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Language Anxiety and its Influence on EFL Students' Oral Performance

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN.

Autor: Maldonado Vélez, Antonio Clotario

Director: Pinza Tapia, Eliana Ivanova, Mgs.

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Magíster.

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Autor: Maldonado Vélez Antonio Clotario

Cédula: 1104553159

Dedication

This work is dedicated to God who has always been my guide; to my family, especially to my parents who gave me all their support in the good and bad situations; to my best friends who were encouraging and motivating me to achieve the goals set in my life; and everyone who helped me in diverse ways to finish this study.

Thanks for being always with me, God bless you all.

Antonio

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Contents

Cover	i
Aprobación del director del trabajo de fin de titulación	ii
Declaración de autoría y cesión de derechos	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Contents	vi
List of tables	vii
Abstract	1
Resumen	2
Introduction	3
Chapter I: Literature review	6
Chapter II: Method	19
Chapter III: Result and discussion	21
Description, analysis, and interpretation of results	21
Conclusions	36
Recommendations	37
References	38
Annexes	40

List of tables

Table 1. Items related to fear of making mistakes in the foreign language.....	22
Table 2. Items related to the fear of being less competent than other students or being negatively evaluated by them	25
Table 3. Items related to the fear of not understanding all the language input.....	28
Table 4. Items related to negative beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom.....	31
Table 5. Items related to positive beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom.....	33

Abstract

The present study is focused on the influence of foreign language anxiety on EFL student's oral performance; for this purpose, the population sample was composed by thirty students of teens and youth levels from an English language institute in the city of Loja. In order to gather data, one questionnaire for students was applied; moreover, additional information was obtained through class observations and interviews. The data obtained from the students' survey was represented and described using the quantitative method. Moreover, it was analyzed qualitatively making a comparison with the results of the observations, interviews, and the most essential literature that was previously investigated. The results of the study showed that language anxiety affects the majority of students, making them incapable to participate in oral activities during class and becoming less competent speakers than the rest of students. Furthermore, this inability to participate in oral activities cause students to have low grades in class in comparison to their classmates who do not suffer this problem. However, the results also show that students' motivation is not likely to be affected by foreign language anxiety; and that instructional' factors like class activities help students to reduce anxiety in class.

Keywords: Foreign language anxiety, EFL students, influence, oral performance, motivation.

Resumen

El presente estudio investigo la influencia de la ansiedad frente a la lengua extranjera en el desempeño oral de los estudiantes de inglés; con este propósito se seleccionó treinta estudiantes de niveles “teens” y “youth” de un instituto de idiomas en la ciudad de Loja. Para obtener esta información se aplicó un cuestionario a los estudiantes; además se adquirió información adicional a través de observaciones de clase y entrevistas. LA información obtenida del cuestionario fue representada cuantitativamente, detallada y analizada en referencia con los resultados de las observaciones de clase, entrevistas y la literatura más relevante que fue previamente investigada. Los resultados del presente estudio demostraron que la ansiedad frente a la lengua extranjera afecta a un gran número de estudiantes, haciendo que estos sean incapaces de participar en actividades orales durante clase y volviéndose hablantes menos competentes que el resto de estudiantes. Además, esta incapacidad de participar en actividades orales causa que los estudiantes tengan bajo rendimiento académico en comparación a sus compañeros que no presentan este problema. Por otro lado, los resultados también mostraron que la motivación de los estudiantes no tiende a ser afectada por la ansiedad frente a la lengua extranjera; y que factores de enseñanza como actividades de clase ayudan a los estudiantes a reducir esta ansiedad.

Palabras clave: ansiedad, lengua extranjera, estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera, influencia, desempeño oral, motivación.

Introduction

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), state that various people express to have a “mental block” that makes them unable to learn a foreign language even if they are strongly motivated, and are good learners in other situations. Then, what makes these people unable to achieve their goals when learning a foreign language? Sometimes, people tend to have a reaction that makes them incapable to have a correct performance in a foreign class; this reaction is called Language Anxiety. According to Spielberger (1970), it is a mental feeling of tenseness, worry, and stress which is related to an activation of the autonomic nervous system. This tension makes students of any age feel stressed when speaking, reading or writing in a foreign language because they do not feel comfortable with it.

The effects of this psychological problem that affects several students are numerous. The most relevant are low motivation and poor performance in class. Horwitz, et al. (1986) claim that students who feel stressed and anxious usually tend to forget everything during a testing situation like a speaking activity. Moreover, Krashen (1980, cited by Horwitz, et al., 1986) states that foreign language anxiety can influence dramatically in students motivation. This occurs because, due to foreign language anxiety, they will not understand target language messages and their language acquisition might not progress in the same way as their peers. Also, they will not acquire the necessary fluency to speak with others in the target language. This poor performance in the target language can make that students get low grades in class, making them feel unmotivated to continue learning the foreign language. These characteristics of foreign language anxiety are shown by the majority of English language learners in the city of Loja, especially in teenage and adult students. It affects them emotionally, making them feel unable to speak a foreign language. Consequently,

they feel less motivated to learn the language and students do not improve their English in a way they expected to do.

Taking into consideration the reality of the students in this city and the consequences that produce to have foreign language anxiety, this study is conducted with the aim to clarify how language anxiety affects students; for this reason, the main purpose of this study is to know the influence of students' language anxiety in oral performance through the following questions: What are the psychological factors that may contribute to language anxiety of EFL students? What other factors may contribute to language anxiety of EFL students? What are the academic consequences derived from language anxiety in EFL students' oral performance? What factors help students to reduce anxiety in class?

