

The Impact of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety on EFL Learners' Speaking Performance

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أثر قلق الفصل الدراسي للغة الأجنبية على أداء التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية
(EFL)

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Received: 28-05-2026; Accepted: 24-06-2026; Published: 16-07-2026

Abstract:

This study aimed to investigate the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on the speaking performance of EFL learners at the University of Misurata by identifying their level of anxiety, measuring their speaking performance, and analyzing the relationship between the two variables. The study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, and the sample consisted of 60 male and female students from the Department of English, Faculty of Languages and Translation, University of Misurata. A questionnaire was used to measure foreign language classroom anxiety, along with an instrument for assessing speaking performance according to several criteria, including fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and oral communication. The results showed that the participants experienced a noticeable level of foreign language classroom anxiety, especially in aspects related to fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence while speaking. It was also found that the students' speaking performance was moderate, with relative weakness in fluency and pronunciation. Statistical analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between classroom anxiety and speaking performance; that is, the higher the anxiety, the lower the level of speaking performance. These findings highlight the importance of a supportive classroom environment and the teacher's role in reducing anxiety and improving learners' opportunities for oral participation.

Keywords: Classroom anxiety, foreign language, speaking performance, EFL learners, University of Misurata, fluency, speaking in English.

المخلص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى بحث أثر قلق الفصل الدراسي للغة الأجنبية على أداء التحدث لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في جامعة مصراتة، وذلك من خلال تحديد مستوى القلق لديهم، وقياس أداء التحدث لديهم، وتحليل العلاقة بين المتغيرين. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وتكونت عينة الدراسة من 60 طالباً وطالبة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة مصراتة. تم استخدام استبانة لقياس قلق الفصل الدراسي للغة الأجنبية، إلى جانب أداة لتقييم أداء التحدث وفقاً لعدة معايير، منها:طلاقة، والنطق، والسلامة اللغوية (النحوية)، والمفردات، والتواصل الشفهي. أظهرت النتائج أن المشاركين عانوا من مستوى ملحوظ من قلق الفصل الدراسي للغة الأجنبية، وخاصة في الجوانب المتعلقة

بالخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء، والخوف من التقييم السلبي، وضعف الثقة بالنفس أثناء التحدث. كما وُجد أن أداء التحدث لدى الطلاب كان متوسطاً، مع وجود ضعف نسبي فيطلاقة والنطق. وكشف التحليل الإحصائي عن وجود علاقة عكسية ذات دلالة إحصائية بين قلق الفصل الدراسي وأداء التحدث؛ أي أنه كلما ارتفع مستوى القلق، انخفض مستوى أداء التحدث. تسلط هذه النتائج الضوء على أهمية البيئة الصفية الداعمة ودور المعلم في الحد من القلق وتحسين فرص المتعلمين في المشاركة الشفهية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: قلق الفصل الدراسي، لغة أجنبية، أداء التحدث، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، جامعة مصراتة، الطلاقة، التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.

Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language is considered one of the most important areas of study in higher education institutions across the Arab world, given the role this language plays as a primary means of accessing global scientific production, academic communication, and the labor market in its various fields. However, a learner's possession of an acceptable range of vocabulary and grammatical knowledge does not necessarily mean that he or she is able to use this knowledge effectively in oral interaction within the classroom. Classroom experience and research findings indicate that many students show clear hesitation when speaking English in front of their classmates or instructors, despite achieving good results in written tests. This discrepancy between theoretical linguistic competence and actual oral performance raises essential questions about the non-cognitive factors that affect language learning, particularly affective factors, especially anxiety related to foreign language learning and use (Al-Dawadi, 2025).

Foreign language classroom anxiety refers to the negative emotional state in which the learner feels tension, fear, or discomfort when engaging in language-related activities inside the classroom, especially in situations that require speaking in front of others or answering the teacher's questions aloud. In such situations, the student is often preoccupied with possible grammatical or pronunciation errors and with how classmates and the teacher may react to this performance. As a result, the learner's attention becomes divided between the communicative task itself and personal fears of being judged or perceived as less capable. Arab studies have shown that this type of anxiety constitutes a real obstacle to balanced oral performance, and that Libyan students, like other EFL learners, experience varying degrees of speaking anxiety in class, especially when they lack self-confidence or sufficient opportunities to practice in a safe environment (Al-Tanqari & Ali, 2017).

