

Types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) Through Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI): A Thematic Analysis

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Abstract

This research uncovers the types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) proposed by Horwitz, Elaine K., Horwitz, Michael B., & Joann Cope (1986) felt by students. This research uses instrument of Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) proposed by Horwitz, Elaine K. (1988) in the form of questionnaire using Guttman scale. It is narrative design of qualitative research. Furthermore, the analysis is completed by thematic analysis passing five steps to draw a conclusion correlated with the respondents' respond to the questionnaire. The respondents of this research are the university students of Economic Department, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara (UISU), Indonesia, Academic Year 2022-2023. The research result found that the highest percentage of people who are anxious about language learning is 64%. It focuses on test anxiety, specifically fear of making mistakes, followed by fear of negative evaluation, specifically fear of receiving a low grade (63%). Then it is on test anxiety, specifically feeling inferior (57%) followed by fear of negative evaluation, specifically fear of correction (49%). Finally, communication anxiety: lack of self-confidence ranks fifth (43%) followed by fear of speaking (35%). Because the percentage of test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation is higher than that of communication skill, the researchers conclude that what makes students anxious in learning foreign language (English) is the grammar or structure of the language.

Keywords: foreign language, language anxiety, types of language anxiety

1. Introduction

Language learning is the process of learning certain language (foreign or second language) to comprehend the language, either the rules, grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, word, or sentence to be able to communicate using that language. Apparently, students may experience anxiety at some points in their learning activities. It is important to note that it does not mean that they have a clinically significant illness. It is absolutely normal because human beings face such a feeling when they are facing situations that are difficult or threatening. Anxiety is a feeling that everyone commonly experiences because it is part of human emotions. In line with this, Freeman and Ditomasso (2015) claim that anxiety is a universal human experience and undoubtedly a common human emotion, but its evocation does not necessarily imply the presence of a clinically significant disorder. It cannot be denied that in language learning activities, students might be requested to speak using the language learned. At this moment, students might feel anxious. It is in line with the idea that anxiety is a feeling when someone has when he or she thinks that something uncomfortable is going to take place in the future (Lidbetter, 2012). Anxiety is also defined as a physical and mental state characterized by certain physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms (Kráľová, 2019). Further, Hammad (2022) claims that anxiety is the brief stimulation of negative emotions accompanied by certain bodily changes, poor cognitive function, and undesirable behaviors.

When anxiety is related to a situation in language learning, it is categorized as a specific anxiety reaction (Horwitz, Elaine K., Horwitz, Michael B., & Joann Cope, 1986). They also state that second and foreign language researchers and theorists have been aware that anxiety is always related to language learning. However, during the learning activities, anxiety might be a problem for them to get the teaching material taught by their lecturers. Students and teachers mostly feel firm that anxiety is the utmost obstacle in language learning. Horwitz (2002) infers that anxiety is the prime cause of poor language learning. It was also determined that there was a link between course achievement and language learning. Although, low levels of course achievement in language learning were not always exhibited by those who have high levels of anxiety (Llin ás, Mónica Marcos, & Maria Juan Garau, 2009). Therefore, the most common variable that is examined in foreign language learning research is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) (Horwitz, Elaine, 2002). Anxiety in language learning is a general problem found in the reality because high expectation to gain high achievement in English class. Thus, it is important for the teachers to control the class to overcome foreign language speaking anxiety (Fitriah and Muna, 2019). This research is to assist the teachers to make a good control if they know the types of FLA. It is emphasized that it is the teacher's role to bring down the anxiety of the students (Pahargyan 2021). As it is suggested in research that teachers should seek diverse strategies and techniques to be applied on teaching language to reduce anxiety experienced by students (Naibaho, 2022).

The research problem here is what types of foreign language anxiety felt by university students of Economic Department, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara (UISU), Indonesia, Academic Year 2022-2023). Therefore, the objective of this research is to uncover the types of FLA

thematically by using the Belief about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) proposed by Horwitz (1988). It was used in a research to reveal the level of anxiety of male and female students in language learning (Bensalem 2018). The researchers consider BALLI to be a suitable instrument for obtaining the types of FLA because it is a suitable tool to be used in language learning research as it is stated in a research that “Overall, these results allow us to conclude that Horwitz’s instrument is a suitable tool for research on language learning beliefs in various socio - linguistic settings regardless of the language being learned (Nikitina and Furuoka, 2013). It is also supported by Bidari (2021) who claims that BALLI has given a beneficial horizon in a language teaching practice. Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) has never been applied to detect the types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in previous researches. Therefore, this research initiates to apply Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) to reveal the types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) felt by students, especially in English language learning. Furthermore, the findings in this study would certainly be a novelty that contributes to the types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) researches.