In order to get a better understanding of this psychological problem that affects foreign language learners, some studies were considered. They show evidences of the different ways language anxiety affects students. Wörde (2003) conducted a study in order to identify the factors that may contribute to language anxiety and the ones which may reduce anxiety when learning a second language. The results revealed that the most frequent causes which contribute to language anxiety include teacher factors, social factors, class activities and language testing.

Another study conducted by He (2014) had the purpose of investigating the reasons leading to Chinese students' foreign language speaking anxiety, focused on the main problem that this nation has in terms of communication with others in the target language. The author concluded that one of the main causes that lead the participants to have language anxiety is related to the teaching traditions in the country. This creates shy students who prefer not to participate in spoken tasks instead of making mistakes that they can correct for future tasks.

The study made by Trang, Baldauf, & Moni (2013) had the main purpose to identify how anxiety developed in students of English as a foreign language, paying attention to students' feelings towards the foreign language as they learned it. The authors discovered that the participants learned to have language anxiety due to teachers' factors, class environment, student-teacher relationship and assessment. It was also noticed that the awareness of the importance of English was a major cause for them to continue learning the language in spite of all the factors that affected them negatively.

The results of the present study shows the influence of foreign language anxiety in EFL students' oral performance and how can affect students in different ways. Also, they illustrate the factors that help to increase language anxiety and the ones which help to reduce it. Likewise, this study represents a source of significant information for teachers and principals and everyone interested in learning about how language anxiety affects students and how to help students that have this psychological problem. Lastly, these results function as evidence for future studies.

The present study will benefit teachers because they will be able to detect students with foreign language anxiety and to make changes in their teaching in order to have a better class environment. Also, this will help students in a way that they will be able to understand this psychological problem and to find possible solutions to overcome this anxiety so they can become better speakers.

Regarding the limitations, two were considered; first, few classes were observed (four classes); and second, few students were interviewed (10 students). In order to avoid these limitations, future researchers should observe more classes and interview more students to get more realistic results.

Chapter I: Literature Review

This literature review is a compilation of the most important information related to foreign language anxiety. It describes how this issue is originated and the main effects of it on foreign language learners. Also, this review presents some previous studies which illustrate some important facts about foreign language anxiety.

Affective filter hypothesis

The affective filter hypothesis created by Krashen (1985) is an important factor for foreign language learning. Razfar, Licón, and Chval (2011) assume that there is a mental filter which can influence the way learners acquire a foreign language. The affective filter will have a positive or negative effect in the way a person learn a foreign or second language. For example, when students are under a situation in which they feel stressed, this filter will create a mental block that might make students incapable to learn the foreign language in the same way as their classmates. Oxford (1996, cited by Chin, 2008, p.115) states that “the affective side of the learner is probably one of the biggest influences on language learning success or failure.” If learners’ feelings towards the foreign language are negative; if they feel unmotivated, stressed, or unconfident to learn a language, “the affective filter will act as a barrier to the learning process” (Du, 2009, p.162).

This hypothesis is of great importance for teachers because it helps them to understand the mental processes to acquire a foreign language. Razfar, Licón, and Chval (2011), also state that teachers have to be aware of the affective factors that affect students’ foreign language learning in order to create an appropriate environment for students and not generate negative feelings in them that might obstruct their process of language learning.

Regarding the affective filter hypothesis, Krashen (1985, cited by Du, 2009) has mentioned that there are four important factors that affect the way students learn a foreign language in a positive or negative form. These factors are motivation, attitude, language anxiety, and self-confidence.

Motivation is the first and the biggest factor that affect students. Du (2009) affirms that this factor is highly important for foreign language learners. Motivation refers to the desire that students have to learn a new language and the satisfaction that it creates when they produce the new language correctly. Gardner and Lambert (1972, cited by Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p.63) state that there are two types of motivation, instrumental and integrative. Instrumental motivation occurs when people have practical goals to learn a language, while integrative motivation takes place when people learn a language for personal growth or for cultural reasons. Although these two types of motivation seem different, they are important to success in foreign language learning.

Regarding attitude, The Cobuild English for Learners Dictionary (2014), states that “your attitude to something is the way you think and feel about it.” In other words, attitude refers to the perspective people have towards a language and how it will affect the way people learn this language. If students are aware of the importance of learning a language and they have positive feelings for it, so it will be easier for them to learn the language.

Another factor that affects the affective filter is language anxiety. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993, cited by Du, 2009, p.163) explains that language anxiety is “the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second or foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient.” This fear to use a foreign language might create a barrier to learn it widely because students will feel afraid to continue learning a language which they are not confident to use in different contexts.

Self-confidence is considered as another factor that affects students learning process. Du (2006, p.164) argues that “L2 acquirers’ personality factors relate a lot to the learning effect. Among the personality factors, self-confidence is the most important one”. Self-confidence is closely related to the students’ success when learning a foreign language. Students who have high self-confidence are able to participate and practice the target language rather than the ones who lack self-confidence.

From these four factors that affect the way students learn a language, Foreign Language Anxiety is widely important for this research study. For this reason, it is needed to have a wide knowledge of this psychological factor that affects the language learning process.

Definition of foreign language anxiety

When a foreign language learner is afraid to go to class, have problems in accomplishing simple tasks in class, or is not able to perform in class in the same way as his or her classmates, it is clear that the student has learning problems. These issues in students make teachers try to find possible causes. What they find is that there are some affective factors inside students’ behavior in class and one of them is language anxiety. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p.128) state that 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 (foreign) language learning process”. Similarly, Clement (1980, cited by Trang, 2012) defined foreign language anxiety as a complex theory that involves all the psychological factors that affect language learners such as feelings, self-esteem, and self-confidence. In other words, foreign language anxiety deals with the emotions of the learner and how these emotions affect the process of learning a foreign language. Macintyre and Gardner (1994, cited by Trang, 2012, p.69) states that language anxiety is “the feeling of tension

and apprehension specifically associated with second or foreign language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning, or the worry and negative emotional reaction arousal when learning or using a second or foreign language”. This means that this psychological issue occurs mostly when students have to produce the foreign language in different ways, making them feel frustrated and stressed to do so, thus creating a barrier that will make them feel that they are unable to understand and communicate in different forms using the target language.