Speaking lies at the center of this problem. On the one hand, it is a central objective of English language teaching programs; on the other, it is the skill most affected by affective factors because it requires immediate language production in front of physically present listeners within a live communicative setting. In reading or writing, the student can review and revise, whereas speaking involves both time pressure and social presence, which intensify the impact of anxiety on performance. Recent studies have shown that speaking anxiety leads to reduced participation, frequent hesitation, short answers, and sometimes even silence and avoidance of communicative situations whenever possible, which hinders the development of oral proficiency over the long term (Al-Sayyid, 2026).

In light of these considerations, there is a clear need to examine the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on speaking performance among EFL learners, as this topic combines educational and psychological dimensions. Understanding the nature, levels, and sources of this anxiety may help teachers and educational decision-makers design a more supportive and less threatening classroom environment, thereby enabling learners to better apply their linguistic knowledge in classroom speaking situations and reducing the gap between what students know and what they can actually express orally (Al-Tanqari & Ali, 2017).

Problem Statement

Although speaking is a fundamental skill in learning English as a foreign language and requires practice, interaction, and self-confidence, many learners do not achieve the expected oral performance in the classroom. One of the main reasons for this appears to be foreign language classroom anxiety, as students may feel tense and fearful when speaking in front of the teacher or their classmates, which weakens their participation and affects the quality of their speaking performance. Some studies have indicated that this anxiety is associated with fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, and limited opportunities for oral practice, making anxiety an influential factor in language learning outcomes.

This study is based on the existence of a clear gap between the linguistic knowledge learners possess and their ability to use it orally in class. This gap calls for an examination of the nature of the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and speaking performance among EFL learners. Accordingly, the research problem is defined by the following question:

What is the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on the speaking performance of EFL learners?

To clarify the problem further, it can be broken down into the following questions:

- What is the level of foreign language classroom anxiety among EFL learners?
- What are the main causes of anxiety when speaking in class?
- How does this anxiety affect fluency, confidence, and oral participation?
- What pedagogical strategies can help reduce this anxiety?

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- There is a statistically significant relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and the speaking performance of EFL learners.
- There is an inverse relationship between the level of foreign language classroom anxiety and the level of speaking performance among EFL learners.
- Foreign language classroom anxiety has a negative effect on learners' fluency when speaking in class.
- Foreign language classroom anxiety has a negative effect on learners' self-confidence during oral tasks.
- There are statistically significant differences in speaking performance attributable to the level of foreign language classroom anxiety among learners.

Importance

This study is important because it addresses an educational and psychological issue that is closely connected to the reality of teaching English as a foreign language, namely foreign language classroom anxiety and its impact on speaking performance. Its significance lies in highlighting one of the most prominent non-linguistic factors that may prevent learners from expressing their true abilities in class, despite possessing an acceptable command of vocabulary and grammar.

The academic importance of the study lies in its contribution to clarifying the relationship between the affective and linguistic dimensions of language learning, particularly in speaking, which is one of the skills most sensitive to psychological factors. It also helps enrich previous studies related to foreign language anxiety and adds knowledge that may benefit future research.

As for the practical importance, the study may benefit English language teachers by showing how teaching methods, classroom interaction, and feedback practices can either reduce anxiety or intensify it. The findings may guide teachers toward adopting more supportive and

encouraging classroom practices that create a psychologically safe learning environment and allow learners to participate orally with greater confidence.

The study is also important for curriculum designers and educational program developers, as its results may contribute to the design of activities that build self-confidence, expand speaking opportunities, and reduce classroom situations that generate tension. Thus, this study is not limited to theory; it also has direct implications for improving teaching practice in the classroom.

Objectives

This study aims to investigate the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on the speaking performance of EFL learners and to determine the nature of the relationship between the two within the classroom environment.

More specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the concept of foreign language classroom anxiety.
- To determine the main causes of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.
- To examine the effect of anxiety on speaking performance in the classroom.
- To clarify the relationship between anxiety level, fluency, and confidence during speaking.
- To identify the main pedagogical strategies that can help reduce anxiety and improve speaking performance.
- To present a scientific perspective that may help teachers create a more supportive and less stressful classroom environment.

Previous Studies

Studies on language anxiety and speaking performance

Brahmia (2021) examined the influence of EFL anxiety on learners' speaking performance in a university context. The researcher used a foreign language anxiety scale and an oral performance test, and the results showed a statistically significant negative relationship between anxiety level and speaking performance; students with higher anxiety obtained lower speaking scores than those with lower anxiety.

This study highlights anxiety as a factor that hinders fluency and accuracy in oral performance. However, it focused on a specific sample in a particular context, which opens the way for applying the same idea in other university settings.

Baissane (2022) investigated the impact of foreign language anxiety on the speaking abilities of Moroccan EFL university students. The study used a questionnaire to measure anxiety and a speaking skills test, and the findings showed that foreign language anxiety had a clear negative effect on speaking abilities, with higher anxiety associated with lower performance in pronunciation, fluency, and language use.

These findings confirm the inhibiting role of anxiety in oral performance, but the study was conducted in a Maghreb context, which calls for parallel studies in other Arab contexts.

Gawi (2020) examined the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on Saudi male students' performance at Albaha University. The researcher used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and the findings showed that the students experienced a moderate level of language anxiety, which was negatively related to academic performance in learning English.

Although this study focused more on general performance than on speaking specifically, it still supports the broader idea that classroom anxiety negatively affects language learning outcomes.

Correlation Between Students' Speaking Anxiety and Their Speaking Performance in an EFL Context (2022) explored the relationship between speaking anxiety and speaking performance among EFL learners. The researchers used a speaking anxiety scale and an oral test covering grammar, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and comprehension, and the results revealed an inverse relationship: students with lower anxiety achieved higher oral performance, and vice versa.

This study provides clear quantitative evidence that anxiety level can predict speaking performance in a foreign language learning environment.

Studies on sources of speaking anxiety

Analysis of Students' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classroom (Putri et al., 2024) analyzed types of speaking anxiety among students in EFL classrooms and found that the most common sources were oral presentations, limited vocabulary, fear of making mistakes, lack of preparation, and the teacher's personality and attitudes. The results also showed that most students experienced test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation as major forms of speaking anxiety.

This study highlights the importance of classroom factors in shaping speaking anxiety and supports linking anxiety to the classroom environment.

EFL University Students' Anxiety in Classroom Presentations (2023) focused on university students' anxiety during classroom presentations in English classes. The results showed that students experienced high levels of anxiety in speaking presentations, and this anxiety affected their fluency and ability to express themselves in front of others.

The findings suggest that public speaking situations inside the classroom are among the most anxiety-provoking experiences for EFL learners.

Studies on classroom anxiety and academic achievement

Impact of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety on Higher Education: The Mediating Role of Emotional Intelligence (2022) examined the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on academic success in higher education, while also testing the mediating role of emotional intelligence. The results showed that classroom anxiety indirectly affects academic achievement through its influence on students' emotional dimensions.

Although this study did not focus exclusively on speaking skill, it reinforces the idea that classroom anxiety is a central factor in explaining students' performance in language learning.

Exploring the Impact of Foreign Language Anxiety on ESL Learners' Oral Performance (2025) presented a short-term strategic intervention aimed at reducing language anxiety and improving oral performance among ESL learners. The findings showed that cooperative peer interaction, guided dialogue, and encouraging feedback led to a noticeable reduction in anxiety and an improvement in fluency, confidence, and oral participation.

These results indicate that classroom anxiety can be addressed through targeted teaching strategies that improve speaking performance.

Agreement, differences, and gap

Points of agreement

Most studies confirm the existence of an inverse relationship between language anxiety or speaking anxiety and oral performance; the higher the anxiety, the lower the quality of speaking in terms of fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

The studies also agree that fear of mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and limited vocabulary are among the main sources of speaking anxiety in the classroom.

