



Anxiety and Foreign Language Learning: Analysis of students' anxiety towards Foreign language learning

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Abstract— Education is seen as a significant tool for assisting pupils in changing their behavior in accordance with their requirements and societal expectations. Anxiety and attitude among students are seen as necessary components of learning, and as a result, they play a significant role in second language acquisition. The major goal of this research is to look at the elements that influence students' anxiety when learning a language at Erbil's private universities. Students' anxiety was measured using a quantitative research method, which included dread of unfavorable assessment, communication apprehension, and exam anxiety. The researcher adapted and adjusted a survey developed by prior academics and was able to collect the essential data. The researcher was able to collect 92 surveys that were properly completed. To assess each of the research hypotheses, multiple regression analysis was used. The results of this study demonstrated that students' fear of negative anxiety was associated with a higher degree of anxiety when it came to learning a language, while students' test anxiety was associated with a lower value among other variables.

Keywords— Language Learning, Anxiety, Private Universities, Kurdistan.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is seen as a significant tool for assisting pupils in changing their behavior in accordance with their requirements and societal expectations (Anwar, 2016). Anxiety and attitude among students are regarded as critical components of learning, and as a result, they play a significant role in second language acquisition (Hameed & Anwar, 2018). The English language plays a vital role in many countries since it is the language that distinguishes the influential class from the rest of society's citizens (Hamza et al. 2021).

Learning the English language is a hard and challenging process (Bill, 2001). Every language student encounters a fresh scenario that has the potential to change their entire personality (Ismael et al. 2021). As a result, good language acquisition demands complete dedication, intense concentration (Jamal et al. 2021), and effective emotion

regulation (Sabir et al. 2021). There are other variables at play, making learning a second language even more challenging. Language anxiety plays a crucial part among the many factors that influence the progression of language learning (Saleh et al. 2021). Many English language learners experience anxiety as they progress through the language acquisition process. Despite the fact that the strength of foreign learners' feelings varies each language learner, the role of anxiety cannot be overlooked (Sorguli et al. 2021). It may be difficult and demanding for certain pupils to acquire English as a second language. More than half of second language learners, according to (Talim, et al. 2021), suffer from anxiety in some form. Second language learners who suffer from anxiety may find language study to be less fun, and they may notice how language anxiety affects their performance. For many Kurdish students, English is an important language because they do not have

effective access to English language outside of what they learn in school (Top & Ali, 2021).

In personality theories, the topic of anxiety is a crucial concern (Abdullah et al. 2021). Since the early 1970s, anxiety has been the subject of academic research in the field of foreign language learning (Shabani, 2012). It is, however, still thought to be a difficult psychological phenomenon. Given the foregoing, the purpose of this study is to look into the elements that cause anxiety in second/foreign language learners (Ahmed et al. 2021). Many lecturers employ various tactics in their classrooms in order to notice the nervousness of their target students (Akoj et al. 2021). Despite the fact that we all understand what anxiety is and have experienced varying degrees of uncertainty and anxiety in many aspects of our lives, anxiety remains an elusive idea that is difficult to articulate (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Anxiety is a part of the affective domain, which is concerned with the emotional aspects of human behavior (Ali et al. 2021). Anxiety is seen as an unpleasant feeling that causes a person to become tight and vulnerable, impotent in the face of a threat (Zabardast, 2014). In order to successfully respond to their academic expectations, students in Kurdistan must attend class and maintain their day-to-day activities. The English language should be regarded as an important world language, and this may provide opportunities for students to devote more time and interest to it. Additionally (Ali et al. 2021), kids should be given opportunity to study English at school through writing, reading, and conversation abilities, as well as opportunities to develop individual students' language skills (Ali, 2014). The English language plays an important role in the educational system because it is used as a medium of instruction in several private colleges' (Ali, 2016) English language departments. Many kids began learning English in primary school; others began in kindergarten or even day care; nonetheless, many of them are unable to achieve the appropriate level of English proficiency; the main reason for this is student de-motivation at all levels. Learning a new language is a powerful tool that can help students adapt their behavior to match their wishes and expectations of society (Ali, 2020). Because student comfort is such an important aspect of learning, attitude is seen as an important factor in language acquisition (Ali, 2021). The attitude toward learning English is expected to be influenced by factors such as choosing and reading the appropriate material, communicating with a native English speaker, and so forth (Ali, et al. 2021).

Statement of the Problem

In recent decades, the popularity of learning English as a second or foreign language has exploded (Andavar et al. 2020). With the growing number of people interested in

learning a language, particularly English as a second or foreign language, it's more vital than ever to identify the elements that can stymie language learning (Shabani, 2012). Language learners' anxiety has not received significant attention since the constellation of factors that negatively affect second language learning (Anwar & Abd Zebari, 2015).

