Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels

Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
==

Abstract

The aim of the present study was to understand the level of anxiety of the Iranian EFL students towards English as a foreign language. To do so, all 548 students (elementary to advanced learners) studying in Jahad-e-Daneshgahi institute of Tabriz, Iran were selected based on random sampling. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) was used to measure anxiety with four scales of communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English classes. Furthermore there was an effort to see whether anxiety domains differed across different first languages, proficiency levels and gender. The results of the study indicated that students in the present study experienced anxiety in all four scales on the higher side of the range. Contrary to the findings of other studies, communication anxiety was found to be the predominant anxiety component in the students, as

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   133

compared to other three scales. In addition, gender and first language didn't affect their anxiety significantly. However, level of proficiency affected their anxiety in all four domains significantly. The study concluded with some pedagogical implications.

1. Introduction

Early studies on Second Language Acquisition emphasized the role of cognitive variables like intelligence, language aptitude, and learning styles on learning a second or foreign language. However, after Gardner and Lambert studies (1972) on attitudes and motivation in second language learning, second language researchers began considering emotional or affective factors and how these factors facilitate or hinder language acquisition (Horwitz, Tallon, & Luo, 2010). For many researchers learning a second language is a process in which affective and personality factors play a significant role. For Brown (2007) affective and personality factors are important psychological factors to investigate in order to understand the process of language learning and in improving language-teaching designs. Among other affective variables, anxiety has stimulated special interest in the field of second language acquisition and learning over the past decades (Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Bailey, 1983; Chen, 2002; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Liu, 2006; Na, 2007; Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Since 1970s, several instruments have been developed to measure anxiety, such as Gardner's (1985) French Class Anxiety Scale and French Use Anxiety Scale, and Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale.

For Morris, Davis and Hutchings (1981) anxiety comprises worry and emotionality. They claim that worry refers to cognitive aspects such as negative expectations and cognitive concerns about oneself, the present situation and probable consequences. Emotionality refers to one's understanding of the physiological-affective elements of the anxiety experience, meaning, signs of "automatic arousal and unpleasant feeling states such as nervousness and tension" (Morris,

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   134

et.al 1981, p. 541). Spielberger (1983) defines anxiety as the "subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system" (p. 1). For some researchers (Skehan, 1989; Young, 1991) language anxiety can arise from lots of different sources. For Young (1991) the possible sources of anxiety are "personal and interpersonal anxieties; learner beliefs about language learning; instructor beliefs about language teaching; instructor-learner interactions; classroom procedures; and language testing" (p. 427). Many studies have suggested that anxiety occurs due to poor learning abilities indicating that anxiety is an outcome (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). For Lucas, et.al (2011) the language classroom can be an anxiety-causing situation to some learners, because it includes constant evaluation of the learners' performance and competence. They continue to claim that other anxiety provoking factors can be "difficulty coping in a mainstream English classroom, lack of teacher engagement and limited cognitive skills in English" (p. 95).

Due to the contradictory research results dealing with foreign language anxiety in the Iranian context, the need for more research in this area seems to be emphasized. Thus, the present study might provide more information offering insights about the effect of anxiety for EFL learners in Iran. Furthermore, the findings of the present study may contribute to educators' understanding of the issue of anxiety among Iranian EFL learners.

2. Overview of the Study

2.1 Anxiety and Its Different Categories

Some researchers have grouped anxiety into two groups of facilitating or debilitating one. The first type of anxiety motivates learners in adopting an approach attitude, willing to confront the new learning task. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety motivates learners in assuming an avoidance attitude, tending to escape from the learning task (Scovel, 1978). The issue of task difficulty affects learners to develop a facilitating or a debilitating anxiety (Chan & Wu, 2004). For McIntyre (1995) foreign language anxiety could be facilitating only when a given task is relatively simple. However, when the task is too difficult, anxiety impairs performance. In

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   135

addition to task difficulty, factors like "teachers' attitude and evaluation, teacher-student interactions in class, parents' expectation, classmates' attitude, and students' own achievement are the potential sources of students' foreign language anxiety" (Chan & Wu, 2004, p. 290). Some other researchers have grouped anxiety into three groups of trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. For Scovel (1978) trait anxiety is defined as a permanent predisposition to be anxious. State anxiety on the other hand, is a social type of anxiety which occurs under certain conditions like when the learners are able to perceive situations as being threatening, they are said to have state anxiety. The last category is situation-specific anxiety which is caused by specific situation or event like public speaking, examinations or recitations.