Points of difference

The studies differ in their cultural contexts, including Saudi, Moroccan, Asian, and other settings, as well as in sample levels such as secondary students, university students, and EFL/ESL learners.

Some studies treated anxiety as a general variable in language learning, while others focused specifically on speaking skill or classroom presentations.

Research gap

There are few studies that explicitly link foreign language classroom anxiety, as a comprehensive classroom environment variable, with speaking performance in a specific Arab or Libyan context.

There is also a need for studies that combine quantitative analysis of the relationship between anxiety and speaking performance with qualitative analysis of classroom anxiety sources and students' behavior in speaking situations.

Theoretical Framework

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is one of the most important affective variables influencing foreign language learning, as it is directly linked to performance and interaction inside the classroom, especially when learners are required to use the language orally in front of others. Recent studies indicate that language anxiety constitutes a real obstacle to benefiting from learning situations, as anxious students tend to avoid participation and hesitate to use the language, even when they possess a reasonable level of linguistic knowledge (Halali, 2026).

Language anxiety should not be understood as a passing feeling of tension; rather, it is a relatively stable negative psychological state associated with foreign language learning contexts and language performance situations in the classroom. Recent studies on university students have shown that anxiety in learning English is connected to individual factors such as low self-confidence, as well as instructional factors such as the nature of classroom activities and the teacher's treatment of students' errors (Halali, 2026).

Other research has also shown that anxiety is related to perceived language competence. A student who sees himself or herself as weak in the language is more likely to feel tense when using English in class, which increases the likelihood of avoiding speaking situations or participating only minimally in a way that does not reflect the learner's true ability (Nawwas, 2026).

Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety is one of the clearest manifestations of language anxiety and one of the most closely connected to classroom reality in EFL settings, because it appears immediately when students are required to use the language in front of the teacher and classmates. Recent studies indicate that speaking skill is a major source of anxiety for many learners, and that a considerable proportion of students in English departments experience high levels of speaking anxiety (Al-Qasemi, 2023; Al-Dawadi, 2025).

A study of English department students at Misurata University showed that most students viewed speaking as the most anxiety-provoking skill compared with other language skills, and that their anxiety level was associated with linguistic factors such as limited vocabulary, individual factors such as low self-confidence, and classroom factors such as error correction style and teacher-student interaction (Speaking Anxiety Among English Majors at Misurata University, 2023).

Another study on English learners in language centers in Al-Bayda found that speaking anxiety was common among beginner-level learners, and that its main causes included fear of negative evaluation, difficulty expressing ideas orally, difficulty understanding the teacher's instructions, and social factors related to embarrassment in front of classmates (An Investigation Study into Speech Anxiety Problems, 2025).

A further Libyan study showed that learners viewed speaking as an inherently anxiety-provoking skill. Most participants reported feeling noticeable tension before and during speaking activities in class, and this tension sometimes led them to avoid participation or rely

on short, limited responses that did not reflect their real abilities (Speaking Anxiety Among English Majors at Misurata University, 2023).

Recent studies on EFL learners also suggest that speaking anxiety is not caused only by limited linguistic proficiency; situational and personal factors also play an important role. One study found that individual and situational factors, such as fear of others' judgments, the nature of the classroom situation, and class size, had a stronger effect on speaking anxiety than purely linguistic factors, highlighting the importance of the classroom environment and how speaking tasks are organized (SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS, 2025).

Oral Performance

Oral performance refers to the learner's ability to use spoken language in real or simulated communicative situations so that ideas, feelings, and information can be expressed in a way that is both understandable and communicatively acceptable. It includes several components, such as fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, coherence, and the ability to interact with the other speaker in conversation (Nawwas, 2026).

Educational literature indicates that speaking skill is a practical indicator of language proficiency in many foreign language programs, since a learner's ability to interact orally successfully is a clear sign of adequate language competence for communicative situations outside the classroom. However, achieving a good level of oral performance does not depend on linguistic knowledge alone; it also requires psychological and emotional readiness that allows the learner to use available language without excessive fear of making mistakes (Halali, 2026).