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anxiety in Language Learning

Many prior research have been carried out to study various aspects that contribute to anxiety when learning a foreign language (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). These components are generally divided into two categories: learner factors and situational factors. Attitudes, self-confidence, age, race, personality, gender, and motivation are some of the elements that influence learners (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016). Situational circumstances, on the other hand, jeopardize "social interactions, course activities, course contents, education providers' behavior, and course level" (Salehi & Marfet, 2014). The aforementioned variables interact in various ways, causing and increasing the level of anxiety among foreign language learners (Anwar & Climis, 2017). The distinction between facilitative and debilitating anxiety, according to (Anwar & Ghafoor, 2017), highlights the relationship between language and anxiety achievement. Anxiety may be beneficial; nevertheless, as many academic academics have demonstrated, there is often a negative relationship between language and anxiety achievement among many foreign language learners. As a result of their anxiousness (Anwar & Qadir, 2017), many foreign language students are having problems in the classroom. Learners' anxiousness is regarded as one of the most important characteristics in foreign language acquisition (Anwar & Shukur, 2015). Anxiety about language is distinct from anxiety about other things. Language acquisition anxiety, according to (Anwar & Surarchith, 2015), is distinct from all other types of anxiety. Language learners, on the whole, have demonstrated that they suffer from anxiety, which makes them feel uneasy in the classroom when learning a language. Language anxiety is common among second-language learners, according to (Anwar, 2016), and it can lead to issues. Since a result, language anxiety should be removed among students learning a second language or a foreign language, as this would improve the effectiveness of their learning process. (Anwar, 2017) shown that when students' language anxiety levels rise, so does the effectiveness and efficiency of the language learning process (Anwar, K., & Louis, 2017). Surveys are the most effective method for identifying a student's language learning process. Students may not remember or

understand the tactics they have learnt or that have been employed by educators in the past, as well as the strategy explanations in the survey sections (Aziz et al. 2021). As a result, several studies have constructed questionnaires based on the tasks that students have recently completed. It appears that if only a short period of time has elapsed, students will be more accurate in providing the correct and proper response to the survey (Demir et al. 2020).

Language learning can be characterized as a strategy or an instrument that students use to complete learning activities based on their language skills, such as writing, listening, reading, and speaking (Faraj et al. 2021). For example, Boonkongsan (2012) described learning as "cognitive abilities, behaviors, plans, habits, stages, and learning skills accepted by the learner during the learning processes, and emphasizing that strategies usage would be useful in boosting learner self-sufficiency. (Hameed & Anwar, 2018) defines language process as the means for handling problems encountered during the second language learning process. Learning language process is defined by (Hamza et al. 2021) as the mechanism by which a learner acquires, remembers, and retains new skills and knowledge. (Ismael et al. 2021) defines the learning language process as "any combination of procedures, stages, or routines employed by the learner to enable the achievement, storage, recovery, and use of knowledge." Learning language processes, according to (Jamal et al. 2021) are global behaviors and feelings that learners use while learning to help them remember and retain new knowledge and information. Learning language processes, according to Chamot and Malley (1990), are "exceptional viewpoints or actions that learners utilize to enable them grasp, remember, or recall new knowledge and information." As a result, learning strategies have been defined as "unique methods of managing information that improve and recall comprehension (Sabir et al. 2021), learning, or keeping information." When prior explanations of the language learning process focused on learning materials and behaviors that replicated unobservable cognitive techniques, definitions finally provided a better understanding of how learners thought and perform while learning language (Saleh et al. 2021). Furthermore, (Sorguli et al. 2021) defined learning language as "actions and techniques that are consciously selected by learners and may lead to activities taken to improve the learning or use of a second language through the storing, maintenance, recall, and application of information about that language through the storing (Talim, et al. 2021), maintenance, recall, and application of information about that language (Top & Ali, 2021). Vocabulary acquiring language, as defined by Filza and Tahira (2013), can be any action that influences this quite vast process (Abdullah et al. 2021).

