The Effect of English Learning Anxiety on Iranian High-School Students' English Language Achievement

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Abstract

The present study explored English language learning anxiety among 38 third-year high school students in English classrooms and its relationship with overall English achievement. Students' foreign language anxiety was surveyed and analyzed using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) [14] and their English achievement was measured through their final standardized English exam administered by the school. The results showed that although some students felt extremely confident and relaxed, however, one-third of the students experienced moderate to high-anxiety levels while learning the English language in class. Correlational analysis revealed that the total FLCAS scores had a significantly moderate negative correlation ($r=-.0586$, $p<.01$) with the total final English exams scores of the participants. Anxiety was also analyzed according to the four different variables of anxiety (communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, English classroom anxiety) which were measured by the FLCAS. The results of the Pearson correlational analysis indicated that English achievement was modestly correlated with all four anxiety variables ($p<0.01$). Of the four types of anxiety, English Classroom anxiety had the highest correlational value. Finally, possible anxiety provoking factors leading to these findings are examined and discussed, and some pedagogical implications are proposed.

Keywords: English learning anxiety, English achievement, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), anxiety variables, high school students.

1. Introduction

Learning English is a prerequisite to being able to successfully participate in many academic and cultural activities, trade, technology, and worldwide communication. Therefore, English has become one of the most important subjects in the educational system. However, it has been observed that many students experience anxiety in the English classroom while trying to learn English. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) [14] have eloquently stated:

> The subjective feelings, psycho-physiological symptoms, and behavioral responses of the anxious foreign language learner are essentially the same as for any specific anxiety. They experience apprehension, worry, even dread. They have difficulty concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations. They exhibit avoidance behavior such as missing class and postponing homework. (p.126)

Furthermore, many learners express their inability and sometimes even acknowledge their failure in learning a second/foreign language. In many cases, student's feeling of stress, anxiety, or nervousness may impede their language learning and performance abilities, and many learners of English claim to have a 'mental block' against learning English (Ellis, 1994, p. 480) [10]. Learning a language itself is "a profoundly unsetting psychological proposition" because it directly threatens an individual's "self-concept" and world view (Guiora, 1983 as cited in Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 28) [14]. For this reason, over the past several decades, language researchers and educators have been investigating learner variables, especially affective variables such as attitude, anxiety, interest,

motivation, inhibition, and self-esteem, in the field of second language (L2) acquisition in an attempt to improve L2 teaching and learning.

Although anxiety has been exhaustively studied in many western countries, there remains limited research focusing on the relationship between English language learning anxiety and English learning and achievement among Iranian high school students. Therefore the purpose of this study was to bridge this gap by discovering the overall situation of English language learning anxiety and its relationship with English achievement among Iranian 3rd year high school students. .

2. Literature Review

2.1. Anxiety

According to Spielberger (1983) [31], anxiety can be described as the subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. Anxiety is also defined as a state of uneasiness or fear caused by the anticipation of something threatening. Language anxiety has been said by many researchers to influence language learning. According to Krashen (1980, as cited in Horwitz & Young, 1991) [15], anxiety contributes to an affective filter, which prevents students from receiving input, and then language acquisition fails to progress. Whereas facilitating anxiety produces positive effects on learners' performance, too much anxiety may cause a poor performance (Scovel, 1991) [29].

Language learning is a socially anxious, embarrassing, and potentially ego-damaging situation itself. When anxiety is specific to language learning, it is referred to as language anxiety. Second language researchers and teachers have been aware that anxiety is not only common among foreign language learners, but also poses potential problems for foreign language learners "because it can interfere with the beliefs about foreign language learning and foreign language anxiety, acquisition, retention, and production of the new language" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991b, p. 86) [19].