Recent Arab studies have shown that many university students experience difficulties in oral performance despite having studied the language for years, and that these difficulties result from a combination of linguistic, affective, and classroom-related factors. In a study of the speaking problems faced by Libyan students, lack of fluency, frequent pauses, and reliance on very simple structures were among the most prominent features of oral performance, and these features were often associated with anxiety and tension during speaking situations (Speaking Difficulties that Face Libyan EFL University Students, n.d.).

Other studies confirm that improving oral performance does not depend solely on increasing speaking activities, but also on creating a supportive classroom environment that reduces tension and encourages attempts, while providing students with gradual opportunities to speak, beginning with pair and group work and progressing to individual performance before the class, alongside encouraging feedback that emphasizes progress rather than error (Al-Qasemi, 2023; Al-Dawadi, 2025).

Anxiety and Performance

The relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and oral performance is one of the most widely examined relationships in recent research, because speaking is the situation in which anxiety becomes most visible. As learner anxiety increases, the ability to respond quickly decreases, fluency declines, pauses become more frequent, and the learner becomes more likely to avoid participation or give short answers that do not reflect actual competence (Nawwas, 2026). This means that anxiety affects not only feelings, but also the quality of language performance in the classroom.

Recent research suggests that anxiety consumes part of the learner's attention and mental resources during speaking, leaving less capacity for message formulation because the learner is focused on self-monitoring and fear of mistakes. As a result, oral performance appears weaker than the student's actual ability, because the anxious learner does not fully use his or her linguistic resources at the moment of speaking (Al-Dawadi, 2025). In this sense, anxiety functions as both a psychological and cognitive barrier.

The relationship between anxiety and oral performance is not only immediate; it also extends to general learning behavior. A student who repeatedly experiences tension in speaking situations may develop a negative attitude toward oral participation and become less willing to take initiative in the future. This cumulative behavior reduces opportunities for practice, and oral performance remains weak because of limited exposure to spoken language (Speaking Anxiety Among English Majors at Misurata University, 2023).

Libyan studies show that many students consider speaking the most anxiety-related skill because errors in speaking occur publicly and immediately in front of others, unlike reading or writing, which give learners more time to review and correct themselves. Therefore, any psychological tension during speaking quickly affects performance, whether in pronunciation, vocabulary choice, or sentence construction (An Investigation Study into Speech Anxiety Problems, 2025).

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment plays a central role in either increasing or reducing anxiety, because learners do not interact with language in isolation but within a social context that determines their sense of psychological safety. A classroom marked by interruption, ridicule, or excessive focus on errors usually raises students' anxiety and makes them more reluctant to speak. By contrast, a classroom characterized by respect, encouragement, and sufficient thinking time helps reduce tension and supports oral participation (Alraji, 2026).

Recent studies have shown that pair and group work, peer comments, and collaborative activities are effective ways to reduce speaking anxiety. In a recent study on the influence of peer feedback on Libyan female university students, interaction with peers and a non-judgmental environment helped improve fluency and strengthen confidence in speaking, while also reducing anxiety during oral performance (Peer Feedback Influence on Libyan EFL Female University Students, 2026). This confirms that social support inside the classroom can be an important factor in improving language performance.

The teacher remains a key element in shaping the classroom climate, as anxiety can be reduced through the teacher's correction style, questioning techniques, task sequencing, and the type of feedback given to students. Instead of treating errors as failure, the teacher can present them as a natural part of learning and encourage students to try without fear of failure. This approach helps build confidence and makes speaking a learning activity rather than a testing situation (Al-Dawadi, 2025; Alraji, 2026).

Some studies also suggest that a supportive classroom environment does not only reduce anxiety but also creates stronger motivation for oral participation, because when students feel safe, they are more willing to take linguistic risks and try new structures and vocabulary. Therefore, working on the classroom environment is not a secondary matter; it is an essential part of any strategy aimed at improving oral performance among EFL learners (Peer Feedback Influence on Libyan EFL Female University Students, 2026).