At this time, there has been a significant shift in focus from a provider-dominated style of vocabulary acquisition to a student-centered style of vocabulary learning. The traditional technique for education providers in terms of vocabulary teaching has been assessed on a regular basis (Ahmed et al. 2021), and among other things, the importance of the pupil's involvement and participation in the process has been highlighted (Akoi et al. 2021). The key point of contention in this debate has been that pupils are rarely motivated to do what they can on their own to improve their vocabulary and other skills. Instead, students rely on educational institutions to offer whatever learning they require. According to (Ali & Anwar, 2021) teaching second language students to learn vocabulary is a difficult task. Recently, it has been widely assumed that assigning a secondary role to a pupil will commonly result in a setback in vocabulary development. In order to be effective in their vocabulary learning, students should focus on the key problem and work hard (Ali et al. 2021). Have a hands-on experience with the learning activities. One of the most important things is to encourage kids to take on more tasks and take more responsibility for their learning, to increase their vocabulary, and to have more influence over their everyday activities and behaviors (Ali et al. 2021). Another advantage of such a strategy, according to (Ali, 2014), is that it will help the power to satisfy child needs by allowing the child to choose and concentrate on the linguistic components that best satisfy their needs. Many studies, according to Lawrence and Lawrence (2013), have demonstrated the importance of encouraging children to develop their own technique of coping with new vocabulary rather than simply memorizing the meanings of particular words. Another way, according to (Ali, 2016), is to pay more attention to the vocabulary learning tactics of the students using research-based methodologies in language expansion. Students employ a range of ways to deal with new language, but only a few are more effective than others for extending their strategic resources in a way that is acceptable to them (Ali, 2020). According to Eren (2012), a variety of social and psychological characteristics, as well as the learners' attitude toward learning a second language, have an impact on their capacity. Baker focused on the importance of the research into the deleterious effects of anxiety on language learning (Ali, et al. 2021). (Andavar et al. 2020) argued the importance of affective component and its effect on learning language behavior, which leads to a decrease in students' anxiety in the classroom. The main reason for the importance of affective component such as values, interests, and attitude of students related to the effect of future behavior is the importance of affective component such as values, interests, and attitude of students (Anwar & Abd Zebari, 2015). This explains why it is important to pay

attention to students' positive attitudes toward language acquisition, as a favorable attitude will have a good impact on students' future learning (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Students' capability, strategy, and attitude, according to (Anwar & Balcioglu, 2016), determine their language learning success. According to Riasati (2011), students' capacity to acquire a second language is influenced not only by their language and mental abilities, but also by their views and ideas towards the target language. They also stated that students' perceptions of attitudes can improve the entire language acquisition process by triggering the environment of pupils' beliefs and behaviors toward the target language, its society (Anwar & Climis, 2017), and culture, as well as classifying their likelihood to acquire the target language. Salehi and Marfet (2014) proposed a theoretical model that emphasized the importance of accompanying attitudinal research in the field of language learning (Anwar & Ghafoor, 2017).

Shang (2013) shown that language teachers, scholars, and students should notice that pupils who have a good attitude and are motivated to study a language are more likely to succeed (Anwar & Qadir, 2017). As a result, if a student lacks the proclivity and attention to study the target language in order to communicate with others, he or she will develop a negative attitude about language learning and will not be encouraged or enthusiastic about it. As a result, students' attitudes may play a role in language learning, as it may have an impact on their ability to achieve the desired language (Anwar & Shukur, 2015).

According to Gardner, "inspiration... reflects the merger of power and aspiration to achieve the goal of learning the language and good attitudes to the language acquisition. (Anwar & Surarchith, 2015) described attitude as a component of inspiration in language learning. He believes that the motivation to learn a foreign language is classified by simple predispositions and personality characteristics, such as the pupil's general attitude toward foreigners and, on the other hand, the aimed language in particular, generalized attitudes and motivations for learning generalized attitudes (Anwar, 2016).

Foreign Language Anxiety

Due to the negative influence of students' worry about learning a foreign language, such as English, learning a foreign language such as English is a complex and challenging process (Anwar, 2017). (Anwar, 2017) described foreign language anxiety as "an individual complex of feelings, beliefs, behavior, and self-perceptions in the language learning classroom as a result of the differences in the language learning process." As a result, FLA may have a detrimental impact on language learners and may cause the entire process of learning English to be

delayed. (Anwar, K., & Louis, 2017) identified three types of anxiety associated with English language learning: test anxiety, fear of unfavorable evaluation, and communication apprehension. However, (Aziz et al. 2021) identified four factors: English class anxiety, test anxiety, fear of a bad evaluation, and communication apprehension. The reason for some English learners' discomfort in the classroom or while practicing their English language, or for communication concern, is typically a lack of English language ability (Demir et al. 2020). While English language learners who are afraid of negative assessment may view their own mistakes as a threat to their identity, and English language learners who are experiencing test anxiety toward the English language process, particularly when it comes to their oral activities in the classroom as an examination or a test instead of enhancing their English language skills and particularly in their speak, may look at and review their own mistakes as a risk to their identity (Faraj et al. 2021).