1.1. Classifications of Anxiety and Its Components

"Anxiety is a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1971 as cited in Scovel, 1991, p. 18) [29]. Anxiety, as perceived intuitively by many language learners, negatively influences language learning and has been found to be one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education (Horwitz, 2001, p. 113) [14]. Psychologists make a distinction between three categories of anxiety: *trait anxiety, state anxiety,* and *situation-specific anxiety*. *Trait anxiety* is relatively stable personality characteristic, 'a more permanent predisposition to be anxious' (Scovel, 1978) [28], while *state anxiety* is a transient anxiety; a response to a particular anxiety-provoking stimulus such as an important test (Spielberger, 1983 as cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113) [13]. The third category, s*ituation-specific anxiety,* refers to the persistent and multi-faceted nature of some anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a) [18]. It is aroused by a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations or class participations. Language learning anxiety, which is the main focus of this paper, deals with the last category, which "refers to the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language" (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) [11]. This type of anxiety which occurs in the foreign language classroom is commonly known as *foreign language classroom anxiety* (FLCA). MacIntyre & Gardner (1991a) [18] describe FLCA stemming from the negative expectations in foreign language learning. On the other hand, Price (1991) [26] and Katalin (2006) [16] found classroom related factors to play a role in learners' developing FLCA.

Another important insight concerning different types of anxiety exists in the distinction between *facilitating* and *debilitating* anxiety (Scovel, 1978) [28], or what Oxford (1999) [23] called *harmful* and *helpful* anxiety. According to Young (1990) [35], facilitating anxiety is an increase in drive level which results in improved performance while debilitating anxiety is an increase in arousal or drive level, which leads to poor performance. Scovel (1991) [29] has noted that

Facilitating anxiety "motivates the learner to "fight" the new learning task; it gears the learner emotionally for approach behavior" (p. 22). Debilitating anxiety, in contrast, "motivates the learner to 'flee' the new learning task; it stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour" (p. 22). Foreign Language Anxiety, or more precisely, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is considered to be a situational anxiety experienced in the well-defined situation of the foreign language classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) [20]. Foreign language anxiety has three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation. According to Horwitz et al. (1986) [14], communication apprehension is 'a type of shyness by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people' (p. 127). In other words, it refers to an individual's discomfort and tension when speaking or performing in public. Test anxiety has been defined by Sarason (1984) [27] as 'the tendency to become alarmed about the consequences of inadequate performance on a test or other evaluation'. Fear of negative evaluation is defined as 'apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively' (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.128) [14].

2.2. Anxiety and Language Achievement

Many studies have concluded that anxiety and achievement are negatively correlated (e.g. Horwitz et al., 1986 [14]; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994 [20]). MacIntyre & Gardner (1994) [20] found that in the three stages of language acquisition, that is, input, processing and output, anxiety and learning achievement are negatively correlated. Anxiety and achievement are often found to have a bidirectional relationship (i.e., in addition to anxiety influencing achievement, achievement [or lack thereof] also influences anxiety level) (Yan & Horwitz, 2008, p.173) [33]. However, several studies have suggested the benefit of facilitative anxiety in learning foreign languages (Ehrman & Oxford, 1995 [9]; Young, 1992 [37]). In Bailey's (1983) [3] study of competitiveness and anxiety in second language earning, facilitative anxiety was one of the keys to success, closely related to competitiveness. Neutral relationships between anxiety and second language achievement have also been found. In Zhang Baoyan's (1996, cited in Na, 2007) [21] study of English learners in Taiwan, the results showed that there was no relationship between anxiety and learning achievement. Many researches have shown inconsistent and sometime contradictory results in terms of the direction of the correlation between anxiety and language learning. In a study by Chastain (1975) [7] which is summarized by Scovel (1978) [28], it was shown that the directions of the correlations between anxiety (test anxiety) and language learning in three languages (French, German, and Spanish) were not consistent. Three levels of correlation, positive, negative, and near zero were between anxiety and language performance in those three languages were found. Young's (1991) [36] review of sixteen studies which examined the relationship between anxiety and language learning (p. 436-439) also showed similar inconstant results both within and across studies. It was concluded that 'research in the area of anxiety as it relates to second or foreign language learning and performance was scattered and inconclusive' (p. 426). Horwitz (2001, p. 121) [13] has reiterated that the issue of understanding the relationship between anxiety and achievement is unresolved. The reason for varied results in research in this area may be due to the fact that the relationship between anxiety and second language learning is in fact a complex, multi-faceted construct. It seems that anxiety has an optimal point along its continuum in which both too much and too little anxiety may hinder the process of successful second language learning. However, it might not be possible to accurately describe the relationship between anxiety foreign language learning in a simple linear fashion. Many other variables such as learner's proficiency, IQ, teacher, learning environment, and culture might also influence this relationship.