Fear of negative evaluation causes anxiety in language learning, which is regarded as one barrier faced by students during the language learning process (Ali and Anwar 2021). Further, Labicane (2021) states that the highest level of anxiety of speaking is experienced by the students when they feel afraid of making mistakes and of negative evaluation. Hidayati (2018) also reveals that that most students exhibit a clear high level of language anxiety when learning a language. In addition, fear of negative evaluation was indicated as the most significant contributor to their anxiety experience in English learning. In addition, Alghofaili (2022) reveals that students generally had moderate anxiety in English, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety about speaking and tests. Further, Basith et al. (2019) show that the most dominant aspect of anxiety experienced by students is communication anxiety. Consequently, anxiety might have an effect on the students’ achievement in their learning, as it is found in research that “students with lower foreign language anxiety have higher academic achievement, and students with higher foreign language anxiety have lower academic achievement” (Oflaz 2019). Foreign language anxiety also had negative effects on students’ speaking skill. There are some factors that give direct influence to the generation of FLA such as learning motivation, communicative intention, teacher-student interaction style, and teaching method (Deng and Liu 2022). On the other hand, anxiety is not only faced by students but also by teachers when they are carrying out real teaching (Agustiana 2019). Teachers experience moderate anxiety when preparing to write an academic paper in English for international publication (Hartono and Arjanggi 2020)

2. Method

This research uses narrative research design under qualitative method. Narrative research design is one of the qualitative researches, which emphasizes individuals’ experience (Faizin and Haerussaleh 2020). In analyzing the data, the researchers utilize thematic analysis in which there are five steps passed to draw the findings or the conclusion of this research, namely: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing report (Dawadi 2020). Research instrument applied in this research is BALLI (Belief About Language Learning Inventory) developed by Horwitz (1988). The statements of BALLI are then managed to be a questionnaire by using Guttman Scale in which the respondents are asked to choose between the two choices, namely yes or no.

To know the types of language anxiety felt by students in learning English language, the researchers shared the instrument to the respondents of this research. The respondents of this research are the university students of Economics Department, Universitas Islam Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. They are twenty students from the first-year of Academic Year 2022-2023.

3. Result

The respondents’ choices to the statement in BALLI show the types of anxiety felt by them in language learning. They are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Respondents’ Answer

Types of Anxiety		Yes	No
1.	Communication anxiety:		
	- Afraid to Speak	35 %	65 %
	- Lack of self-confidence	43 %	57 %
2.	Test anxiety:		
	- Afraid of making mistake	64 %	36 %
	- Feel inferior	57 %	43 %
3.	Fear of negative evaluation:		
	- Afraid of correction	49 %	51 %
	- Fear of having bad score	63 %	37 %

It is seen in the table above that the highest percentage of students who are anxious about language learning is 64%. It focuses on test anxiety, specifically fear of making mistakes, followed by fear of negative evaluation, specifically fear of receiving a low grade (63%). The third high percentage is again on test anxiety, specifically feeling inferior (57%) followed by fear of negative evaluation, specifically fear of correction (49%). Finally, communication anxiety: lack of self-confidence ranks fifth (43%) followed by fear of speaking (35%). Because the percentage of test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation is higher than that of communication skill, the researchers may conclude that what makes students anxious in learning language is the grammar or structure of the language.

4. Discussion

The research result portrays that the test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are the dominant anxieties felt by the students. It refers to research finding that linguistic factors are the most cause of the students’ anxiety in language learning (Al-mukdad, 2021). The types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) were obtained by sharing the questionnaire containing the statements in Belief About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) as the research instrument. However, the statements are analyzed firstly by using thematic analysis to make them conical and lead to the types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). The following are the thematic analysis steps made in this research.