Language anxiety reactions may have a physical impact on language learners, such as the inability to replicate the inflection and rhythm of the language, distorting individuals' sound, as well as a cognitive impact, such as forgetting certain phrases or words while practicing English language just learned (Hameed & Anwar, 2018). Furthermore, Lian and Mardziah (2014) demonstrated that dry mouth, weak knees, nausea, and sweating are all considered human symptoms associated with linguistic anxiety. Furthermore, it has been suggested that a substantial percentage of language nervous learners are dissatisfied as a result of their failure to communicate in English, and that this dissatisfaction leads to English language anxiety. Furthermore, according to (Hamza et al. 2021) learners' reactions are divided into two categories: psychological and physical, which include the following human reactions, from the most common to the least common: stammering, trembling voice, failing to recall familiar words, or pale face, faster heart beats, feeling embarrassed, red face, unconscious behaviors, being annoyed, and being annoyed (Ismael et al. 2021).

Factors of Foreign Language Anxiety

The incapacity to communicate in English or any other second language has been shown by certain academic researchers to increase anxiety levels. (Jamal et al. 2021) discovered that English learners with a higher level of anxiety had a lower level of ability to speak English. Furthermore, paying too much attention to English intonation and pronunciation might cause anxiety. (Sabir et al. 2021) discovered that five factors contribute to an increase in anxiety in English classrooms: fear of failure in the English classroom or personal failure, discomfort when

learners speak to a native English speaker, negative self-assessment, speech anxiety, and having negative attitudes toward learning English in the classroom. (Saleh et al. 2021)also identified a number of factors that can cause anxiety in students in the classroom, including concerns about intelligibility, a lack of vocabulary, a lack of a conducive FL speaking environment, fear of losing face, a lack of oral practice, a fear of speaking a FL with others, test anxiety, a fear of making mistakes, poor FL proficiency (Talim, et al. 2021), trait anxiety, having excessive self-expectations, and a lack of a supportive environment. Other criteria documented by English learners, according to (Top & Ali, 2021), include teaching techniques, personal motivations, previous experience, and teacher demeanor.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Erbil-Kurdistan through focusing on private universities. The participants of the present study were 92 students of the English Department, at private universities in Kurdistan and particularly in Erbil. The students were from second, third, and fourth grade levels. Students were from group of age 18-30 years old. Furthermore, the factors like gender it also included to determine the possible differences of learners level of anxiety.

The present study employed the FLCAS (The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale), which was developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) to assess the levels and sources of foreign language anxiety (FLA). The FLCAS comprises of

33 items, each of which utilizes a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to assess respondents' anxiety in language classrooms. The FLCAS's reliability was confirmed by (Horwitz et al., 1986). A quantitative method was used to gather relevant information regarding to the investigation of the factors that learners believe contribute to their foreign language anxiety in learning an English language. Methods comprise the procedures used for generating, collecting and evaluating data. The researcher gathered data for the study through distributing questionnaires as primary data. Questionnaire was prepared and distributed to students of English Department in private universities; data was required for conducting research work collected from recent academic articles, books and previous studies related to the students' language anxiety's factors in learning a foreign language.

Research Hypotheses

- H1:** There is a negative impact of students' fear of negative evaluation on learning language achievement.
- H2:** There is a negative impact of communication apprehension on learning language achievement.
- H3:** There is a negative impact of test anxiety on learning language achievement.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher employed SPSS version 23 to measure the developed research hypotheses as mentioned earlier.

Demographic Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Items	Group	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	63	68.5
	Female	29	31.5
Age	18-20	37	40.2
	21-22 and over	55	59.8
Level of education	2 nd year	26	28.3
	3 rd year	29	31.5
	4 th year	37	40.2

As for demographic analysis for students in private universities in Kurdistan, it was found that (as seen in Table 1) 63 (69%) male students participated in this study and 29(31%) female students participated in this study. As for students' age, it was found that 37 (40%) of students were from group aged 18-20 years old and 55 (60%) of students

were from group aged 21-22 years old. Finally, as for students' level of education participated in this study, it was found that 26 (28%) of students were from 2nd year, 29 (32%) of students were from 3rd year and 37(40%) of students were from 4th year.