Horwitz et al. (1986) [14] conceptualized foreign language anxiety as "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). Horwitz et al. (1986) [14] developed the scale called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for the purpose of providing researchers with a standard instrument to measure foreign language anxiety. Based on their

conceptualization of foreign language anxiety, the construct of foreign language anxiety underline three related performance anxieties: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Moreover, correlational studies have sought to establish relationships between individual learner variables and foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety has been shown to correlate with age (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2000) [4], gender (Aida, 1994 [1]; Baker & MacIntyre, 2000 [5]), certain personality traits (such as perfectionism, Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002) [12], and with negative self-perceptions (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1999) [22].

English has long since been a major subject in high schools across Iran; however, despite the continued increasing demand to learn English, and the emphasis it is given at the high school level, still today students enter the university with many language related problems. Although many reasons can be accounted for the students' difficulty in learning English, it is felt that by reducing negative affective factors such as anxiety, it is possible to get one step closer to helping our students learn English more effectively. By understanding the relationship between English learning anxiety and overall English achievement of high school students, teachers can hopefully help their students receive better learning effects in a low-anxiety learning environment. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the following research questions:

Q1. What is the general English language learning anxiety level among Iranian 3rd year high school students?

Q2. What is the correlation between English language learning anxiety and English achievement among Iranian 3rd year high school students?

Q3. What is the correlational relationship between each of the four types of English language learning anxiety and English achievement among Iranian 3rd year high school students?

Based on these research questions, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H01. English language learning anxiety exists at a very low level in Iranian 3rd year high school students.

H02. There is no significant correlation between English language learning anxiety and English achievement in the target group.

H03. No significant correlational relationships exist between each of the types of English language learning anxiety and overall English proficiency.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants of the present study were 38 third-year high-school students from a private school in the North of Tehran, Iran. All participants were female and were at the same age of 17 years old; they all had a minimum of 5 years of experience of studying English at school from the second year of guidance school up to the time of conducting the research. The school comprised of students who were studying in three different majors entitled: 'Literature', 'Math', and 'Science'. The participants of this study included students from three different classes which were in the three different majors. The basis for choosing these three particular classes lied in having the same English teacher. This controls for *teacher effect*, which could possibly have a part in increasing anxiety levels among students. Each class also studied the same English book, followed the same syllabus, and considering the fact that they were accepted into a particularly high-level school in terms of academia, they were all considered to be high-achievers. The Literature class had 10 students; likewise, the Math class originally had 17 students; however, on the session that the questionnaires were distributed, two students were absent and accordingly15 students were left. The Science class had 13 students which were all present at the time of the distribution of the questionnaires.

3.2. Instrumentation and Procedure

Two instruments were used in this study. They included a questionnaire which was used to assess the students' English learning anxiety level (see Appendix A), and an English final achievement exam which was administered at the end of the semester by the school. The questionnaire was the Persian full version of the Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) that was designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) [14]. The Persian version of the FLCAS was translated into English using a Back-translation method to assure its validity. A psychologist holding a Doctoral degree in the field of clinical psychology, and two full-time English language instructors assessed the content of the translated version of the FLCAS to insure its validity.