Foreign language anxiety differs from other types of anxiety that people mostly face during their life. Horwitz, et al (1986) argue that when anxiety is limited to the language learning situation, it falls into the category of specific anxiety reactions. Psychologists use the term *specific anxiety* to differ people that feel stressed and anxious in all situations from people who feel anxious in just specific tasks like communicating or reading in the target language. This means that foreign language anxiety is not a general problem that affect the whole language learning process. It affects the way students use the target language in real situations with different people.

Types of language anxiety

Regarding the types of language anxiety, Horwitz, et al (1986, p.127), state that “Because foreign language anxiety concerns performance evaluation within an academic and social context, it is useful to draw parallels between it and three related performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.” These three performance anxieties are the types of anxiety that learners usually have and that affect negatively to the language learning process.

Regarding communication apprehension, Akbari and Sadeghi (2013) state that this occurs when learners are afraid to communicate with other people. This might lead to difficulty to express ideas in public, problems to understand spoken language and to

make themselves understood, and being quiet during the language learning process in class. This type of anxiety makes students unable to produce the language in spoken way, which is a very important feature in the language learning process.

Test anxiety refers to a “psychological condition in which a person experiences distress before, during, or after an exam or other assessment to such an extent that this anxiety causes poor performance or interferes with normal learning” (Du, 2006, p.163). Test anxiety arises when learners are afraid of exams, quizzes and other activities used to evaluate their performance in the target language. Akbari and Sadeghi (2013) mention that this fear might affect their motivation negatively because they worry about the critics from other people and the reactions that these people have when they make something wrong, making students reluctant to participate in activities that involve performing in public.

Fear of negative evaluation is closely related to test anxiety. Du (2006) mentions that this type of anxiety occurs when students are overly concerned with their classmates’ opinions about something that they did. When students have this kind of issue, they tend to avoid situations in which they have to perform a task in order to be evaluated. They do this because they do not want to have unfavorable impressions and bad opinions about the way they perform a task.

Horwitz, et al (1986) state that, even though these three types of anxiety are crucial in the language learning process of students, communication apprehension is much more relevant than the others. They argue that this shyness to speak in class and in public makes students feel that they are controlled by their teachers and they are not acting by themselves, thus affecting their self-esteem and creating a barrier that will separate them from the rest of the class. They also mention that this kind of anxiety affects mostly adult learners. They have high self-perceptions that might be altered

when they find out that they are not able to communicate in the target language in the same way as in their mother tongue. This makes their self-esteem vulnerable because they feel like they cannot express themselves and they feel forced to remain silence during the language learning process.

Causes of language anxiety

Regarding the causes that contribute to foreign language anxiety in learners, Al-Saraj (2014) explains that they are not fully understood. This means that there are not specific causes that lead to foreign language anxiety in learners. The author mentioned before also states that “foreign language anxiety can be provoked by many situations, such as not knowing the meaning of a word and speaking in front of peers” this cause is the one that affects most of the foreign language learners. This is due to the fact that they do not have a wide knowledge of the foreign language so they might not be able to express in the same way as in their mother tongue. This fear to say something bad in front of the class makes students reluctant to participate in most of the activities that involve speaking. Horwitz, et al (1986) indicate that the beliefs of some students might make them become anxious. These students believe that they do not have to talk until they have learned everything about the foreign language. This might create frustration in them because they are afraid to make mistakes in class or in public.

Another factor mentioned by Horwitz, et al (1986) that might contribute to language anxiety is the age of the students. Teenage and adult students, especially adults “typically perceive themselves as reasonably intelligent, socially-adept individuals, sensitive to different socio-cultural mores”. These beliefs of superiority create a challenge in students when they realize that the foreign language overpass their wide knowledge, Thus making them feel stressed and anxious to produce the language in spoken form and making mistakes during the process.

Other six potential causes identified by Young (1991, cited by Zheng, 2008, p.4) are stated in terms of the learner, the teacher, and the instructional practice. These six sources of language anxiety are “(a) personal and inter- personal anxiety, (b) learner beliefs about language learning, (c) instructor beliefs about language teaching, (d) instructor-learner interactions, (e) classroom procedures, and (f) language testing”. These six potential causes are related one to each other and to the affective factors mentioned at the beginning because they can get affected by any of this causes and create a mental wall, making hard for the learners to understand and produce the target language in the same way as they understand and produce their mother tongue. Also, all of them are involved in the language learning process during class.

Although some authors have established some possible causes that lead to foreign language anxiety. There is no deep research which states that they are the unique causes or which mentions that there are more possible causes for this psychological issue.

Effects of foreign language anxiety

Related to the causes that make students arise language anxiety, it is also difficult to determine specific effects of foreign language anxiety on learners. Al-Saraj (2014) explains that the effects of foreign language anxiety are not fully understood maybe because all humans react in a different way regarding the same situation. Horwitz, et al (1986, cited by Al-Saraj, 2014, p.259); Young (1990, cited by Al-Saraj, 2014, p.259) state that “anxiety in foreign language learning manifests primarily in listening to and speaking in the foreign language”. That is, two of the most frequent issues that foreign language anxiety create in learners are problems when they try to use the language in spoken way and problems when they try to listen to conversations in the target language.