Table 2: Reliability analysis

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Fear of negative evaluation	.740	10
Communication apprehension	.819	11
Test anxiety	.749	11
Language learning	.758	14

As for reliability analysis, the main purpose is to measure the reliabilities of each item used to measure students' anxiety towards learning language in private universities. Moreover, the researcher employed three independent variables as seen in (conceptual framework, Figure 1) and a dependent variable to be measured which it was language learning. However, it was found that (as seen in Table 2) the Cronbach's Alpha for factor (fear of negative evaluation) = .740 which is greater than .7 this reveals that the 10 items employed to measure fear of negative evaluation were reliable for the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha for

factor (communication apprehension) = .819 which is greater than .7 this reveals that the 11 items employed to measure communication apprehension were reliable for the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha for factor (test anxiety) = .749 which is greater than .7 this reveals that the 11 items employed to measure test anxiety were reliable for the current study, and finally, the Cronbach's Alpha for factor (language learning) as dependent variable = .758 which is greater than .7 this reveals that the 14 items employed to measure language learning were reliable for the current study.

Table 3-Correlation analysis

		Correlations			
		Fear negative evaluation	Communicati on apprehension	Test anxiety	Language learning
Fear of negative evaluation	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N		92		

Communication apprehension	Pearson Correlation	.767**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	N	92	92	
Test anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.657**	.456**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001	
	N	92	92	92
Language learning	Pearson Correlation	.701**	.629**	.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	92	92	92

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As for correlation analysis, the main aim is to measure the association between independent variable and dependent variable, as mentioned earlier that the researcher employed three independent variables and a dependent variable. The researcher aim to measure the association between each independent variable and dependent variable, however it was found that the Pearson correlation value between students' fear of negative evaluation and language learning = .701** Sig. (2-tailed)=.000, this reveals that there is a strong correlation between students' fear of negative evaluation and language learning in private universities in Kurdistan, the Pearson correlation value between students'

communication apprehension and language learning = .629** Sig. (2-tailed)=.000, this reveals that there is a moderate correlation between students' communication apprehension and language learning in private universities in Kurdistan, and finally, the Pearson correlation value between students' test anxiety and language learning = .601**Sig. (2-tailed)=.000, this reveals that there is a moderate correlation between students' test anxiety and language learning in private universities in Kurdistan. However, the result of correlation analysis revealed (as seen in Table 3) that there are positive correlation between independent variables and dependent variable.

Table 4: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		t	P-Value
	B	Std. Error		

1 (Constant)	.794	.172	4.606	.000
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Fear of negative evaluation	.373	.150	2.489	.015
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Communication apprehension	.229	.101	2.268	.026
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Test anxiety	.272	.096	2.834	.006
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			.552	
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F value			36.138	
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a. Dependent Variable: language learning

The researcher employed multiple regression analysis to measure the developed research hypotheses. The results revealed that (as seen in Table 4) the value *B* for the students' fear of negative evaluation = .373 which is greater than .005 along with P-value = .015 this means that there is a negative impact of students' fear of negative evaluation on learning language achievement, however students' fear of negative evaluation will cause an anxiety towards learning language which is considered as one of the barriers that students are facing during the process of language learning, the value *B* for the students' communication apprehension = .229 which is greater than .005 along with P-value = .026 this means that there is a negative impact of students' communication apprehension on learning language achievement, however students' communication apprehension will cause an anxiety towards learning language which is considered as a barrier that students are facing during the process of language learning, and finally, the value *B* for the students' test anxiety = .227 which is greater than .006 along with P-value = .015 this means that there is a negative impact of students' test anxiety on learning language achievement, however students' test anxiety will cause an anxiety towards learning language which is considered as one of the barriers that students are facing during the process of language learning.

V. CONCLUSION

This research pointed out the importance of English in undergraduate students in Kurdistan. The researcher examined variables influencing students' level of anxiety in Kurdistan and particularly in Erbil city. The researcher employed three variables to be investigated; these variables are (communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety). A quantitative method was employed to analyze and measure factors affecting students' anxiety in language learning of private universities in Kurdistan. The researcher employed multiple regression analysis to measure the developed research hypotheses. The results revealed that the highest value was for the students' fear of negative evaluation which indicates that there is a negative impact of students' fear of negative evaluation on learning language achievement. However students' fear of negative evaluation will cause an anxiety towards learning language which is considered as one of the barriers that students are facing during the process of language learning. The second highest value causing students' anxiety in language learning was communication apprehension which indicates that there is a negative impact of students' communication apprehension on learning language achievement. However, students' communication apprehension will cause an anxiety towards learning language which is considered as a barrier that students are facing during the process of language learning. Communication apprehension factor is the second highest influential factor that causes anxiety; students lack of confidence while practicing language during their foreign

language classes, furthermore, student's nervousness while practising their foreign language with a native speaker, and finally, the lowest value was for test anxiety. However the result reveals that there is a negative impact of students' test anxiety on learning language achievement.

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