The questionnaire consisted of 33 statements in the form of a Likert Scale. The items were divided into sections, each related to four different types of anxiety: communication anxiety (items 1,2,3,4,9,12,14,15,18,20,24,27,29,32,33), test anxiety (items 8, 10, 21), fear of negative evaluation/feeling less competent (items 7, 13, 19, 23, 25, 31), and anxiety of English classes (items 5, 6, 11, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30). The questionnaires were administered two weeks before the final standardized English exam day, and also, at the beginning of each of the classes' English period. The participants were asked to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Some items were negative; therefore, their points were counted reversely. The sum of the points from the 33 questions represents the students' anxiety scores, theoretically ranging from 33 to 165. The higher the total scores were, the more anxious the participants were considered to be. At the time of administration of the FLCAS, the researcher clearly explained the purpose of the research to the participants that the responses are confidential, and their names would not be used in the research, and their scores would not be given to their English teacher or their school. At the next stage which was two weeks later, students took the final standardized English exam administered by the school. The results of this test were used to assess the overall English achievement of the students. The test included six different sections: spelling, vocabulary, grammar, language function, pronunciation, reading comprehension, and a cloze passage.

3.3. Design

This study was a descriptive in nature, and the groups were not chosen randomly but as intact groups placed in three high school classes. The dependent variable in this study was English achievement, and the independent variable was language anxiety. The intervening variable is English proficiency. The control variables are: age of subjects (second year high school students with an average age of 17) and years of experience in English learning (a minimum of 5 consecutive years). The schematic design of the study is presented below (Figura 1):

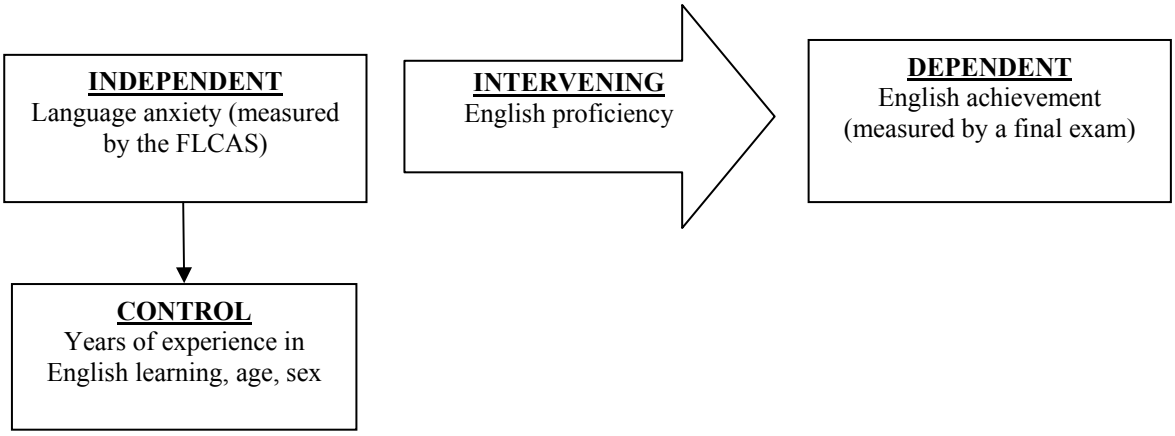


Figure 1. The design of the study

3.4. Data Analysis

After the researchers distributed the translated Farsi version of the SLTAS questionnaires to the participants and the participants answered the questions, the questionnaires were then retrieved for quantitative analysis. After two weeks, the final standardized English exam was administered by the school; the students' grades were also collected for data analysis using the SPSS software version 16. Considering the fact that the three majors studied the same English book, and had the same teacher, followed the same syllabus and took the same final standardized English exam, it was justified to consider them as a single homogeneous group. However, to assure their homogeneity in terms of English language proficiency/achievement and English learning anxiety, two separate one-way analyses of variances (one-way ANOVA) were run between the three majors using their scores obtained from the FLCAS and their final standardized English exam.

4. Results

4.1. Homogeneity of the Three Majors in Terms of English Language Achievement

The raw data was fed into the computer and then was analyzed by using SPSSX16. The results are discussed below.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the final English exam of the three majors

Descriptive Statistics							
Exam							
					95% Confidence Interval for Mean		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Maximum
Literature	10	18.48	.72121	.22807	17.96	18.99	17.00
Math	15	18.62	1.33586	.34492	17.88	19.36	15.50
Science	13	18.38	1.13015	.31345	17.7	19.07	16.25
Total	38	18.5	1.10741	.17965	18.14	18.86	15.50

To assure the homogeneity of participants of the three majors of Literature, Math and Science, a one-way ANOVA was run between the mean scores of their final English exam. Descriptive statistics of the results of their final English exam is shown in Table 1. Also, Table 2 displays the results of the one-way ANOVA between the three majors.