Regarding the use of a foreign language in a spoken way, Horwitz, et al. (1986) claim that students do not feel stressed when they have to perform drillings or short conversations with the guidance of the teacher, but they start to feel anxious when they have to perform activities in which they have to use the language in spoken way during other situations like role-play activities and the like. They also mention that these anxious students suffer from mental blocks during normal speaking activities that they have to perform without their teacher's help; they are less confident and tend to avoid participation on these activities, becoming more and more passive in classroom over the time. Likewise, Price (1991, cited by Al-Saraj, 2014, p.259) mentions that the most frequent effect of language anxiety in students is that they are afraid to talk in front of their classmates. Students usually feel stressed because they do not want to be laughed at or they "would make fools of themselves when speaking the target language".

Another negative effect that foreign language anxiety has is related to testing situations. Horwitz, et al. (1986) claim that students who feel stressed and anxious for the content of the test usually tend to forget everything during it. Also, due to students' nervousness, they tend to answer the items of the test wrong and remember the correct answers after the exam. Krashen (1980, cited by Horowitz, et al., 1986) states that foreign language anxiety can influence dramatically in students motivation. This occurs because, due to foreign language anxiety, they will not understand target language messages and their language acquisition might not progress in the same way as their peers. Also, they will not acquire the necessary fluency to speak with others in the target language. This poor performance in the target language can make that students get low grades in class, making them feel unmotivated to continue learning the foreign language.

The effects of foreign language anxiety might be different depending on their phase of learning according to Al-Saraj (2014). The author state that all students, even academic ones, has or had faced problems with anxiety when they were in the process of learning a foreign language. It is just a process that begins with being afraid of anything about the language because it is new, and ends with students that have overcome these problems in order to be successful foreign language speakers. It just depends on the strategies used by them and by teachers in order to solve this problem.

Regarding the most frequent causes and effects of foreign language anxiety, some previous studies has shown important information that helps people have a better understanding of how they are created and how people can overcome this problem. The following studies presented below show that language anxiety is a global issue that students and teachers should be aware in order to know how to deal with this psychological problem.

One of these studies was conducted by Wörde (2003) with the objective of identifying the factors that may contribute to language anxiety and the ones which may reduce anxiety when learning a second language, in order to have a deeper understanding of the role that language anxiety plays in learning a second or foreign language. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in order to analyze students' opinions, beliefs, experiences, and feelings towards this phenomenon. The author used note-taking and surveying techniques, tests and interviews as tools to gather information from 15 participants.

After analyzing the information, it was discovered that 73% of the participants have medium levels of language anxiety and 34% were highly anxious. Moreover, the interviewees had faced extremely negative experiences in their classes. In the conclusion section the author states that the most frequent causes that contribute to

language anxiety include teacher factors, social factors, class activities and language testing. As the population had medium and high levels of language anxiety, they were able to give suggestions for other people with the same problem. As a positive factor of the study, the population felt better after learning that they are not the only ones that face this problem; this helped them to overcome language anxiety with the help of someone who truly understands them.

Another research made by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) had the main purpose of building a tool that helps future researchers to identify people with language anxiety and to measure the level of language anxiety that this people might have, in order to have a deeper knowledge of language anxiety and the causes that contribute to this problem. The authors used qualitative method in order to analyze students' feelings, beliefs, and points of view towards this phenomenon. Note-taking technique and interviews were used as tools to collect information from 78 students who volunteered to participate in this study.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the authors were able to create the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*, which is a test that help researchers to identify people with foreign or second language anxiety and help to measure the level they are in. The test was applied to the participants and discovered that most of them had faced language anxiety at some point of their life as foreign language learners. In conclusion, they were able to create one of the most important tools for researchers on foreign language anxiety; moreover, they were the first to determine an exact number of people who face this problem and the first to measure the level of anxiety that each participant had.

The study made by Trang, Baldauf, & Moni (2013) had the main purpose to identify how anxiety developed in students of English as a foreign language, paying

attention to students' feelings towards the foreign language as they learned it. The authors used qualitative method in order to analyze students' feelings towards the foreign language. Autobiographical and surveying techniques, tests and autobiographies were used as tools to gather information from 419 participants.

First, the authors applied the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* test to the 419 students, finding that 288 of them have medium and high levels of language anxiety. After that, they invited 95 students who got higher levels of language anxiety, and 49 of them responded positively. These participants were asked to write an autobiography focusing on their feelings about learning English as a foreign language from the time they began to learn it.

After analyzing the 49 autobiographies, the authors discovered that the participants learned to have language anxiety due to teachers' factors, class environment, student-teacher relationship and assessment. It was also noticed that the awareness of the importance of English was a major cause for them to continue learning the language in spite of all the factors that affected them negatively. In conclusion, the authors were able to find the causes that lead to foreign language anxiety in students and the factors that help them to overcome this problem. They also conclude that using autobiographies as an approach to collect data is of great importance to this study because it was easier to analyze the data received in form of autobiographies and they were able to analyze real stories and to conceptualize these stories in order to affirm some theories about this psychological issue.

Another study conducted by Al-Saraj (2014) focused on examining the experiences of female college students learning English as a foreign language. The author used a multimethod approach in order to analyze students' perspectives, experiences and behavior toward the foreign language. Note-taking and surveying

techniques, questionnaires, observations and interviews were used as tools to gather information from ten participants who reported to have medium and high levels of language anxiety.

