

# What Causes Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety?

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*“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” –Ludwig Wittgenstein*

AS a result of the development of humanistic psychology in the 1960s, there has been a growing recognition that affective factors can significantly impact the outcomes of education (Lu, 2001). Affective factors in language learning, particularly in second language acquisition, have been reckoned as non-cognitive factors and along with cognitive factors, have sparked substantial attention among academics. Affective variables that may influence foreign language acquisition include a variety of emotions and feelings arising in foreign language classroom such as anxiety, fear, embarrassment, or sense of inferiority. Among them, second language anxiety has long been a popular topic in foreign language instruction research.

According to Gardner & MacIntyre (1993), anxiety in language acquisition refers to the apprehension experienced by the individual in the language class or any situation in which the language is used. Horwitz et al. (1986) emphasized that foreign language anxiety was a unique phenomenon in language learning and defined it as complex emotional experience involving self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors. They also drew parallels between it and three relevant performance anxieties: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Research has shown that anxiety has multifaceted effects on foreign language learning. It is often associated with negative emotional experiences such as uneasiness, lack of confidence, self-negation, worry, and tension (Horwitz et al., 1986). Symptoms of foreign language anxiety typically include sweaty palms, increased heartbeat, unusual voice, and skewed intonation, appearing lost when called to answer questions, forgetting learned words or phrases, and refusing communication (Young, 1991). Many studies revealed a significant negative correlation between anxiety and foreign language achievement and proficiency (Aida, 1994; Horwitz & Young, 1991).

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*Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and Its Link to Speaking Self-efficacy, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Self-perceived Proficiency and Gender* in this issue of the journal focused on examining factors contributing to speaking anxiety in the EFL classroom. The study identified the correlations between EFL speaking anxiety and student speaking self-efficacy, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived speaking proficiency. It also demonstrated how these variables predicted EFL speaking anxiety. In addition, the research confirmed that there were gender differences in EFL speaking anxiety (Okyar, 2023). The findings of this study have significant pedagogical implications for second/foreign language instruction.

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