Table 2. Results of the one-way ANOVA for the three majors on the English final exam

ANOVA					
Exam					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.383	2	.192	.149	.862
Within Groups	44.992	35	1.285		
Total	45.375	37			

*level of significance is set at 0.05 (two-tailed)

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, there is no significant difference among the means of the three major groups on the final English exam. Accordingly, it was suggested that the three groups were

from the same population of 3rd year high school students, and were considered as one homogeneous group.

4.2. Homogeneity of the Three Majors in Terms of English Learning Anxiety

To recap, it was shown that the three groups of participants, enrolled in three different majors, were at the same level of English language proficiency/achievement. Then to assure that the anxiety level of the intended 3rd year high-school participants were not significantly different, a one-way ANOVA was run between the means of the FLCAS scores of the three majors. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the one-way ANOVA on the FLCAS for the three majors

ANOVA

FLCAS					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	852.800	2	426.400	.687	.510
Within Groups	21736.910	35	621.055		
Total	22589.711	37			

*level of significance is set at 0.05 (two-tailed)

Table 3 displays that the significance level obtained by ANOVA was not less than 0.05; therefore, the means were not significantly different. So, the intended groups were found homogenous in terms of English language learning anxiety as well.

4.3. The general situation of high school students' anxiety in English classrooms

The FLCAS is a Likert scale which has been quantified by assigning points to each of the responses. Those questions which have a positive response for anxiety have been assigned 5 points for "strongly agree", 4 points for "agree", 3 points for "no comment", 2 points for "disagree", and 1 point for "strongly disagree". The pointing system is reversed for negative questions. (The scoring scale of the FLCAS is shown in Appendix B.) Each questionnaire has been tabulated according to this system. The descriptive analysis is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of FLCAS for 3rd year high school students

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
FLCAS	38	45.00	150.00	87.8158	24.70896

The results showed that the minimum score of the overall language learning anxiety was 45, and the maximum was 150, and the median was 84.5. The obtained results were divided into three levels; according to normal distribution assumptions, students whose scale points range above 33.3% of the participants were considered to be high anxiety-level students. Likewise, those whose scale points range between 33.4% and 66.6% of the participants were the intermediate anxiety-level students, and those whose scale points range under 66.7 of the participants were considered to be the low anxiety-level students in this research. Moreover, the results showed that although some students felt extremely confident and relaxed, however, one-third of the students experienced moderate to high-anxiety levels while learning the English language. Therefore, the first null hypothesis which stated that English language learning anxiety exists at a very low level in Iranian 3rd year high school students was rejected.

Many previous studies in western and Asian countries have adopted the FLCAS to investigate the foreign language anxiety of students mostly at the college or high school level. The means of the students' scores on the FLCAS of previous researches are: 96.7 by Aida (1994) [1], 97.78 by Chang (1999, cited in Wu, 2005) [32], 97.79 by Liao (1999) [17], 99.26 (7^{th} graders) and 101.01 (8^{th} graders) by Pan (2002) [24]. The mean of the FLCAS scores obtained by the 3^{rd} year high school students in this study is 87.82, which is a little lower than the results of previous research. This means that the English language learning anxiety of the 3^{rd} year high school students in this study is a little bit less severe than that of the investigated participants of previous researches.