Step 1: Familiarization with the data

At this stage, the researchers choose twenty points from BALLI instrument which are considered referring to anxiety. These points are, then, fold in a questionnaire. The followings are the points of the questionnaire:

Table 2. Step 1 and 2: Familiarization with the Data and Generating Initial Codes

No.	Statement	Code
1.	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	Doubt
2.	I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in language class.	Tremble
3.	It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	Afraid
4.	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	Unconfident
5.	I start to be panic when I have to speak without preparation in the class.	Panic
6.	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	Worry
7.	In language class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	Nervous
8.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	Embarrassed
9.	Even if I am prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	Anxious
10.	I often feel like not going to my language class.	Anxious
11.	I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	Unconfident
12.	I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in language class.	Edgy
13.	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	Unconfident
14.	I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	Unconfident
15.	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	Tense
16.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	Panic
17.	I get nervous when I don’t understand every word the language teacher says.	Nervous
18.	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	Confused
19.	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	Embarrassed
20.	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance.	Nervous

Step 2: Generating Initial Codes

At the second step, the researchers generate codes for every point of statement to make the data reduction based on the similar feeling of interest in language learning.

Table 3. Generating Initial Codes

Statement	Codes
1. S 2	Tremble
2. S 12	Edgy
3. S 5 & 16	Panic
4. S 6	Worry
5. S 1	Doubt
6. S 18	Confused
7. S 15	Tense
8. S 4, 11, 13, &14	Unconfident
9. S 3	Afraid
10. S 7, 17, & 20	Nervous
11. S 9 & 10	Anxious
12. S 8 & 19	embarrassed

Step 3: Searching for Themes

At this step, the data that have been displayed in the codes is then analysed to find the relationship among the codes to search the themes.

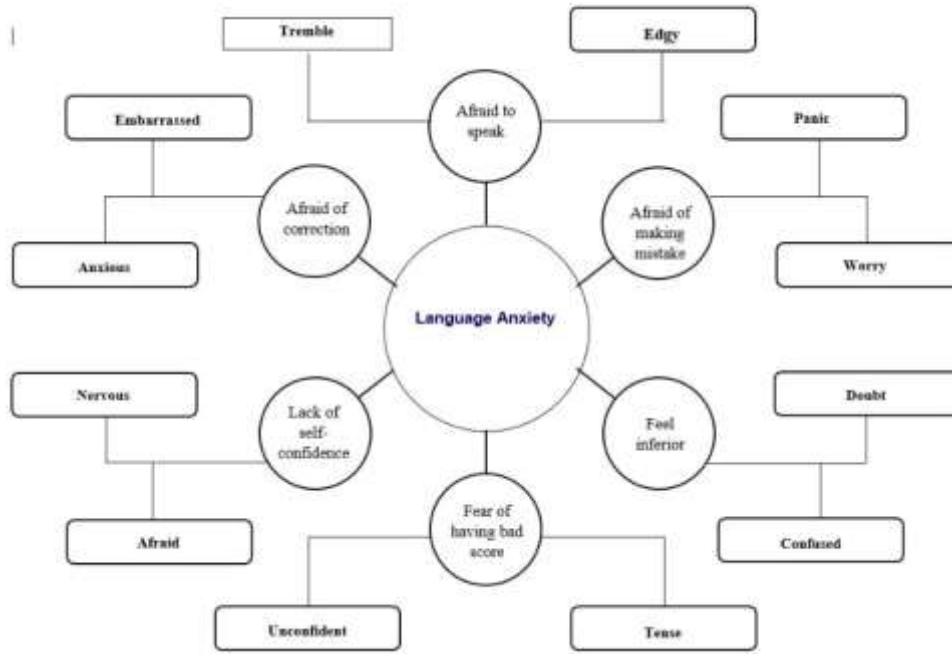


Figure 1. Initial Themes Map

There are six themes uncovered based on the created codes, namely: 1. Afraid to speak; 2. Afraid of making mistakes; 3. Feel inferior; 4. Fear of having bad score; 5. Lack of self-confidence; and 6. Afraid of correction

Step 4: Reviewing Themes

At this step, the codes along with the themes identified are reviewed in connection with the types of anxiety might appear based on the interest feeling of similar emotion of the students during the language learning activities. The review of the themes is displayed in the following map.

