strong personality that believes in one's abilities; but he may suffer from severe foreign language anxiety problems where this anxiety causes his level of self-confidence to plummet when he is in a situation that forces him to communicate using the foreign language. Does this mean he is incompetent? or someone who does not have a high level of self-confidence? No. This anxiety only occurs in specific situations or circumstances. For example, if the teacher has to make a report in a foreign language or present his research in a foreign language; or when a student who are assigned to complete a presentation in the foreign language. They often label themselves as weak in the language and will avoid being in the situation that need them to use the language in future. Foreign language anxiety may have rooted since the high school days. If this matter is not carefully examined, it will interfere with the student's future interpersonal and self-development. Extreme anxiety will leave a negative impact on the person. For example, he might have the hatred towards the foreign language and feels reluctant to master the language. Characters that probably display by students who undergo the language anxiety are;

1. They become reluctant to learn the language
2. They might skip the foreign language classes
3. They do not feel confident to complete work related to the foreign language
4. They do not want to communicate using the foreign language
5. They are unable to focus on foreign language lessons
6. They do not volunteer to themselves answer questions related to foreign languages
7. They might influence friends to dislike learning the foreign language
8. Fail or poor score in the test

These in time, will further lead to feelings of the demotivation and will hinder the student's development from mastering the second or third language diligently. Proficiency in English certainly brings many advantages to a person as the current age of globalization has long resided in the realm of employment everywhere. The possibility of the need to use English to communicate is increasing by day. Many international companies see the graduate's ability to communicate in multiple languages as the valuable asset.

The following are some theories that discuss foreign language anxiety;

1. Self-efficacy and appraisal

This theory explains the extent to which a person cares or measures the severity of a particular situation. If the severity of the situation is not the cause of the problem, then the anxiety will depend on how a person perceives self-efficacy and self-confidence to control a particular situation. However, if the situation experienced is negative, where a person is not confident in his ability to control the situation, feelings of restlessness will occur. Take two examples; a student has to submit and present his report in English and the student's abilities will be measured and marked. Another example is when an employee who is skilled in his work field is asked to explain the company's project to the customer using a foreign language, which might place him into the stressful situation. Foreign language anxiety causes stagnation in the communication process, which will damage a person's confidence level to communicate as foreign language anxiety is closely related to communication anxiety.

2. State, trait and situational anxiety

Anxiety has several types, which are state anxiety, trait anxiety and more specifically, situational-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety happens when a person feels chronically restless, persistent in all circumstances. State anxiety occurs when a person experiences high stress only in a particular situation. The most recent and detailed related to state anxiety is the situational-specific anxiety. It develops from state anxiety which explain that the anxiety arises during a specific situation, for example, when forced to use a foreign language to communicate or giving speech. Often foreign language anxiety may occur in a language class. According to previous studies, including the study from Du (2009), the variables for foreign language anxiety, namely;

- Communication-apprehension
- Test Anxiety
- Fear of negativity evaluation

a. Communication Apprehension (CA)

Communication apprehension (CA) occurs when a person needs to speak or listen carefully to others. For example, a student must recount his or her past experiences using a foreign language, or when a student needs to communicate with foreigners. Communication apprehension happens when a person needs to listen and understand the content of a communication to obtain instruction, to obtain necessary information, or to understand something. According to Du (2009), CA is a stage of a person's fear or anxiety related to an actual situation or just a person's imagination to communicate with others. CA becomes a worrying problem as it is yet to be completely cured and it is one of the mental illnesses which will impede a person's achievement in mastering a foreign language. People with CA are typically those who are more shy, quiet and feelings of shame and inferiority about

themselves. In Du's (2009) study, she noted that one in five people, or 20% of total university students, has communication apprehension symptoms.

b. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety or better understood as performance anxiety is related to fear or extreme worry about one's abilities for unable to produce relevant results, in short, the fear of failure. This phenomenon occurs when a person feels tense before, during and after an exam. This fear and tension persist until it affects the learning performance of foreign language proficiency. The causes of test stress or fear are many, for example, disappointing past experiences. Students who bring negative past test experiences may continue to experience test anxiety in the future. This anxiety is built up gradually to the approaching test or any examination. Other causes are the lack of preparation, inefficient of time management, the lack of adequate study methods, the lack of self-affirmative and laziness. Test anxiety is also something that is inherited genetically. Nevertheless, test anxiety can be controlled in many ways that require a person to be more proactive. The fear of testing because of wanting to achieve good mastery can be a motivational factor unless the fear becomes excessive and the desire for perfection is extreme, "when the student's self-esteem is tied to the outcome, the results could be devastating", Du (2009).

c. Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is the fear of a person's concern about other people's views on his ability to communicate using a particular foreign language. For example, teachers, superiors, classmates, colleagues and others. This fear is commonly found among Japanese students, where perception and evaluation from others are highly emphasized in the daily life. Not only among students, but this fear is carried over into adulthood such as when a person needs to host a meeting or event using a foreign language. Not all of those who are typically very advanced in their field of work can deal with this fear. This fear will further cause stress and depression if it cannot be resolved in the right way. When foreign language-related tasks arise, people will try to avoid the responsibility. Another scenario is that when a company's meeting involves others from a foreign country, those who have a "fear of being measured negatively by foreign language ability" will often be more likely to remain silent in the discussion; or refrain from asking questions or giving opinions; whereas if the communication takes place in their native language, they might be able to show better working abilities and skills. When a person is too concerned about others' views, they tend to experience symptoms of fear of negative evaluation where they will hide their bad feelings, avoiding situations that are highly likely to be judged or evaluated. They expect others to not give suggestions or reviews about them. Fear of negative evaluation will arise when a student feels unable

to convey the best social impression, in short, it is an extreme fear of others' views, avoid being evaluated. This factor is a definite cause that leads to foreign language anxiety. Studies from Spark and Ganschow state that foreign language anxiety will interfere with the foreign language learning process's progress.

All three of these types of factors can increase an individual's anxiety and cause a lack of self-efficacy. This is obviously seen among those who work abroad or study abroad. This group is weaker and prone to experience the anxiety in mastering the foreign language; they may have a social gap with those proficient in the language of those from the foreign country. This social distance gap is likely to cause a person to avoid mixing with the locals. Another that needs to be studied is the physical factors of the person that cause anxiety. For example, lack of rest, not enough sleep, not getting proper nutrition or hormone levels will also induce the anxiety.

Psychological & Foreign Language Anxiety

According to a psychological perspective, foreign language anxiety is; “*Profoundly unsettling psychological proposition as it jeopardizes an individual's self-understanding and perspective.*” Wikipedia (2021). There are three psychological challenges based on foreign language anxiety: performance difficulty, the threat to one's image, and identity conflict where human beings (abroad) tend to show appropriate attitudes and are accepted by those who come from that country.

Effects of foreign language anxiety

When a person is continually bothered by foreign language anxiety, they will eventually lose the motivation to continue the learning process. This matter has, to some extent, also led to an increase in the number of students who drop out of school halfway. According to Du (2009), they tend to be disinterested, insecure, have negative feelings towards the target foreign language, and feel unnecessary to master the foreign language.

1. Demotivation

Anxiety is related to students' self-confidence and desire to learn. The effects of foreign language anxiety are strong evidence from foreign language classes. Demotivation is the absence of motivation, lack of externally or internally stimuli that lead individuals to develop actions. When students find no stimulus to act, move, change, they are often related to demotivation. It would be easier to understand demotivation's concept when the phrase is explained by opposing the concept of motivation. Motivation is the force that moves the student to produces a desire to perform an activity to achieve a goal; or an objective. However, when there is nothing to stimulate the desire,

demotivation develops, stopping the student to act or to strive. It is essential to understand the types of demotivation in higher education, among which to highlight are the following;

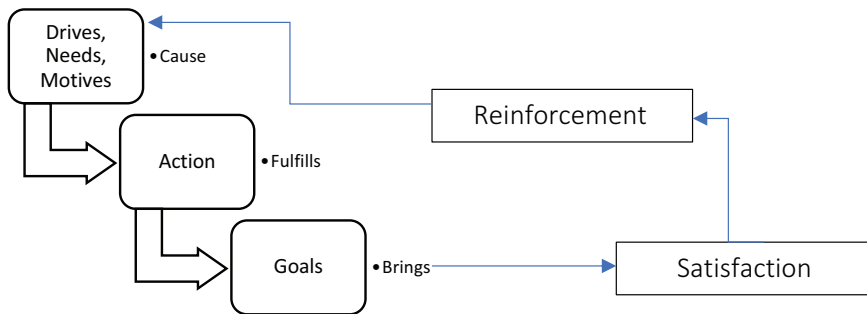
- Learning Demotivation, this experienced by some students who have no desire or interest in their academic achievement
- Social Demotivation, which occurs when the student has no interest in connecting with other students or to a particular social circle.

In foreign language learning, demotivation happens when the students lost the interest, or feel that the content, they are taught is not valuable for them. Many reasons cause the students to be demotivated, especially during the pandemic in year 2020, such as social stress (lack of opportunities to socialize), fear, the worry of the future or situation, and boredom in the learning progress. According to Gardner (1985), second language learner motivation can be observed by “measuring the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn that language because of the desire to do so and the satisfaction they feel by doing so” (Du, 2009).