4.4. The Relationship between English Learning Anxiety and English Achievement

To detect the relationship between English language learning anxiety and English achievement, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used based on the English language anxiety scores obtained from the FLCAS and the final standardized English exam of the participants. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The correlation between FLCAS scores and final English exam scores

Correlations

		FINAL	FLCAS
FINAL	Pearson Correlation	1	-.636**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	38	38
FLCAS	Pearson Correlation	-.636**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	38	38

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

According to Cohan and Holliday's (1982) [8], correlation coefficients of and under .19 are very low, from .20 to .39 are low, from .40 to .69 are modest, from .70 to .89 are high, and from .9 to 1.00 are very high. As can be seen from Table 5, the total FLCAS scores had a significantly moderate negative correlation ($r=-.0586$, $p<.01$) with the total final English exam scores of the participants. It meant that the respondents with lower English language learning anxiety were likely to achieve higher scores on the final English exam, and students with higher English language learning anxiety tend to obtain lower scores on the final English exam. Therefore, the second null hypothesis which stated that there was no significant correlation between English language learning anxiety and English achievement was rejected.

4.5. The Relationship between each of the Four Different Variables of English Learning Anxiety and English Achievement

The FLCAS questionnaire consisted of 33 statements in the form of a Likert Scale. So, to discover the relationship between each of the four different anxiety types and overall English language achievement, a Pearson product moment correlation was run between each of the scores of the anxiety types of the participants, and their final English exam scores. The results of the four independent correlations are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Correlation between each of the four types of English language learning anxiety and final English exam scores of the participants

		Communication Anxiety	Test Anxiety	Fear of Negative Evaluation	English Classroom Anxiety
FINAL	Pearson Correlation	-.551**	-.537**	-.584**	-.588**
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.001	.000	.000
	N	38	38	38	38

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

The results of the Pearson correlational analysis indicated that English achievement is modestly correlated with all four anxiety types ($p<0.01$). Of the four types of anxiety, English Classroom anxiety has the highest correlational value. Therefore, the third hypothesis stating that no significant correlational relationships exist between each of the types of English language learning anxiety and overall English proficiency was also rejected.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Considering the limitations of the participants' size, gender, not randomly being chosen, female students from only one school, generalization from provided data must be made with caution. The findings of this study cannot be said to represent all 3rd year high school students in Iran. Furthermore, not all variables influencing foreign language learning have been controlled. For instance, personality, self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, intelligence, classroom atmosphere, etc., are also important variables which may influence foreign language learning.

As revealed by the results of this study, English language learning anxiety does exist among the 3rd year high school students who participated in this study. The findings of this study are similar to those found in previous studies (e.g., Tang, 2005, cited in Na, 2007 [21]; Na, 2007 [21]; Azhar & Iqbal, 2010 [2]) stating those students who have moderate to high English language anxiety showed less academic achievement than who have less English language anxiety. Horwitz & Young (1991, p. 14) [15] state that "we have been truly surprised at the number of students who experience anxiety and distress in their language classes". The results of this study show that English learning anxiety has a significant moderate negative correlation with the English achievement of the students in this study. Therefore, it can be concluded that anxiety plays a debilitative role in language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) [14] also found a significant negative correlation between the FLCAS scores and the students' final course grades. Other studies have also confirmed these findings (e.g. MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994 [20]; Tang, 2005, cited in Na, 2007 [21]; Na, 2007 [21]). Many research focusing on the construct of language anxiety show a moderate inverse relationship between language anxiety and various measures of language achievement (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986 [14]; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a [18], 1991b [19]; Phillips, 1992 [25]; Young, 1986 [34]). Campbell & Ortiz (1991, p. 59) [6] found language anxiety among university students to be 'alarming' and estimated that up to one half of all language students experience debilitating levels of language anxiety. High levels of anxiety can discourage students from participating in classroom activities or studying at home, and may even cause them to lose their self-confidence and motivation for learning English. This in turn can create more anxiety, as they may feel overwhelmed by the presence of new material. All these negative factors can influence their effort to learn English and may consequently impede their learning, and therefore cause them to do poorly on their English achievement tests.