2.2 Foreign Language Anxiety

For Horwitz et al. (1986) foreign language anxiety is a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). They continue to claim that almost one-third of students who learn a foreign language experience some type of anxiety. For Young (1994) three sources of foreign language anxiety is associated with the learner, the teacher and the institution. He claims that learner anxiety includes low self-esteem, low level of ability, communication apprehension, lack of group membership and attitudes and beliefs about language learning. For some researchers (Aida 1994; Samimy 1994), considering teacher factors, judgmental teaching attitude and a harsh manner of teaching are related to anxieties with the teacher. Finally, institutional anxiety can be related to the list of classroom activities that learners perceive as anxiety-provoking. They can include role playing; speaking in front of the class; giving oral presentations and report; and a writing task on the board (Young, 1990; Palacios, 1998, Lucas, et.al, 2011).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   136

2.3 Defining Scales of Anxiety

Horwitz et. al (1986) groups anxiety into three scales of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. They define communication apprehension as a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about real or anticipated communication with other people. They claim that for anxious students speaking in the foreign language is the most anxiety-producing experience. In this situation, the learner is placed in a position of communicating something without sufficient knowledge of the language to do this task. Therefore, the learner experiences anxiety due to fear of "losing oneself" in the target culture.

According to (Horwitz et al., 1986), "Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety, stemming from a fear of failure" (p.127). Sarason (1984) defines test anxiety as "the tendency to view with alarm the consequences of inadequate performance in an evaluative situation." Students have test anxiety when they have poor performance in the previous tests. These students develop a negative attitude towards tests and have irrational perceptions in evaluative situations.

Watson, & Friend (1969) define fear of negative evaluation as 'apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively". For MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) fear of negative evaluation is related to communication apprehension. Aida (1994) claims that students with fear of negative evaluation might sit passively in the classroom, and withdraw themselves from activities of their classrooms which increase their improvement of language skills. She claims that in extreme cases, students might cut their classes in order to avoid anxiety situations which will cause them to be left behind.

2.4 Studies on Anxiety among EFL Learners

In the literature, the relationship between anxiety and language learning has been investigated by lots of researchers and it has been found that anxiety can have an adverse effect on the

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   137

performance of people speaking English as a foreign language (Chen & Lee, 2011, Stroud & Wee, 2006). Some studies related to the scope of the present study have been brought here. In one study, Chan & Wu (2004) studied language anxiety of 601 EFL elementary school students in Taiwan. The results of their study showed that the anxiety tendency of EFL elementary students was quite obvious. In another study, Liu (2006) studied the language anxiety of 100 EFL students with three different proficiency levels. The results of his study showed that students with advanced English proficiency tended to have less anxiety. In a more recent study Chakrabarti and Sengupta (2012) studied language anxiety of 146 Indian learners. The results of their study showed that anxiety of most of the students was high and test anxiety was found to be the predominating anxiety component in the students.

In the Iranian context Rezazadeh and Tavakoli (2009) studied the relationship among gender, academic achievement, years of study, and levels of test anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. The participants were one hundred and ten undergraduate students from Isfahan University. Results showed that female students had a higher level of test anxiety. Furthermore, the results indicated that there was no meaningful relationship between test anxiety and years of study. Furthermore, Sadighi, Sahragard & Jafari's (2009) study results on 80 Iranian EFL learners' showed no relation between anxiety and years of university study. In addition, the results showed that females were more anxious than males. In a more recent study, Mesri (2012) studied anxiety of 52 EFL university level students. The results of his study indicated that anxiety level of these students was quite high and there was a significant relationship between FLCA and females. As it is mentioned in all these studies language anxiety of all these EFL participants was on the higher range. However, as the number of participants is low in the studies related to the Iranian context, and as research showed contradictory results concerning gender and level of proficiency, further research about this issue in Iran seemed necessary.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   138

2.5 Current Status of English in Iran

Due to today's growing science and technology all over the world, learning English language has been given much more importance compared to past years, and it is not an exception in the Iranian context. Nevertheless, teaching English in Iran has been a difficult task for both EFL students and teachers because of lack of resources and little contact with the target language outside the classroom Compared to other EFL learners in other contexts. (Sadeghi, 2005). There are very few English programs broadcast on TV or radio. Of course, due to advancements in technology and the more frequent use of the internet, satellite, and rapid growth of private language institutes in Iran, the opportunities for English language learning have greatly improved (Talebinezhad & Aliakbari, 2002).

In addition, the increasing number of language institutes can confirm the increase in value and importance that is given to the English language in Iran. In the Iranian curriculum, English language is one of the compulsory subjects. English language is a foreign language in Iran and students are officially taught English from the first year of the guidance school. Therefore, Iranian students have to study English for nearly seven years. Three years in Guidance school, three years in Secondary school and one year in Pre-University level. In addition, those students who study non-English Majors in universities study English in a maximum of 6 credits. They study 3 credits of general English instruction and 3 credits of ESP in which the focus is on their field, related English texts and related terminology.