According to Victor H. Vroom, motivation is a consequence of an outcome when a person wants to achieve or estimate that what he does will lead to the outcome. G. R. Terry explains that motivation is a desire in a person that stimulates him to perform various actions. H. Hadari Nawawi defines the motivation of a person to do any act that takes place consciously. The factors that makeup motivation is divided into two categories. The first is the internal orientation (intrinsic orientations) which refers to satisfaction and enjoyment either because of knowledge development, self-achievement or gaining a pleasant experience. The second is external orientations (extrinsic orientations) that occur due to external returns such as getting degrees, jobs and gifts (Noels, 2002). Many studies have found that motivational elements contribute significantly to student achievement in foreign language learning (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). Oxford & Shearin (1994) listed six factors that have a significant impact on the formation of motivation, which are (1) attitudes towards target language, (2) self-confidence, (3) goals, (4) involvement, (5) environment and (6) self-attributes. Motivation is a crucial element that determines the extent of personal involvement, activity, and success in mastering a second language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Issues related to motivation in foreign language learning began to gain researchers' attention in the early 1990s. Although researchers may disagree on some detailed aspects such as definition, division of motivation, each acknowledges that motivation plays a very significant in ensuring students' success in mastering the foreign language. Educators need to understand what kind of activities to implement those activities that can form and maintain a sense of enthusiasm among the students. According to Pourhosein Gilakjani et al., 2012; five initial efforts that can be made to nurture students' initial motivation are:

1. Refining students' attitudes towards the target language
2. Enhancing students' expectations of success in mastering the English language
3. Enhancing students' goals
4. Making learning materials relevant to students
5. Forming achievable goals

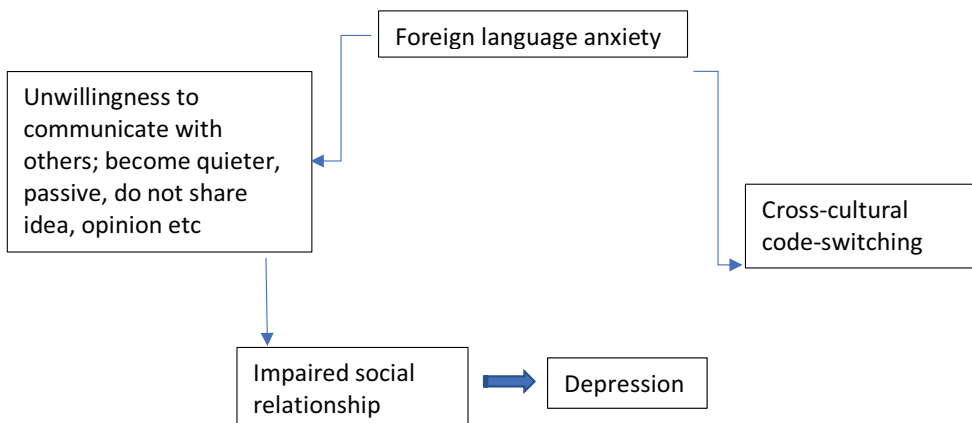
Ellis (1985) and Dornyei (1994) point out that learning activities, teaching materials and individual assignments can influence students' motivation towards a second language. Motivation exists because there is a more fundamental need. In order to meet these goals, there will be a behavioral impulse. The motivation process shows a dynamic derived from the existence of needs. In short, the encouragement leads to the behavior and action that ends in the acquisition of satisfaction from within the individual himself. Motivation is an extraordinary force as it is the inner strength that drives the action and maintains one's goals.



2. Attitude

Those with language anxiety will bear the brunt, especially when asked to engage in spoken communication activities. This effect will further interfere with their performance and attitude to continue learning to master the target foreign language. Students will stop attending classes, avoiding engaging in such foreign language activities. Students in this group cannot remember past lessons; they rarely offer themselves to answer questions and are very unmotivated to improve themselves. If this situation continues, the gap in performance differences between the group with language anxiety and less anxiety will become more significant. If this difference cannot be detected since the early school days, it will continue to be brought to the secondary level, upper level until the university level. On top of that, persistent foreign language anxiety will cause a person to experience communication depression, where they will tend to be more reticent, do not talk or communicate much, do not like to give opinions or responses. Over time those who have such an attitude will be

classified as a group that is not trustworthy, less competent, less sociable, unattractive, stressed, depressed, cold towards others, has no idea compared to others in the same group. This matter can cause serious problems related to a person's mental health. This attitude is carried from the school age to university level and then to the workplace in the future. Foreign language anxiety can lead to communication anxiety, and when someone's mental health is disturbed it will ruin the psychological health of the person as well. Therefore, foreign language anxiety should be examined as early as possible. Apart from doubting why a person is quiet, does not like to study or is lazy, students' FLA needs to be given full attention. The diagram below shows the effect of foreign language anxiety on a person's level of communication.