Interestingly enough, a significant moderate negative correlation was found to exists between each of the four English learning anxiety variables and English achievement in this study. High school students in Iran usually spend most of their time studying English at school. Therefore, their exposure to the English language is limited to their English classes, which can be the reason that they feel so anxious in them. Furthermore, high school students in Iran take more English tests compared to college students which usually have a final exam at the end of the semester. However, high school students are constantly evaluated during the term, and are exposed to many tests, quizzes, mid-terms, and ultimately a final exam. Most English teachers evaluate the performance of their students at the end of each unit. Therefore, considering the vast amount of test that high school students must take, and the fact that their final grade is dependent on all of these tests scores, it can be understood why there is a feeling of anxiety among students during test-taking. If the emphasis of "grade" is decreased, and test-taking can be seen as a tool for assisting students to learn better, then maybe the test-related anxiety factor can be minimized, if not eliminated.

Increased communication anxiety levels in Iranian high school students can be attributed to a variety of factors. One attributing factor may be related to the fact that the Iranian educational system is not designed to increase the communicative competence of students. Therefore many students experience a feeling of uneasiness and anxiety when having to speak in the foreign language. An important factor may also stem from the previous reason. Because of the presence of a national university entrance exam, most of the emphasis during the high school years is given to learning "about" the language, instead of learning the language. Reading and writing are given more weight in terms of importance and priority than speaking and listening. Rote memorization of exhausting grammar rules and vocabulary can place increased amounts of pressure on students. Not being able to learn all of "rules" of the language may create a sense of anxiety, and ultimately dislike for the English language. Of course many other factors can have their share in creating language learning anxiety for high school students as well, such as a feeling of competition to obtain the highest grade, high expectations of parents, and maybe even feeling distant from the English language (because of its lack of incorporation into the students' normal daily lives). It's not unusual to hear an Iranian high school student express dislike for his/her English class.

Anxiety is still proven to be a major factor affecting foreign language learning. As Sila (2010) [30] states, "young adolescent students experience language anxiety and this anxiety could have much more adverse effects in their future lives" (p. 89). Therefore, it is important for teachers to understand the complete nature of this complex phenomenon, and attempt to decrease the negative effects that it may have on language learning. Consequently, how to reduce the students' English language learning anxiety becomes an important issue for all high school language teachers as well. Given the fact that English language learning anxiety can cause detrimental influences of foreign language learning, it is extremely important that English teachers not only recognize that anxiety can be a major cause of students not being successful in English learning, but also assist them to overcome their feelings of discomfort and uneasiness. It is important for teachers to acknowledge the existence of foreign language anxiety and take initiatives for its effective reduction. However, considering the fact that much research indicates that adequate anxiety levels play a positive facilitative role in English learning, therefore the teachers' role is to keep an optimal amount of anxiety among the students. This can be achieved by providing the students with learner-friendly language settings which are free from debilitative anxiety. Teachers are encouraged to create a warm and friendly classroom atmosphere and give positive encouragement to the learners. They can also attempt to reduce anxiety by openly discussing its nature. They can also take measures to reduce the sense of negative competition among the students, and replace it with friendly cooperation. Price (1991) [26] suggests that they could reduce students' anxiety by encouraging them to make mistakes in the class. Price also advises that instructors should make it clear that the classroom is a place for learning and communication. Teachers can also attempt to reduce the anxiety caused by fear of negative evaluation by postponing error correction or if necessary, by providing subtle or indirect correction of students' language errors.

Anxiety discussed alongside other individual learner differences (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) [11], is still considered to be a relatively new and developing area within foreign language research. Although this research does not put forth generalizable results, it does draw the reader's attention to the phenomena of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. The prevalence of language learning anxiety has been realized in every English class in Iran, and important measures should be taken to try to minimize its negative effects.