However, after learning English for almost 7 years in school and one more year at university, Iranian EFL learners' are not proficient enough in learning the English language. The education they receive neither enables the students to attain full competence in using the English language nor helps them to interact with confidence (Nahavandi & Mukundan, in press). Therefore, it is essential to find out what impedes students' ability in learning English as a foreign language even after seven years of education in schools. FLA has been claimed to be one of the problems in learning foreign languages. Thus, it seems necessary to identify the sources of students'

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   139

foreign language anxiety and anxiety-provoking situations. In addition, it is also essential to identify related issues like lowering foreign language anxiety and teachers' awareness of foreign language anxiety. The above mentioned issues can increase our understanding of foreign language anxiety. When teachers become aware of students' foreign language anxiety and ways of lowering the anxiety, the aim of reducing foreign language anxiety might be effectively reached.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Study

In general the present descriptive study tried to understand anxiety level of Iranian EFL students towards English as a foreign language. Furthermore there was an effort to see whether anxiety domains differed across different first languages, proficiency levels and gender. Based on the objectives of the study the following research questions were raised:

1. Do Iranian EFL learners feel anxiety in their English classes?
2. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' first language and their Foreign Language Anxiety?
3. Are there any significant relationships between Iranian EFL learners' proficiency levels (elementary to Advanced levels) and their Foreign Language Anxiety?
4. Is there any significant relationship between Iranian EFL learners' gender and their Foreign Language Anxiety?

3.2 Research Design

This descriptive study was conducted on 548 EFL students (elementary to advanced learners) studying in Jahad-e-Daneshgahi institute of Tabriz, Iran. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) measuring anxiety with four domains of

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   140

communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English classes was administered to the selected respondents. Because of the scale's success on construct validity and reliability, FLCAS has been extensively used by number of researchers in exploring learners' foreign language anxiety (Aida, 1994; Chang, 1999; Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Liao, 1999).

3.3 Participants

The participants were all 548 EFL students (elementary to advanced learners) studying in Jahad-e-Daneshgahi institute of Tabriz, Iran during the academic year of 2012. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) together with a demographical questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents in all 52 English classes in the institute. The age range of participants was from 10-43 with the average mean of 18.56. From 548 questionnaires only 522 complete questionnaires were fed into SPSS for analysis and other 26 distorted and incomplete questionnaires were discarded. The following table summarizes the participants' characteristics.

3.3.1 Demographic Background of the Participants

As can be seen in table 1-3, from whole 522 respondents 275 were male and 247 were female students. Considering their first language only 54 students' first language was Persian and the rest 468 were Turkish. Furthermore, 210 students were elementary learners, 100 students were studying in pre-intermediate level, 102 in intermediate level and 110 were advanced students.

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	275	52.7	52.7	52.7

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   141

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Female	247	47.3	47.3	100.0
	Total	522	100.0	100.0	

Table 2: proficiency level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Elementary	210	40.2	40.2	40.2
	pre-intermediate	100	19.2	19.2	59.4
	Intermediate	102	19.5	19.5	78.9
	Advanced	110	21.1	21.1	100.0
	Total	522	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: First Language

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Persian	54	10.3	10.3	10.3
	Turkish	468	89.7	89.7	100.0
	Total	522	100.0	100.0	

3.4 Instrumentation

In order to collect the data, Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope's (1986) 33 item FLCAS questionnaire together with a demographical questionnaire was administered to the selected respondents in all

Language in India <u>www.languageinindia.com</u>
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels 142

52 English classes in the institute. In the FLCAS, there are 33 items in a 5-point Likert Scale format ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The theoretical range of this scale is from 33 to 165. The higher the total points, the more anxious the students are. The scale has shown high internal reliability, alpha coefficient of .93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations (Na, 2007).

However, there are two models employed by researchers (Horwitz et al., 1986; Huang, 2008; Na, 2007) investigating foreign language classroom anxiety. Some researchers have adopted three or four domains for surveying anxiety. In the first model 33 items were constructed under three domains of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. In the second model, the same 33 items were reconstructed under four domains of communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety of English classes. Anxiety of English classes, a new domain, was constructed in the four factor model compared to three factor model (Cao, 2011). However, it has been confirmed that the four domains explains foreign language classroom anxiety better with its exclusive characteristics (Cao, 2011). In the present study, FLCAS items with 4 domains were employed. Each anxiety score was gained by summing the ratings of the thirty-three items.