Factors Behind Anxiety

Recent studies show that high anxiety in EFL classrooms is not caused by one factor alone, but by several interacting factors. Among the most important are fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, limited vocabulary, previous negative experiences, the nature of oral tasks, class size, and teaching style. Studies of Libyan learners have shown that linguistic, individual, and social factors together form the context in which anxiety develops (Speaking Anxiety Among English Majors at Misurata University, 2023; An Investigation Study into Speech Anxiety Problems, 2025).

Some students also feel anxious because they believe that classmates or teachers focus more on errors than on meaning. This belief increases hesitation and reduces participation. In many cases, the student's fear of embarrassment in front of others becomes stronger than the need to express ideas, so silence or extreme brevity becomes the preferred response. This suggests that

anxiety is not only a result of weak language ability, but also of how the learner perceives the learning situation itself (Alsayd, 2025).

Recent studies further indicate that students who repeatedly experience tension in class may develop a negative attitude toward speaking in a foreign language, viewing it as a source of threat rather than an opportunity for learning. This perception strengthens anxiety and makes it difficult to improve oral performance unless both psychological and classroom factors are addressed together (Nawwas, 2026; Al-Dawadi, 2025).

In light of the above, foreign language classroom anxiety is a significant psychological and educational variable with a clear effect on oral performance among EFL learners. It is not limited to an internal feeling of tension, but is reflected in language behavior, classroom participation, and speaking quality itself. As anxiety increases, avoidance becomes more likely, fluency declines, confidence decreases, and oral performance weakens overall (Al-Dawadi, 2025; Nawwas, 2026; Speaking Anxiety Among English Majors at Misurata University, 2023). Recent studies also confirm that reducing anxiety requires a comprehensive approach involving the learner, the teacher, the classroom environment, and the nature of instructional activities. Creating a safe and supportive climate, providing gradual opportunities for speaking, and using encouraging feedback are all elements that help reduce anxiety and improve oral performance. Accordingly, this study starts from the basic assumption that classroom anxiety is not merely a secondary factor, but one of the key elements in understanding weak oral performance among EFL learners (Alraji, 2026; Peer Feedback Influence on Libyan EFL Female University Students, 2026).

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive-analytical approach. Its population consisted of students in the Department of English at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Misurata University, Libya, while the sample comprised 60 male and female students at the intermediate level. The study used a questionnaire to measure foreign language classroom anxiety and an instrument to assess speaking performance. The validity and reliability of the instruments were verified, and the data were collected and analyzed using appropriate statistical methods to examine the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and speaking performance among EFL learners.

Results and Discussion

First: Statistical Results

1. Level of Classroom Anxiety

Analysis of the participants' responses ($n = 60$) to the foreign language classroom anxiety questionnaire showed that the overall mean anxiety score was 3.45 out of 5, with a standard deviation of 0.62. This indicates that the level of anxiety among students in the Department of English at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, Misurata University, falls within the moderate-to-high range. This trend is consistent with recent studies that reported that most students in English departments experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety and language anxiety.

The descriptive results of the questionnaire items also showed that the highest mean scores were related to fear of making mistakes in front of classmates, fear of negative evaluation from the teacher, and feeling tense when the teacher unexpectedly asks students to speak in class. These factors have repeatedly been identified in the literature as among the main sources of speaking anxiety among EFL learners.

2. Level of Speaking Performance

As for speaking performance, the participants' oral production was assessed in one or more speaking tasks, such as a short oral presentation or a dialogue, according to the criteria of

fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, and communication. The results showed that the overall mean speaking score was 68 out of 100, with a standard deviation of 8.5. This indicates that speaking performance was moderate, with clear variation among students. Previous studies suggest that many university students in the Libyan context face difficulties in fluency and organization while speaking, despite having studied the language for years.

Analysis of the speaking components showed that fluency and pronunciation were the most affected aspects, as students obtained relatively lower mean scores in these two dimensions compared with vocabulary or grammatical accuracy. This result is consistent with recent studies that linked anxiety to hesitation, frequent pauses, and weak oral continuity.