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Appendix A: English Version of FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986)

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in 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 foreign 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 worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
12. In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. It would not be nervous speaking in the foreign language with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
23. I always feel that the other students speak the language better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
25. Language class move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

Appendix B: Persian Version of the FLCAS

به نام خدا

Participant No……

ردیف	سئوالات	شدیداً موافقم	موافقم	نظری ندارم	شدیداً مخالفم	مخالفم
1	وقتی در کلاس زبان انگلیسی صحبت می کنم، هیچ وقت به خودم مطمئن نیستم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	در کلاس زبان انگلیسی، نگران اشتباه کردن نیستم	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	اگر بدانم که قرار است در کلاس زبان انگلیسی از من درس پرسیده شود می لرزم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	وقتی که معلم به زبان انگلیسی صحبت می کند و من نمی فهمم که او چه می گوید، می ترسم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	شرکت کردن در کلاس های متعدد زبان انگلیسی برایم مسئله ای ندارد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	سر کلاس زبان انگلیسی به مسائلی که اصلاً به کلاس زبان ارتباطی ندارند فکر می کنم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	دائم فکر می کنم که دانش آموزان دیگر در یادگیری زبان انگلیسی بهتر از من هستند.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	هنگام امتحان زبان انگلیسی معمولاً درآرامش هستم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	اگر مجبور شوم بدون آمادگی قبلی در کلاس زبان انگلیسی صحبت کنم، دچار اضطراب و ترس ناگهانی می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	نگران پیامد مردود شدن در کلاس زبان انگلیسی هستم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	نمی فهمم که چرا بعضی از مردم آنقدر کلاس زبان انگلیسی برایشان ناراحت کننده است.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ردیف	سئوالات	شدیداً موافقم	موافقم	نظری ندارم	شدیداً مخالفم	مخالفم
12	اگر در کلاس زبان انگلیسی مطالبی را که می دانم را فراموش کنم، عصبی می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	داوطلبانه پاسخ دادن به سئولات در کلاس زبان انگلیسی مرا خجالت زده می کند.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	وقتی با کسانی که زبان					

	انگلیسی زبان مادریشان است صحبت می کنم، دلهره ندارم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	در کلاس انگلیسی،وقتی نمی فهمم معلم چه چیزی را دارد تصحیح می کند،ناراحت می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	حتی اگر برای کلاس انگلیسی کاملاً آماده باشم، دلواپس هستم .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	اغلب دلم می خواهد به کلاس زبان انگلیسی نروم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	هنگام صحبت کردن در کلاس زبان انگلیسی کاملاً اعتماد به نفس دارم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	از اینکه معلم زبان انگلیسی من همیشه آماده است که هر اشتباه مرا تصحیح کند، نگرانم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	اگر قرار باشد معلم زبان انگلیسی مرا برای پرسش کلاسی صدا بزند، صدای قلب خودم را می شنوم .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	هر چه بیشتر برای امتحان زبان انگلیسی درس می خوانم،بیشتر گیج می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	برای کامل آماده کردن خود برای کلاس زبان انگلیسی تحت فشار نیستم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	همیشه احساس می کنم که دانش آموزآموزان دیگر از من بهتر انگلیسی صحبت می کنند.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
ردیف	**سئوالات**	**شدیداً موافقم**	**موافقم**	**نظری ندارم**	**شدیداً مخالفم**	**مخالفم**
24	در هنگام صحبت کردن زبان انگلیسی جلوی سایر دانش آموزان در کلاس، خودآگاه و خجالتی می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	آنقدر کلاس زبان انگلیسی به سرعت جلو می رود که نگران هستم عقب بمانم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	سر کلاس زبان انگلیسی بیشتر از سایر کلاسهایم نگران و عصبی هستم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	وقتی در کلاس زبان انگلیسی صحبت می کنم،گیج و عصبی می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	وقتی در حال رفتن به کلاس زبان انگلیسی هستم، بسیار احساس آرامش و اطمینان دارم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	وقتی تمام کلماتی که معلم زبان انگلیسی می گوید را نمی فهمم،	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	عصبی می شوم.					
30	از اینکه برای صحبت کردن به زبان انگلیسی این همه قاعده باید گرفت، احساس سر در گمی می کنم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	می ترسم که وقتی دارم انگلیسی صحبت می کنم، دانش آموزان دیگر به من بخندند.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	احتمالاً وقتی که کنار کسانی که انگلیسی زبان مادریشان است هستم، احساس آرامش می کنم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	وقتی معلم زبان انگلیسی سئوالاتی را از من بپرسد که مطالعه قبلی درباره آنها نداشته ام، عصبی می شوم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