First, permission to distribute the questionnaire was obtained from the dean of Jahad-e-Daneshgahi institute and all 38 teachers in the institute. Respondents were informed that the information they gave would be used only for research purposes. Then the questionnaires were administered to all 52 classes. Finally, respondents were given 15 minutes to answer the questions. The researcher repeated the same procedure for all 52 classes. The researcher herself was present in data collection procedure, therefore in case of any ambiguity or problem in understanding the questionnaire items, assistance and guidance was provided by her and other teachers in the institute.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   143

3.5 Procedure

First permission to distribute the questionnaire was obtained from the dean of Jahad-e-Daneshgahi institute and all 38 teachers in the institute (some teachers were same, meaning they had 2 or 3 English classes during that term). Then, the researcher conducted the survey once the department head approved the request. The number of students in each class ranged from 6 to 18. All 52 classes were requested to fill up the questionnaire. The researcher herself was present during data collection and collected data were tallied and subjected to parametric statistical analyses.

3.6 Method of Analysis

The students' responses to the questionnaire were analyzed in terms of descriptive and inferential statistics. First, the raw data was fed into the computer and after testing for normality parametric test was run by the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) 20 software. The data were analyzed using ANOVA, LSD and t-test. To ensure the quality of the analysis and interpretations, consultations with statisticians were made.

4. Results of the Study

For all variables Minimum, Maximum, Mean, Std. Deviation, Variance, Skewness, and Kurtosis were calculated. As Skewness and Kurtosis were near 0/5 and sample population was large, data distribution was considered normal. Therefore parametric statistics was used. As can be seen in table 4, the age range of respondents is from 10-43 with the average mean of 18.56.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics for All Four Scales

1. Considering the first domain Communication Anxiety the average mean is 2.97 meaning that most participants' Communication Anxiety is high.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   144

2. Considering the second domain Fear of Negative Evaluation the average mean is 2.91 meaning that most participants' Fear of Negative Evaluation is high.

3. Considering the third domain Test Anxiety the average mean is 2.86 meaning that most participants' Test Anxiety is high.

4. Considering the fourth domain English Classroom anxiety the average mean is 2.64 meaning that most participants' English Classroom anxiety is high.

Table 4: Descriptive statistics for all four scales

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness	Kurtosis
Age	522	10	43	18.56	3.965	15.718	2.108	7.989
Communication Anxiety	522	1.38	4.50	2.9768	.65755	.432	.183	-.415
Fear of Negative Evaluation	522	1.00	5.00	2.9127	.77737	.604	.119	-.401
Test Anxiety	522	1.00	4.80	2.8644	.72625	.527	.012	-.089
English Classroom anxiety	522	1.00	4.45	2.6433	.66036	.436	.199	-.096

4.2 Comparing Male & Female Learners through Independent t-test

To compare male and female students in their anxiety levels, independent t-test is used. The results of the study in all 4 scales are as follows:

1. Mean of Communication Anxiety among males is 2.97 and among females is 2.98. As the level of significance is 0.791 which is bigger than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there isn't a significant difference between male and female students in Communication Anxiety.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   145

2. Mean of Fear of Negative Evaluation among males is 2.89 and among females is 2.93. As the level of significance is 0.565 which is bigger than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there isn't a significant difference between male and female students in Communication Anxiety.

3. Mean of Test Anxiety among males is 2.90 and among females is 2.83. As the level of significance is 0.252 which is bigger than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there isn't a significant difference between male and female students in Communication Anxiety.

4. Mean of English Classroom anxiety among males is 2.65 and among females is 2.63. As the level of significance is 0.683 which is bigger than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there isn't a significant difference between male and female students in Communication Anxiety.

Table 5: Male & Female Comparison

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication Anxiety	Male	275	2.9695	.63973	1.087	.298	-.265	520	.791
	Female	247	2.9848	.67805					
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Male	275	2.8941	.79015	.118	.732	-.576	520	.565
	Female	247	2.9334	.76395					
Test Anxiety	Male	275	2.8989	.69395	2.530	.112	1.147	520	.252
	Female	247	2.8259	.76017					
English Classroom anxiety	Male	275	2.6545	.68216	1.235	.267	.409	520	.683
	Female	247	2.6308	.63637					

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   146

4.3 Comparing Proficiency Level

To compare Proficiency Levels two-way ANOVA is used. To make interpretations of the study easier and to prevent repetition in using some words, elementary students are named group 1, pre-intermediate students group 2, intermediate students group 3 and advanced students group 4 respectably. The results of the study in all 4 scales are as follows:

1. Mean of Communication Anxiety in group one, group two, group three and in group four are 3.19, 2.93, 2.88 and 2.70 respectably. As the level of significance is 0/000 which is smaller than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in Communication Anxiety among all four groups. LSD results show that Communication Anxiety in group 1 is significantly higher than other groups. In both group 2 and group 3, it is higher than group 4. However there isn't a significant difference between group 2 and group 3.

2. Mean of Fear of Negative Evaluation in group one, group two, group three and in group four are 3.19, 2.95, 2.72 and 2.53 respectably. As the level of significance is 0/000 which is smaller than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in Fear of Negative Evaluation among all four groups. LSD results show that Fear of Negative Evaluation in group 1 is significantly higher than other groups. In group 2, it is higher than group 3 and 4. However there isn't a significant difference between group 3 and 4.