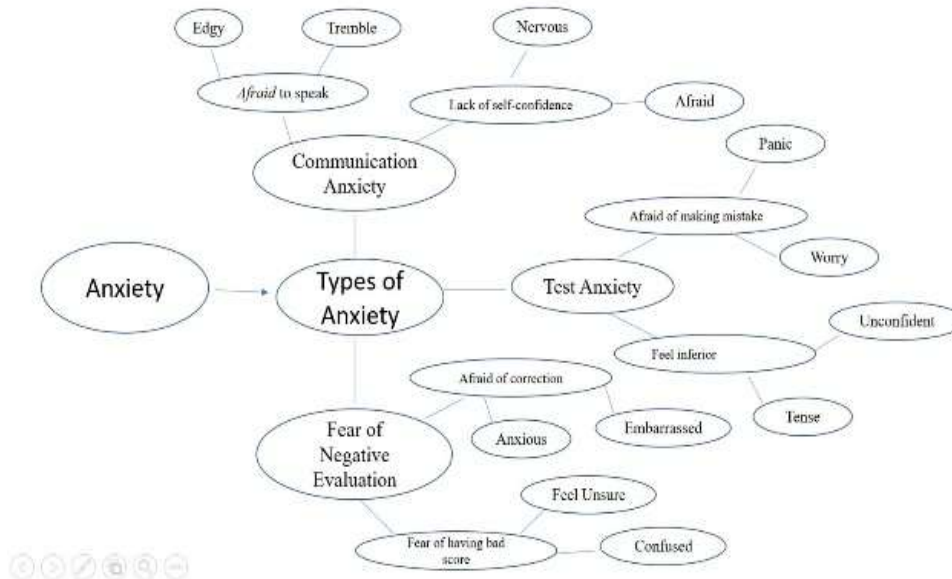


Figure 2. Reviewed Themes Map

In figure 2, the researchers present the themes into main themes and sub-themes which end to the codes as the representatives of the statements in BALLI instrument. They are then grouped systematically based on the coherence and consistency (homogeneity) and dissimilarity among the themes (heterogeneity).

Step 5: Defining and Naming Themes

At this step, the researchers define and name the themes by referring to the types of anxiety proposed by Horwitz, Elaine K., Horwitz, Michael B., & Joann Cope (1986).

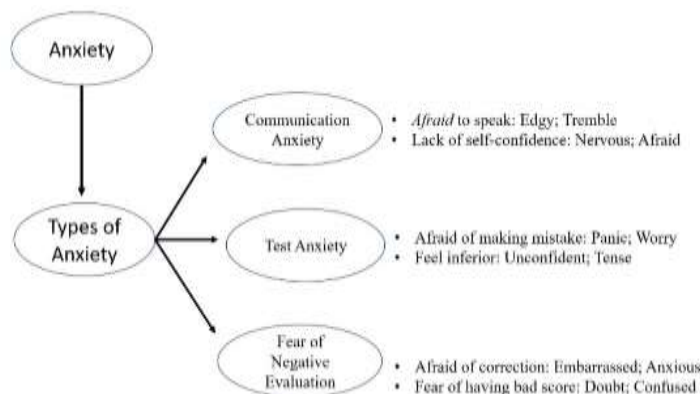


Figure 3. Defined and Named Themes

From the thematic analysis, the researchers prove that in language learning anxiety, there are three types of anxiety, namely: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative correction. They permeate six different parts in total. Communication anxiety is divided into two parts: afraid to speak and lacking self-confidence. Afraid of speak stems from two conditions or situations: edgy and tremble. A lack of self-confidence stems from being nervous and afraid. Test anxiety is divided into being afraid of making mistake and feeling inferior. Afraid of making mistake stems from panic and worry. Feel inferior stems from unconfident and tense. Finally, fear of negative evaluation is divided into afraid of correction and fear of having bad score. Afraid of correction stems from embarrassed and anxious, and fear of having bad score stems from feeling unsure and confused.

5. Conclusion

There are three types of anxiety experienced by the students in language learning. They are namely: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The results of this research meet the three types of anxiety proposed by Horwitz, Elaine K., Horwitz, Michael B., & Joann Cope (1986). It is to expose that the three types of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) are revealed by using BALLI instrument. Further research results show that structure or grammar (linguistic factors) of the language the students learn is the main factor of feeling anxiety of language learning. It is proved by the percentage counted from the instrument. Test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation have higher percentage than that of communication anxiety. This might be important information for other researchers or language teachers to respond the research findings. The research findings could be considered one of the solutions to reducing students' anxiety when learning a foreign language. It is said that using technology in foreign language education alleviates the FLA felt by the students significantly (Ma, Noordin, and Razali, 2022). As a result of integrating the methods in foreign language teaching, a better method is exposed as a pathway to reducing students' anxiety about foreign language advancement. Blended learning is also potential to give maximal effect to reduce language anxiety in language learning (Alghofaili, 2022). However, it is to be noted that online platform does not always give a resolution to anxiety problem in foreign language learning (Tosun and Balkaya 2022). This research was done during the covid pandemic in which google meet as one of the most attested platforms for online learning does not provide solution concerning FLA. Therefore, further researches related to efforts to provide solutions to FLA need to be carried out.

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