After analyzing the information from the observations, interviews, and questionnaires, the author discovered that the causes that lead the participants to have language anxiety were closely related to other previous studies. There were just one cause that was different due to sociocultural factors. Also, the effects of foreign language anxiety on the participants were mostly problems in speaking and understanding messages in the foreign language, which is similar to other studies about the research problem. In conclusion, it was determined that some causes that contribute to language anxiety and some effect that this problem create in students are more a less global. This means that most of the students face the same factors when they have this issue. Although, some factors might change because of the sociocultural factors of the participants; this is why future researchers need to search the causes that lead to this problem in order to see if there are different and new factors that might help others.

A study made by He (2014) had the purpose of investigating the reasons leading to Chinese students' foreign language speaking anxiety, focused on the main problem that this nation has in terms of communication with others in the target language. The author used a cross-validated methods in order to analyze students' perspectives towards the foreign language. Note-taking and surveying techniques, questionnaires, and interviews were used as tools to gather information from 332 participants at two colleges in China.

After analyzing the information from the interviews, and questionnaires; it was discovered that the awareness of foreign language speaking anxiety and its effects on their learning achievement works as a trigger to help them reduce this anxiety. This

research concluded showing that one of the main causes that lead the participants to have language anxiety is related to the teaching tradition in China. In there, people do not communicate in the foreign language until they think they know everything about it. This cause creates shy students who prefer to not participate in spoken tasks instead of making mistakes that they can correct for future tasks. Also, most foreign language teachers think that their students do not participate in class due to lack of motivation and self-esteem, however, the main causes are beyond that affective factors.

Chapter II: Method

Setting and participants

The current study was carried out in an English language institute from the city of Loja. The population sample was selected from four classrooms of 15 students or less; as a result, thirty students from “Teens” and “Youth” programs of the institution were part of this study as participants.

Procedures

In order to develop this study, the first step was to gather the most relevant information about foreign language anxiety, the causes that lead to language anxiety, and effects of foreign language anxiety in students. Furthermore, five previous studies about the research topic were selected. All this information was organized in order to have enough scientific information that would help during the research process.

The methods used in this study were qualitative and quantitative. The techniques used were survey, note-taking, and observations. The instruments used to collect data were observation sheets, with ten statements related to students reactions during class, questionnaires for the interviews that included thirteen questions related to foreign language anxiety, and a test named as “The *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope in 1986.

When the data collection started, the observations were applied first. This technique was used to write down relevant details observed during class, and to see which students show high levels of language anxiety during class in order to interview them in the future.

After applying the observations, The *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (FLCAS) survey was applied. Students had to grade each statement in a range

from one to five, being one “totally agree”, two “agree”, three “not agree neither disagree”, four “disagree”, and five “totally disagree”.

Afterwards, taking into account the performance of some students during the observations and the information gathered from the surveys; ten students who showed the highest levels of foreign language anxiety in class were selected for the interviews. This interview was used to get deeper information about the psychological problem that these students have. Also, it was used to determine which factors help students to reduce their anxiety in class.

Subsequently, the thirty six items from the survey were tabulated by counting the participants’ responses to each one of the items, in order to get a percentage of each one of their ranks. During the tabulation process, the items were arranged into five groups taking into account aspects that relate them in order to have a deeper analysis of the results.

The analysis was done by arguing each question of the survey with the information obtained from the observations of classrooms and interviews; and were sustained by the most important literature which was previously investigated. This was done with the purpose to get an adequate amount of information to answer the specific questions of the study about the factors (psychological and others) that may contribute to language anxiety of EFL students, the academic consequences derived from language anxiety in EFL students’ oral performance, and the factors that help students to reduce anxiety in class; consequently, the aim to know how foreign language anxiety affects students’ oral performance was reached.

Chapter III: Result and Discussion

Description, Analysis, and Interpretation of Results

This section includes a quantitative and qualitative description of the results that were gathered during this study, along with a detailed the analysis and interpretation of them. In order to do this analysis, the 36 items were organized in groups taking into consideration their similarities to have a wider analysis of the results.

Each one of the items from the survey contains five ranks stating five feelings towards them. Rank 1 reflecting a feeling of strongly agreement, rank 2 showing agreement, rank 3 that represents a feeling of not agreeing neither disagreeing to the item, 4 showing disagreement, and rank 5 illustrating a strongly disagreement to the item. To make a contrast between the positive and negative feelings toward the items from the survey, the data from the agreement (one and two) and disagreement (four and five) ranks are put together. The data for the neutral rank (three) is not taken into consideration in the analysis. The results of the class observations and interviews are used as data to argue with the statistical results of the students' survey. Moreover, the information of the literature review is used to support the results found this study.

Table 1

Items related to fear of making mistakes in the foreign language

	Totally agree		Agree		Not agree neither disagree		Disagree		Totally disagree		Total	Total %
Fear to make mistakes in the foreign language	1	%	2	%2	3	%3	4	%4	5	%5	30	100
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3	10	13	43,3	6	20	7	23,3	1	3,3	30	100
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	8	26,7	8	26,7	9	30	1	3,3	4	13,3	30	100
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	2	6,7	11	36,6	6	20	5	16,7	6	20	30	100
I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	6	20	10	33,3	3	10	10	33,3	1	3,3	30	100
I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	6	20	11	36,7	6	20	5	16,7	2	6,7	30	100
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	5	16,7	10	33,3	5	16,7	6	20	4	13,3	30	100
I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	6	20	9	30	5	16,7	10	33,3	0	0,0	30	100
I am usually at ease during oral tests in my language class.	2	6,7	11	36,7	8	26,7	8	26,7	1	3,3	30	100
I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	4	13,3	8	26,7	10	33,3	7	23,3	1	3,3	30	100

Author: Antonio Maldonado
Source: Student's questionnaire

The results of table one show that the majority of students are afraid to make mistakes in class. The percentage of students that agree they do not feel sure of themselves when speaking in the target language is 53%, while 27% disagree with this item. Similarly, 53% of the population recognize they tremble when they know that they are going to be called on in language class, although 16% do not agree with this item. Likewise, this fear of making mistakes makes 43% of students get nervous and confused when they are speaking in their language class, even though 26% state that they do not feel the same way during this situation. In addition, in spite the fact that 36% of the population studied do not feel afraid that their language teacher is ready to correct every mistake they make, 56% of them admit they have this feeling in class. In like manner, 56% of students get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which they haven't prepared in advance, while 23% of them disagree with this detail. Additionally, their fear of talking without preparation makes 53% of students panic when this situation occurs, while 33% of them do not feel this fear in class. Moreover, despite the fact that 33% of students do not worry about making mistakes in language class, 50% of students agree with this item.