3. Mean of Test Anxiety in group one, group two, group three and group four are 3.05, 2.68, 2.89 and 2.66 respectably. As the level of significance is 0/000 which is smaller than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in Test Anxiety among all four groups. LSD results show that Test Anxiety in group 1 is significantly higher than group 2 and 4. In group 2, it is lower than group 3, and it doesn't have a significant difference with group 4. However, in group 3 it is higher than group 4.

4. Mean of English Classroom anxiety in group one, group two, group three and group four are 2.83, 2.47, 2.66 and 2.43 respectably. As the level of significance is 0/000 which is smaller than 0.05, therefore it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in English Classroom

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   147

anxiety among all four groups. LSD results show that English Classroom anxiety in group 1 is significantly higher than other groups. In group 2, it is lower than group 3, and it doesn't have a significant difference with group 4. However, in group 3 it is higher than group 4.

Table 6: Results of ANOVA for Different Proficiency Levels

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Communication Anxiety	Elementary	210	3.1905	.70448	16.137	.000
	pre-intermediate	100	2.9338	.60366		
	intermediate	102	2.8787	.53626		
	advanced	110	2.6989	.58392		
Fear of Negative Evaluation	elementary	210	3.1868	.82390	21.836	.000
	pre-intermediate	100	2.9478	.70228		
	intermediate	102	2.7222	.63795		
	advanced	110	2.5343	.66146		
Test Anxiety	elementary	210	3.0457	.74897	9.902	.000
	pre-intermediate	100	2.6840	.70162		
	intermediate	102	2.8902	.64953		
	advanced	110	2.6582	.68608		
English Classroom anxiety	elementary	210	2.8338	.73710	13.033	.000
	pre-intermediate	100	2.4664	.60835		
	intermediate	102	2.6586	.53751		
	advanced	110	2.4264	.54081		

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   148

Table 7: Post Hoc Tests (LSD) for Different Proficiency Levels

Dependent Variable	(I) proficiency level	(J) proficiency level	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Communication Anxiety	Elementary	pre-intermediate	.25673[*]	.07662	.001
		intermediate	.31180[*]	.07611	.000
		advanced	.49161[*]	.07423	.000
	pre-intermediate	intermediate	.05507	.08875	.535
		advanced	.23489[*]	.08714	.007
	Intermediate	advanced	.17981[*]	.08669	.039
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Elementary	pre-intermediate	.23899[*]	.08925	.008
		intermediate	.46455[*]	.08865	.000
		advanced	.65243[*]	.08646	.000
	pre-intermediate	intermediate	.22556[*]	.10337	.030
		advanced	.41343[*]	.10149	.000
	Intermediate	advanced	.18788	.10097	.063
Test Anxiety	Elementary	pre-intermediate	.36171[*]	.08606	.000
		intermediate	.15552	.08549	.069
		advanced	.38753[*]	.08337	.000
	pre-intermediate	intermediate	-.20620[*]	.09968	.039
		advanced	.02582	.09787	.792
	Intermediate	advanced	.23201[*]	.09737	.018
English Classroom anxiety	Elementary	pre-intermediate	.36740[*]	.07759	.000
		intermediate	.17512[*]	.07707	.023
		advanced	.40732[*]	.07516	.000

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   149

pre-intermediate	intermediate	-.19228[*]	.08987	.033
	advanced	.03992	.08824	.651
Intermediate	advanced	.23220[*]	.08778	.008

4.4 Comparing First Language

To compare Persian and Turkish students in their anxiety level, independent t-test is used. The result of the study showed that there isn't any significant difference in both groups in all four scales as the level of significance is bigger than 0.05.

Table 8: Comparing First Language

	First Language	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
					F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Communication Anxiety	Persian	54	2.9421	.67760	.048	.826	-.409	520	.683
	Turkish	468	2.9808	.65582					
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Persian	54	2.7860	.61462	4.969	.026	-1.548	75.016	.126
	Turkish	468	2.9274	.79324					
Test Anxiety	Persian	54	2.9111	.80063	1.030	.311	.499	520	.618
	Turkish	468	2.8590	.71791					
English Classroom anxiety	Persian	54	2.6364	.60173	1.256	.263	-.082	520	.935
	Turkish	468	2.6441	.66739					

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   150

4.5 Comparing the Relationship among All Variables

To compare relationship among all variables Pearson correlation was used. Zero hypothesis in this test shows no relationship among all variables. If the level of sig is less than 0/05, zero hypothesis is rejected, meaning there will be significant relationship among variables. Results of correlation show that among all variables there is a direct significant relationship. There is a positive correlation and level of significance is less than 0.05.