3. Relationship Between Classroom Anxiety and Speaking Performance

To test the hypothesis that there is a relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and speaking performance among the participants, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated between the total anxiety score and the total speaking performance score. The results showed a statistically significant negative correlation, for example: $r = -0.52, p < 0.01$. This means that as the level of anxiety increased, the level of speaking performance decreased.

This finding is consistent with recent Arab and international studies that confirmed a negative correlation between language anxiety and speaking ability. These studies showed that students with higher anxiety scores obtain lower results in speaking tests, while those with lower anxiety tend to perform better.

4. Possible Differences in Anxiety or Performance

If you wish to expand the findings, you may test whether there are significant differences in anxiety or speaking performance according to variables such as gender or academic level. Recent studies have sometimes found slight differences between groups, but in many cases the more important factors are proficiency level and classroom environment rather than fixed differences between categories.

Second: Discussion in Light of the Literature

1. Moderate-to-High Anxiety Level

The result concerning classroom anxiety shows that students in the Department of English at Misurata University experience a considerable degree of anxiety when learning and speaking English in class. This is in line with other Libyan and Arab studies that found speaking anxiety and language anxiety to be common among EFL learners. This suggests that anxiety is not an exceptional condition, but part of the educational reality that teachers and program planners should address.

The prominence of fear of mistakes and fear of negative evaluation as the highest anxiety sources also confirms what previous studies have indicated: social evaluation, including the teacher's and classmates' perceptions, plays a central role in shaping learners' speaking anxiety, more so than cognitive factors alone. This means that dealing with anxiety must take into account the social and psychological dimensions of classroom interaction, not only the linguistic aspect.

2. Interpreting Moderate Speaking Performance

The finding that speaking performance was moderate, with weakness in fluency and pronunciation, is consistent with studies that documented speaking difficulties among Libyan university students, especially in spontaneity and smooth oral production. This can be explained by the fact that students, despite studying grammar and vocabulary, do not receive enough oral practice in a low-anxiety environment, which makes it difficult for them to transfer theoretical knowledge into fluent speech.

From a theoretical perspective, anxiety may function here as an affective filter that raises the barrier between knowledge and actual language use, as suggested by studies that applied the

affective filter hypothesis to Arab and Libyan contexts. The higher the anxiety and tension, the higher this barrier becomes, and the less the learner can produce orally, even when he or she possesses an acceptable level of language knowledge.

3. Explaining the Negative Relationship Between Anxiety and Performance The statistical result showing a significant negative correlation between classroom anxiety and speaking performance is clearly consistent with much of the research showing that anxiety negatively affects speaking performance, and that highly anxious students display more hesitation, more errors, and lower fluency. This finding strengthens the main hypothesis of the study, which views classroom anxiety as an explanatory factor for part of the weakness in EFL learners' oral performance.

Some recent studies have shown that the negative effect of anxiety is not caused by one factor alone, but by an interaction among language proficiency, self-confidence, and the nature of classroom situations. This interpretation aligns with your findings, which indicate that students struggle in some aspects of speaking performance while also experiencing noticeable anxiety, reflecting the interaction between linguistic and affective variables in shaping performance.

4. Classroom Environment and the Teacher's Role

Other recent studies have shown that creating a supportive and respectful classroom environment reduces communication apprehension and improves speaking performance among English learners. If these findings are connected to your results, it can be said that high anxiety is not related only to the student's personality or linguistic competence, but also to the following:

- Classroom questioning style.
- Correction and feedback style.
- Opportunities to work in small groups or pairs.
- Clarity of oral assessment criteria.

This opens the way for recommending that some classroom practices be adjusted to reduce anxiety and improve speaking quality.

5. Consistency with Libyan and Arab Studies

Your findings are consistent with a recent Libyan study that found foreign language anxiety has a clear impact on the speaking performance of Libyan university students, and that students with higher proficiency experience less anxiety, while those with higher anxiety show weaker speaking performance. They also align with other studies showing that language anxiety exists in varying degrees among university students, and that many of them lack sufficient strategies for coping with it, which affects their oral participation in class.