These reactions were shown during the class observations; in which students started to show signs of stress during oral activities like stammer, sweating, hand shaking, etc. Furthermore, during the interviews students mentioned that they feel nervous when they have to talk in front of the class, especially when they are not prepared to do it because they do not want to be corrected by their teacher or fooled by their classmates. What students prefer is to have written activities rather than oral ones.

However, students who recognize that they are usually at ease during oral tests in their language class is 43%, while 30% of them do not feel in the same way. Similarly, despite the fact that 26% of students do not feel confident when speaking in

foreign language class, 43% of students state that they feel confidence while speaking in the foreign language. As expressed by the students during the interviews, they have these positive reactions especially when the teacher creates activities that are of their interest or when they have a high confidence with the teacher and classmates; leading them to not be afraid of making mistakes during class. Similarly, the results of the class observations show that students are usually afraid of making mistakes. However, students do not feel in the same way when they have a good class environment and a good relationship with their teacher and classmates.

These results are similar to the ones found in the research study conducted by Wörde (2003); wherein was stated that the most frequent causes that lead to language anxiety are teacher factors, like the fear of being corrected by the teacher; social factors, as students' anxiety of being criticized by their own classmates; and class activities that might not be interesting for students.

Table 2

Items related to the fear of being less competent than other students or being negatively evaluated by them.

	Totally agree		Agree		Not agree neither disagree		Disagree		Totally disagree		Total	Total %
Fear of being less competent than other students or being negatively evaluated by them	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%		
I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	1	3,33	11	36,7	8	26,7	7	23,3	3	10	30	100
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	6	20	10	33,3	6	20	2	6,7	6	20	30	100
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	6	20	8	26,7	6	20	4	13,3	6	20	30	100
I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	2	6,7	6	20,0	4	13,3	10	33,3	8	26,7	30	100
In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	8	26,7	10	33,3	5	16,7	4	13,3	3	10	30	100
Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	4	13,3	9	30	5	16,7	5	16,7	7	23,3	30	100
During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	5	16,7	5	16,7	13	43,3	4	13,3	3	10	30	100
Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	6	20	10	33,3	3	10	7	23,3	4	13,3	30	100
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	0	0,00	7	23,3	14	46,7	8	26,7	1	3,33	30	100

Author: Antonio Maldonado

Source: Student's questionnaire

The results of table two demonstrates that a big number of students feel less skilled when speaking in the target language than their classmates. Forty percent of the students admit that they feel their classmates speak the foreign language better than them while 33% disagree with this item. In like manner, 53% of them agree they are afraid that the other students will laugh at them when speaking the foreign language, although 26% of them do not share this feeling. Likewise, 46% of students feel embarrassed to volunteer answers in their language class, while 23% disagree with this item. Also, even though 26% of students feel very self-conscious about speaking in the foreign language in front of other students, 60% of them admit that they do not feel the same during this situation.

These reactions make students feel afraid to communicate with their classmates or with the teacher during class. Results show that 43% of students get so nervous when they have to speak in class that they forget what they were supposed to say, although 40% disagree with this detail. That is why some of them prefer to stay quiet during the class. Moreover, these reactions affect students' grades negatively, especially in class participation and oral tests. During the interview, students representing the 60% of the population agreed that even if they get prepared for language class, they feel anxious about it, while 23% do not share this feeling. This anxiety makes students forget everything and get low grades in tests and class participations because they are afraid that their classmates start laughing when they make mistakes.

The fear of speaking in class during oral activities makes 33% of students find themselves thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course, while 23% of them do not share this reaction during class. These reactions were also shown during the class observations of this research study in which anxious students tended to play with objects they have nearby or talking to their classmates in order to get rid of the stress caused by their fear

to speak in class. As a consequence, the lack of participation during class makes 53% students agree that language class moves so quickly that causes them to worry about getting left behind, even though 36% are discordant with this statement. It could be demonstrated during the class observations that anxious students who were afraid to participate in class were less likely to understand the topic because they felt afraid to ask questions and to clarify doubts. This also affects their grading because they keep uncertainties that will affect their development in other tasks.

On the other hand, 30% of the population disagree that they keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than they are, although 23% recognize that they feel this way. During the interviews some students mentioned that they are better at writing about a topic rather than speaking about it. This means that students' self-confidence is affected just when they have to speak in front of the class.

The research conducted by Horwitz, et al (1986) shares similar results. In their analysis, the authors mention that the majority of the surveyed people have fear of being less competent than other students and being negatively evaluated by them. Moreover, they state that this fear makes students skip class, get stressed by over studying topics, seek refuge in the last row of the class to avoid humiliation or being called during class, and focusing on other things that are not related to the class to relieve stress. This cause students to have poor performance in class and to become less proficient than their classmates.

Table 3

Items related to the fear of not understanding all the language input.