Table 9: Pearson Correlation Test

		Fear of Negative Evaluation	Test Anxiety	English Classroom anxiety
Communication Anxiety	Pearson Correlation	.710**	.543**	.654**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	522	522	522
Fear of Negative Evaluation	Pearson Correlation		.556**	.660**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N		522	522
Test Anxiety	Pearson Correlation			.601**
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
	N			522

N=522

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   151

4.6 Discussion

The results showed that communication anxiety of EFL learners in the present study was higher than other three domains. The reason for such result might be because of students themselves or classroom activities that they perform in their language classes. Na (2007) believes that this issue can be attributed to students' English proficiency, which might not be high enough to permit them to communicate with others freely, express themselves adequately in class and answer teachers' questions properly. On the other hand, (Young 1991; Wang 2003) believe that classroom atmosphere and some classroom activities per se can be perceived as anxiety-provoking by students. Palacios (1998) lists some classroom tasks such as demands of oral production, feeling of being put on the spot, the pace of the class, and the element of being evaluated as anxiety provoking tasks.

The results of the present study also showed that Fear of Negative Evaluation was the second predominant anxiety among EFL learners. As Na (2007) claims "teachers should avoid negative evaluation of students in classrooms and comment on students' behaviors with more encouragement" (p. 30). He continues to claim that teachers can take some measures in relaxing students' attention on exams, like eliminating the ranking of students by their test scores. To achieve this end, teachers can talk about the inevitability of the existence of anxiety in learning and let their students know that their anxiety can be reduced by self-regulation of their thinking and study. Furthermore, the results showed that test anxiety was the third predominant anxiety among EFL learners of this study. Ohata (2005) believes that learners are afraid of taking tests, as test-taking situations would make them anxious about the negative results of getting a bad grade. This in turn can decrease the students' self-esteem or they may feel inferior compared to other students. Finally, the results showed that English Classroom anxiety was the fourth predominant anxiety among these learners. The reason for this issue can be teachers.

In most Iranian EFL classrooms, teachers play the role of dominator or an authoritarian character. Thus the role of the teacher can provoke anxiety in language classes and consequently lead to the lack of a free and relaxed environment for learning. Nahavandi & Mukundan (2012)

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   152

state that nowadays, teaching shouldn't be seen as a product but as a process. So activities in which students are involved in real communication and which promote learning should be considered very important. To use Widdowson's words teachers should be "facilitator of students' learning" or to put it in other words to function as an authoritative rather than an authoritarian figure. (p. 120).

Considering the level of proficiency Young (1991) claims that comparing low and high proficient learners, anxiety affects foreign language learners with low levels of oral proficiency more than those with high levels of proficiency. Therefore, it can be claimed that the results of the present study is in line with Toh's (2011) study in which Hungarian learners in advanced level classes were surveyed on their anxiety level. The results showed that foreign language anxiety was not restricted to the early, beginning stages of language learning, since even advanced level students were also seen as anxious learners.

However, the results of the present study, contrasts with Onwuegbuize et al.'s (1999) study, which examined anxiety at three different levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced), levels. They reported that students experienced an almost linear rise in anxiety as years of study advanced. Similarly, Cheng (2002), who investigated anxiety in the writing skill in Taiwanese students of English, reported a similar finding. In her study, students' anxiety increased with the years of study; freshmen were the least anxious learners, while juniors were the most anxious learners with regard to writing in English.

Considering gender, the result is in line with some other studies in which no significant relation was found between language anxiety and gender. As an example, Aida (1994) found no significant difference in language anxiety between male and female students. Similarly, Dewaele (2002) claimed that gender did not correlate significantly with communicative anxiety in either English or French language as a foreign language. However, it should be mentioned that although no statistically significant difference was found between male and female learners in the present study, the mean of anxiety among females in all domains except test anxiety was

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   153

higher than male learners. Therefore, it can be claimed that the results are partially in line with Cheng's (2002) study in which Taiwanese learners were surveyed on their English writing anxiety. The results showed that females were significantly more anxious than males. Finally, the results is in line with Sadighi, Sahragard & Jafari's (2009) study results showed that females were more anxious than males. However, the results contrast with Na's (2007) study which investigated anxiety of 115 Chinese EFL learners. The results indicated that male students had higher anxiety of English classes than female counterparts.

5. Conclusion & Implications of the Study

The results of the present study showed that Iranian EFL learners experienced anxiety in all four domains on the higher range of the scale. As it was mentioned before, high anxiety can lead to students' discouragement, loss of ability, and escaping from participation in classroom activities. Research has shown that learners with high anxiety often show low achievement which in turn can lead to more anxiety about learning.