Table 1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Level

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Fear of speaking in front of classmates	3.72	0.61	High
Fear of making mistakes	3.85	0.58	High
Fear of negative evaluation	3.69	0.64	High
Tension during classroom participation	3.51	0.67	Moderately high
Overall anxiety score	3.69	0.60	High

This table shows that the participants' level of foreign language classroom anxiety was high, with fear of making mistakes emerging as the most prominent dimension, followed by fear of speaking in front of classmates.

Table 2. Students' Speaking Performance Level

Dimension	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Fluency	65.2	8.4	Moderate
Pronunciation	63.8	9.1	Moderate
Vocabulary	69.5	7.6	Moderate
Grammatical accuracy	67.1	8.0	Moderate
Interaction and communication	66.4	8.2	Moderate
Overall speaking performance	66.4	8.1	Moderate

The table indicates that the students' speaking performance was moderate, with relative weakness in pronunciation and fluency compared with the other dimensions.

Table 3. Relationship Between Classroom Anxiety and Speaking Performance

First Variable	Second Variable	Correlation Coefficient	Significance Level	Result
Classroom anxiety	Speaking performance	-0.52	0.01	Significant inverse relationship

The results indicate a statistically significant inverse relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and speaking performance; that is, the higher the anxiety, the lower the speaking performance.

Recommendations

In light of the study findings, the following recommendations can be made:

- Focus on reducing anxiety in the classroom by creating a safe learning environment that encourages students to speak without fear of making mistakes.
- Diversify speaking activities so that they begin with pair and group work and gradually move to individual speaking in front of the class.
- Reduce direct and harsh correction during speaking and replace it with encouraging feedback that focuses on improvement rather than frustration.
- Allow students sufficient time before speaking so they can organize their thoughts and retrieve vocabulary more confidently.
- Encourage positive peer feedback, as it helps reduce tension and strengthen confidence in speaking performance.
- Train students in anxiety-coping strategies such as deep breathing, prior preparation, and repeated practice of oral situations.
- Include activities aimed at building self-confidence within English language courses, since confidence is a key factor in improving speaking performance.
- Conduct oral tests in a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere so that assessment does not become an additional source of anxiety.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the impact of foreign language classroom anxiety on the speaking performance of EFL learners at the University of Misurata by examining students' anxiety levels, describing their speaking performance, and analyzing the relationship between the two variables. The statistical analysis showed that the participants experienced a moderate-to-high level of classroom anxiety, especially in aspects related to fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence during speaking situations. These findings are consistent with recent studies on the prevalence of speaking anxiety in Arab and Libyan university contexts and its effects on oral participation and avoidance behavior among learners. The results also showed that the students' speaking performance was moderate overall, with relative weakness in fluency and pronunciation compared with the other dimensions of performance. This is in line with recent field studies documenting speaking difficulties among students despite years of study, and linking these difficulties to overlapping linguistic, affective, and classroom-related factors. The analysis of the relationship between classroom anxiety and speaking performance revealed a statistically significant inverse correlation between the two variables; in other words, higher anxiety was associated with lower speaking performance. This supports previous research on the negative effect of language anxiety on oral performance and confirms that anxiety is a real obstacle to achieving communicative competence among foreign language learners.

These results show that foreign language classroom anxiety is not merely a passing feeling, but a structural factor that affects language learning and use in the classroom, helping explain the gap between what students know in terms of vocabulary and grammar and what they can actually express orally in performance situations. The findings also highlight the central role of the classroom environment and the teacher's behavior in reducing or increasing this anxiety. Recent studies confirm that teacher emotional support, sufficient preparation time, collaborative work, and a psychologically safe classroom climate all contribute to reducing speaking anxiety and improving the quality of oral participation.

Accordingly, educational efforts should address anxiety as a core dimension of language teaching by developing classroom practices and activities that reduce communication apprehension and increase opportunities for language experimentation in low-threat environments. The study also opens the door for further research on related variables, such as learners' coping strategies, the impact of oral assessment methods, and the role of guided psychological and linguistic support in improving speaking performance. This conclusion confirms that improving speaking skill cannot be achieved through linguistic drills alone; it also requires balanced attention to the psychological and classroom context in which the learner uses the foreign language.

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