	Totally agree		Agree		Not agree neither disagree		Disagree		Totally disagree		Total	Total %
Fear of not understanding all language input.	1	%	2	%2	3	%3	4	%4	5	%5	Total	Total %
I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	4	13,3	9	30	7	23,3	6	20	4	13,3	30	100
I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	6	20	11	36,7	6	20	5	16,7	2	6,7	30	100
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	7	23,3	10	33,3	7	23,3	5	16,7	1	3,3	30	100
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	3	10	6	20	11	36,7	6	20	4	13,3	30	100
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	0	0	5	16,7	12	40	4	13,3	9	30	30	100

Author: Antonio Maldonado
 Source: Student's questionnaire

The results of table three show that a big number of students are afraid of not understanding all language input. Even though 23% of the learners do not get upset when they do not understand what the teacher is correcting, 43% of students agree with this item. Moreover, 56% of the population studied get nervous when they do not understand every word the language teacher says, although 23% of them do not share this feeling toward the item. These reactions make 56% students get frustrated during class, leading them to feel their heart pounding when they are going to be called on in language class, in spite of the 20% of the population studied who disagree with this statement. These reactions caused severe consequences to students that were perceived during the observations. One of these consequences perceived was that students who were afraid to ask questions used to make mistakes than other active students did not commit. This caused students to get bad reactions from their classmates and become afraid to speak in class.

In contrast, the results of the study show that 33% of students agree that they do not feel frightened when they do not understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language, while 30% of them agree with this item. In like manner, 43% of students do not get confused when they study for a language test, although 16% of them feel confused even if they study for a test several times. During the interviews, some students mentioned that they use to read and analyze the topic before the class so they get less nervous and more prepared to talk in class. This causes students to feel less confused and frightened when they do not understand something. This strategy is used by some of the participants and that is why they feel neutral towards these two reactions from the survey.

The reactions found during the data collection are also called communication apprehension. It is part of the performance anxieties stated by Akbari and Sadeghi (2013). These authors mention that it occurs when learners are afraid to communicate with other

people. This might lead to difficulty to express ideas in public, problems to understand spoken language and to make themselves understood, and being quiet during the language learning process in class. This type of anxiety makes students unable to produce the language in spoken way, which is a very important feature in the language learning process.

Table 4

Items related to negative beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom.

	Totally agree		Agree		Not agree neither disagree		Disagree		Totally disagree		Total	Total %
Negative Beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom.	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%		
I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	3	10	6	20	6	20	7	23	8	26,7	30	100
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	5	16,7	2	6,7	8	26,7	8	26,7	7	23,3	30	100
I often feel like not going to my language class.	5	16,7	4	13,3	5	16,7	6	20	10	33,3	30	100
I am not a good EFL student.	2	6,7	6	20	6	20	9	30	7	23,3	30	100
I hate to study English.	0	0	4	13,3	3	10	8	26,7	15	50	30	100

Author: Antonio Maldonado
Source: Student's questionnaire

The results of table four demonstrates that a big amount of students do not have negative beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning. Forty nine percent of students do not feel tense in their language class than in their other classes while 30% of students feel like this during language class. Also, even though 23% of students feel overwhelmed by the number of rules students have to learn to speak a foreign language, 50% of them disagree with this item. Moreover, 53% of students do not feel like not going to their language class, in spite of the 30% of students who share this feeling. Likewise, 53% of students do not think they are bad EFL learners and like to study English while 26% of them agree with this item. Similarly, even if 13% of the population studies stated that they hate to study English, 76% have positive feelings towards the target language.

During the interviews, the participants mentioned that they have a specific purpose to study English. This motivates students to continue learning English even if they have problems when speaking in the target language. Also, they are aware of the importance of learning English in this society and that is why they continue learning it. Likewise, the fact that they have problems when speaking in English does not mean they are less motivated than the other students.

As it was mentioned by Horwitz, et al (1986), Language Anxiety is not general, this means that it does not affect students in all their skills. The participants of this research have communication anxiety, but their writing and reading skills are equal to their classmates' skills. This makes students keep their motivation high.

Table 5

Items related to positive beliefs and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom.

	Totally agree		Agree		Not agree neither disagree		Disagree		Totally disagree		Total	Total
Positive beliefs and feelings	1	%	2	%2	3	%3	4	%4	5	%5	%	%
When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed	7	23,3	6	20	11	36,7	4	13,3	2	6,7	100	30
I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	10	33,3	6	20	5	16,7	4	13,3	5	16,7	100	30
I want to improve my English skills.	25	83,3	3	10	0	0	0	0	2	6,7	100	30
I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	25	83,3	3	10	0	0	1	3,3	1	3,3	100	30
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	16	53,3	8	26,7	0	0	5	16,7	1	3,3	100	30
I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	4	13,3	8	26,7	10	33,3	8	26,7	0	0	100	30
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	3	10	10	33,3	11	36,7	3	10	3	10	100	30
I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	3	10	10	33,3	12	40,0	2	6,7	3	10	100	30

Author: Antonio Maldonado
Source: Student's questionnaire

The results of table five show that students have positive beliefs and feelings towards foreign language learning. On the one hand, 20% of the participants do not feel sure and relaxed in the foreign language class, while 43% agree with this item. Moreover, 30% of the learners feel pressure to prepare well for class, even though 53% do not share this pressure in EFL classes. On the other hand, 93% of students have a strongly agreement with the item “I want to improve my English skills”, although 6% disagree with it. In the same manner, 93% of the participants worry about the consequences of failing their foreign language class while 6% do not worry about it. Similarly, 80% of students do not have problems with taking more English classes, while 20% disagree with this statement. These positive beliefs and feelings toward the foreign language make 40% of students not feel nervous to speak in the foreign language with native speakers, although 26% of the population feel anxious about it. In like manner, 43% of students think they would feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language while 20% do not share this feeling. Moreover, even though 16% of students understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes because they have negative beliefs towards the language, 43% of them do not share the same belief of their classmates.