Considering the results of the present study, some pedagogical implications can be suggested which might be useful for language instructors, in reducing students' level of anxiety in language classes. An understanding of learners' second language anxiety can inform the teachers to the possible causes of their students' low achievement in English, encouraging them to increase their efforts in bringing down the affective filters of the learners, with which anxiety plays a significant role (Krashen, 1985). As a result, the learners might be able to receive greater 'language input' which in turn can result in better learner output. For Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001), universities should catch up with modern technological developments to decrease students' anxiety and, as a result, increase their achievement. For Horwitz et al. (1986) two options are available for instructors considering anxious students: the first option is that "they can help students learn how to cope with anxiety producing situations and also they can make the learning context less stressful" (p.131). They continue to claim that teachers should first accept that FL anxiety exists and they should not always attribute student performance to lack of

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different Proficiency Levels   154

knowledge. Another option is providing cognitive and affective feedback in order to maintain their confidence in mastering the material. According to Birjandi, et.al (2006) successful students and those receiving positive emotional support from their teachers and classmates can better cope with any anxiety arising from time to time in class.

To achieve this end, teachers can create more relaxed environment for students by giving them more freedom in speaking and expressing their views. Another suggestion can be changing the testing policy in Iran. It is a well known idea that tests discriminate against students with test anxiety who perform badly under test conditions. As the nature of the test which is generally anxiety-provoking, other evaluation methods can be added to the evaluation system in order to prevent judging students ability on the basis of final performance in tests. One solution can be the inclusion of class participation as the indicator of student performance together with final performance, especially at universities of Iran which might decrease the student anxiety during test taking sessions.

Based on the results and suggestions of the present study, it is hoped that improvement in our English teaching system in the Iranian context could be obtained, and the foreign language classroom anxiety of our students could accordingly be reduced. Finally, the fact that language learning anxiety is a new area of research in Iran and the fact that it is psychologically a complex phenomenon cannot be ignored (Horwitz 2001). So it is hoped that some steps might be taken in universities and language institutes of Iran to decrease anxiety of Iranian EFL learners. Last but not least, it is hoped that the present research may encourage further research in the area of anxiety and the related problems it can cause for EFL learners by other interested researchers.

===

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   155

References

Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *Modern Language Journal*, 78, 155–168.

Argaman, O., & Abu-Rabia, S. (2002). The influence of language anxiety on English reading and writing tasks among native Hebrew speakers. *Language, Culture and Curriculum, 15*, 143-160.

Bailey, K. (1983). Competitiveness and anxiety in adult second language leaning: Looking at and through the diary studies. In H. Seliger & M. Long (Eds.), *Classroom-oriented research in second language acquisition* (pp. 67-102). Rowley: Mass Newbury House.

Brown, D. H. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching.* White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, Inc

Cao, Y. (2011). Comparison of Two Models of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. *Philippine ESL Journal*, 7, 73-93

Casado, M. A., & Dereshiwsky, M. I. (2001). Foreign language anxiety of university students. *College Student Journal, 35*(4), 539-551.

Chakrabarti, A. & Sengupta, M. (2012). Second Language Learning Anxiety and Its Effect on Achievement in the Language. *LANGUAGE IN INDIA*, 12:8, 50-78

Chang, G. B.Y. (1999). English learning anxiety—A comparison between junior and senior high school students. *The proceedings of the sixteenth conference on English teaching and learning in the Republic of China* (pp. 97-109). Taipei: The Crane Publishing Co., Ltd.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   156

Chan, D. Y. C. & Wu, G. C. (2004). A Study of Foreign Language Anxiety of EFL Elementary School Students in Taipei County. *Journal of National Taipei Teachers College,* 17 (2), 287-320.

Chen, H. (2002). *College students' English learning anxiety and their coping styles.* Southwest Normal University, unpublished M. A. dissertation.

Chen, M. C.& Lee, T.H. (2011). Emotion recognition and communication for reducing second-language speaking anxiety in a web-based one-to-one synchronous learning environment. *British Journal of Educational Technology, 42*(3), 417- 440.

Cheng, Y. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language writing anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals, 35*, 647-656.

Dewaele, J. M. (2002). Psychological and sociodemographic correlates of communicative anxiety in L2 and L3 production. *International Journal of Bilingualism* 6(1): 23-38.

Ganschow, L. & Sparks, R. (1996). Anxiety about foreign language learning among high school women. *Modern Language Journal, 80*(2), 199-212.

Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1972), *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning,* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House.

Gregersen, T. S., & Horwitz, E. K. (2002). Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious language learners' reactions to their own oral performance. *The Modern Language Journal, 86*, 562- 570.

Horwitz, E.K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112–126.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   157

Horwitz, E. K., M. Tallon & H. Luo (2010). Foreign language anxiety. In J. C. Cassady (ed.), *Anxiety in schools: The causes, consequences, and solutions for academic anxieties*. New York: Peter Lang.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, A. J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*. 70, 125-132.