Excerpted from the International Business Review, Aichorn & Puck (2017)

Addressing foreign language anxiety among students

Recognizing the importance of investigating and reducing foreign language anxiety, linguists, psychologists, and academics have long studied this subject. To reduce such anxiety requires the cooperation of two parties, namely the instructor and the student. Of course, students play an essential role in overcoming this anxiety because they are most clear with their state of mind. Students should recognize, identify the anxiety they are experiencing and not avoid facing this problem. How to avoid dealing with this will not only bring any good results, but it will continue to ruin one's peace of mind; and when mental strength is weak, this, in turn, results in extreme depression. After identifying the anxiety experienced, accepting and working on controlling the anxiety is very important. Students first are required to express their needs, wants the instructor more frequently, next they need to identify what are the situation that mostly cause them to feel a very high level of restlessness in learning the language.

Some of the ways to reduce foreign language anxiety include;

1. Write a daily journal in the target language
2. Do positive self-talk regularly
3. Engage in activities related to target language exposure
4. Take opportunities whenever there is an activity, things that involve the target language

FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale)

Foreign language anxiety has long been labelled as one of the causes of weakness in mastering a foreign language. FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) is a set of questionnaires that have long been used in previous research studies related to foreign language proficiency. It was designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), who described a theory that could measure a person's foreign language anxiety by using the FLCAS scale. Horwitz et al. (1986) put forward three-domain theories: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluations. Another study conducted in 1994 by Aida (1994) involving Japanese language classes in Malaysia formed FLCAS into a four-factor model: namely speech anxiety and fear of negative assessment, fear of failing in Japanese classes, comfort level when speaking with native speakers of Japanese and negative attitudes towards the Japanese class. Zhao's (2007) study restructured the three-factor model of Horwitz et al. to four domains: namely communication fear, test anxiety, fear of negative assessment and foreign language class anxiety. At the beginning of the new semester that will begin in April 2021, foreign language students will be asked to implement the FLCAS questionnaire. The students have to sit for a placement test where their English language ability will be measured by a test from the language faculty at this university. The placement test's achievement will be a measure for the university to classify these first-year students into their respective language classes. Nevertheless, foreign language anxiety exists regardless of the class level the student is at. The FLCAS questionnaire will be translated into Japanese language. It is a tool to measure students' foreign language anxiety level. It consists of 33 items using a 5-points Likert scale. This questionnaire's main purpose is to measure the level of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation of the respondents. It has long been practised in the field of foreign language studies. This instrument was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), using the students' self-reports and clinical experiences. FLCAS is intended to measure the level of foreign language anxiety while taking English classes. A higher score obtained by the instrument would indicate a higher FLA level (Rokiah & Misieng, 2012). The following is the FLCAS questionnaire. It was modified to suit the characteristics of the students at this university.

Strongly agree = 5, Agree = 4, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 2, Strongly disagree = 1

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called in the English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English	1	2	3	4	5
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English language related classes.	1	2	3	4	5
6. During English language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I keep thinking about the other students are better in English language than me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I am usually at ease during tests in English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I worry about the consequences of failing in the test (English language).	1	2	3	4	5
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
12. In English language class, I can get nervous I forget things I know.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I would not be nervous speaking English language with native speakers.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Even if I am well prepared for English language class, I feel anxious about it.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I often feel like not going to my English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I feel confident when I speak in English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I am afraid that teacher will correct every mistake I make.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called (to speak/present/answer) in the English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
21. The more I study English, the more confused I get.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I always feel that the other students speak English language better than I do.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students.	1	2	3	4	5
25. English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than my other classes.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English language class.	1	2	3	4	5
28. When I am on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English language.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English language.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the English language.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	1	2	3	4	5

Conclusion

Foreign language anxiety is an important one to overcome. Improving students' self-confidence should be a goal of language teachers. Various traditional or contemporary methodologies can be practised on students not to be overwhelmed by anxiety and become self-confident. Forcing students to speak in a

foreign language is necessary, but students' anxiety about the language must first be identified for teachers to consider the level of stress, the appropriate mode of delivery for the student to thrive in the lesson. The methodology or pattern of teaching is still undecided, and it is necessary to first identify the students' anxiety resistance in learning a foreign language.

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