During the interviews, the participants of this research study mentioned that English is a highly important language and that is the reason they continue learning it. This shows that almost all anxious students share the same motivation in spite of their communication problems and their anxiety to speak in class activities. Moreover, students are aware that making mistakes is part of the process of learning a new language; during the class observations, teachers always explain students that it is OK to make mistakes because it is a new language for them. This is also mentioned by the

students during the interviews. They state that teacher's advice makes students feel less stressed during class.

The research study made by Trang, Baldauf, & Moni (2013), shows that the awareness of the importance of English was a major cause for their participants to continue learning the language in spite of all the factors that affected them negatively. Similarly, according to Al-Saraj (2014), all students, even academic ones, have or had faced problems with anxiety when they were in the process of learning a foreign language. It is just a process that begins with being afraid of anything about the language because it is new, and ends with students that have overcome these problems in order to be successful.

Conclusions

- Language anxiety affects students' oral performance making them unable to speak during class and becoming less competent speakers than the rest of students.
- The psychological factor that contributes to language anxiety of EFL students is low self-esteem. This causes students to be afraid of participating in oral activities and to feel they will never perform in the same way as their classmates.
- Other factors that contributes to language anxiety of EFL students are social factors like fear of negative evaluation by the teacher and classmates; and instructional factors like class activities.
- Low grades and lack of understanding during a conversation are academic consequences derived from language anxiety in EFL students' oral performance.
- Even though students have a high level of language anxiety, their motivation and positive beliefs towards a foreign language encourage them to continue learning the foreign language.
- Interesting class activities and a good classroom environment among students help to reduce anxiety in class.

Recommendations

- Teachers should create a relaxed environment in class. This may involve changing the speed of talking during class and taking into consideration students' learning styles. The participants mentioned that their anxiety decrease when teachers make the class interesting and fun.
- Teachers ought to use topics and themes relevant to the student's lives and interests in order to reduce their anxiety and increase their motivation to learn the target language.
- Educators should create more group work or collaborative activities in order to foster a cooperative and friendly setting among students. Small groups might allow anxious students to have more time to practice. This leads students to become more secure before they are expected to participate in oral activities.
- Principals of language institutions and schools should train their teachers to detect students with foreign language anxiety and teach them strategies to deal with this psychological problem that is found in the majority of learners in class.

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Annexes

Annex 1

Survey



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

Foreign language classroom anxiety scale adaptation.

Instructions: The following statements refers to different situations that are frequent when learning a foreign language. Please, rate your grade of agreement or disagreement in each one of the statements, using the following range.

1	2	3	4	5
Totally agree	Agree	Not agree neither disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree

Before starting with the survey, please write your age and gender.

Age: _____

Gender: _____

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in mu foreign language class.	
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in my language class.	
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the	

foreign language.	
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more language classes.	
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class	
10. I want to improve my English.	
11. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	
12. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	
13. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	
14. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	
15. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	
16. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	
17. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	
18. I often feel like not going to my language class.	
19. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	
20. I think I'm not a good English language learner	
21. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	
22. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class	
23. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	
24. I don't feel pressured when I am getting ready for my English class.	
25. I always think my classmates are better at languages than I am	

26. I hate to study English	
27. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	
28. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	
29. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	
30. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	
31. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed	
32. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	
33. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	
34. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	
35. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language	
36. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	

¡THANKS FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!

Annex 2

Observation sheet

Observed behavior: student's behaviors towards English class that can be Identified as signs of Anxiety.

Date: _____

Observation	Yes/no	Notes for supporting
All students are willing to participate in oral activities.		
Students are pressured to speak in class.		
Students seem to be nervous when speaking in class.		
Students hesitate when speaking in class.		
Students feel worried when they make mistakes.		
Students forget what they want to say.		
Students feel anxious when the teacher corrects them.		
Students feel embarrassed		

when their classmates start laughing at them when speaking in front of the class.		
Students look like they are interested in doing the oral tasks.		
Students look like they are reluctant to speak in class		

Annex 3

Interview

Language Anxiety and its Influence on EFL Students' Oral Performance

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee (nickname or codename):

Procedures to do before the interview:

- Test the tape recorder
- Tell the interviewee the purpose of the study and how I will protect his/her confidentiality
- Tell the interviewee how long the interview will take

Questions

1. How old were you when you started learning the English language?
2. Why did you started learning English? (purpose of studying English)
3. Do you think that it is hard to speak in English?
4. How well are you at speaking in English?
5. How often do you participate in oral class activities? (Role-plays, presentation of some topics, etc.)
6. Do you think is better to have oral tests or written tests?

- 6.1.1 So, this means that you prefer writing something rather than speaking in front of the class?
7. From 1 to 5 (1 uncomfortable, 5 very comfortable), how comfortable are you when speaking in English during class?
- 7.1 (If the student say 1-3) why do you think you feel uncomfortable?
8. How do you feel when you have to talk in front of the class?
9. Do you feel nervous when the teacher tells you to answer a question?
10. Do you think your teacher helps you feel less nervous when speaking in English?
11. In which circumstances do you feel less nervous when speaking in English?
12. What helps you be less anxious when speaking in the classroom?
13. Do you think that English is a very important language to learn?
- 13.1 (If student say yes) do you think this is the reason why you continue learning the language even if you feel anxious when speaking?
- 13.2 (If student says no) do you feel forced to learn the language?
- 13.2.1 Do you think this is the reason why you feel uncomfortable when speaking?

Note: do not forget to thank the interviewee and to tell again about the protection of his/her confidentiality.