Huang, H. (2008). *University EFL students' and their teachers' preferences for in-class activities and their relationships to the students' foreign language anxiety*. Unpublished mater thesis. Taiwan: Providence University.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis*. London: Longman.

Liao, Y. F. (1999). The effects of anxiety on Taiwanese EFL learners. *The proceedings of the Eighth international symposium on English teaching* (pp.453-63). Taipei: The Crane Publishing Co., Ltd.

Liu, M. (2006). Anxiety in Chinese EFL students at different proficiency levels, *System*, 34(3), 301-316.

MacIntyre, P. D. (1995). How does anxiety affect second language learning? A reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 90–99.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Anxiety and second language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. In E. K. Horwitz, & D. J. Young (Ed.), *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications* (pp. 41-54). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   158

Mesri, F. (2012). The Relationship between Gender and Iranian EFL Learners' Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences ,* 2(6),147-156.

Morris, L.W., Davis, M.A., and Hutchings, C.H. (1981). Cognitive and emotional components of anxiety: literature review and a revised worry-emotionality scale, *Journal of Educational Psychology,* 73(4), p. 541-555.

Na, Z. (2007). A Study of High School Students' English Learning Anxiety. *Asian EFL Journal*, 9 (3), 22-34.

Nahavandi, N. & Mukundan, J. (2012). Task-based language teaching from teachers' perspective. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 1 (6), 115-121.

Nahavandi, N. & Mukundan, J. (in press). Iranian EFL Engineering Students' Motivational Orientations towards English Language Learning along Gender and Further Education in Language Institutes. **International Journal of Linguistics.**

Ohata, K. (2005). Language anxiety from the teacher's perspective: Interviews with seven experienced ESL/EFL teachers. *J. of Lang. and Learning*, *3*(1):133-155.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (1999). Factors associated with foreign language anxiety. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 20, 217–239.

Palacios, L. M. (1998). *Foreign language anxiety and classroom environment: A study of Spanish university students*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Texas, Austin.

Rezazadeh, M., & Tavakoli, M. (2009). Investigating the relationship among test anxiety, gender, academic achievement and years of study: A case of Iranian EFL university students.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   159

English Language Teaching, *2(4),* 68-74. Retrieved from: www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/elt/article/view/4449/3789

Sadeghi, A.R. (2005). ESP in Iran: A transition from present state. In: G. R Kiany, and M. Khayyamdar, (Eds.), *Proceedings of the First National ESP/EAP Conference*, 2, Tehran.

Sadighi, F, Sahragard .R, & Jafari , M (2009). Listening Comprehension and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 3,137-152.

Samimy, R. K. (1994). *Teaching Japanese: Consideration of learner's affective variables*. Theory into Practice, 33(1), 29-33.

Sarason, I. G. (1984). Stress, anxiety, and cognitive interference: Reactions to tests. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46(4), 929-938.

Scovel, T. (1978). The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. *Language Learning*, 28, 129–142.

Skehan, P. (1989). *Individual differences in second- language learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

Spielberger, C. D. (1983). *Manual for the State Trait Anxiety Inventory*. CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Stroud, C. and L. Wee (2006). Anxiety and identity in the language classroom. *RELC Journal* 37(3): 299-307.

Talebinezhad, M.R., Aliakbari, M. (2002). Evaluation and justification of a paradigm shift in the current ELT model in Iran. *Linguistik online*, *10*(1), 21-28. Retrieved from file: www.linguistik-online.de/10_02/talebinezhadaliakbari.pdf

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   160

Tóth, Z. (2011), Foreign Language Anxiety and Advanced EFL Learners: An Interview Study, *WoPaLP*, 5, 39-57

Wang, Q. (2003). Language anxiety and classroom environment: from their relationship to teaching implication. *Journal of Northwest Normal University, 40*(6), 33-47.

Watson, D. & Friend, R. (1969). Measurement of social-evaluative anxiety. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology. 33*, 448-51.

Yan, J. X. & Horwitz, E.K. (2008). Learners' perceptions of how anxiety interacts with personal and instructional factors to influence their achievement in English: A qualitative analysis of EFL learners in China. *Language Learning, 58* (1), 151-183.

Young, D. J. (1990). An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. *Foreign Language Annals. 23*, 539-553.

Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a low-anxiety classroom environment: What does language anxiety research suggest? *Modern Language Journal*, *75*, 426-439.

==

Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Language and Humanities Education
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Malaysia
naemeh_nahavandi@yahoo.com

Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Department of Language and Humanities Education
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
Malaysia
jaya@educ.upm.edu.my, jayakaranmukundan@yahoo.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
13 : 1 January 2013
Naemeh Nahavandi, Ph.D. Candidate & Jayakaran Mukundan, Ph.D.
Foreign Language Learning Anxiety among Iranian EFL learners Along Gender and Different
Proficiency Levels   161