



QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS OF EFL FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS' ANXIOUSNESS IN LEARNING ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN A TERTIARY CONTEXT

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate EFL first-year university students' apprehension in learning the English language. Several EFL teaching strategies are used in first-year English classes and their effectiveness in making learning more successful in discussing the problem of apprehension in learning English. The current study tries to investigate the causes and factors behind this problem as well as, trying to find solutions for this issue. A set of questionnaires was implemented among first-year university students (169 students). The results revealed that the majority of the participants possessed a higher level of anxiety in learning the English language at university due to some factors discussed in this research. Further recommendations and suggestions to overcome this impediment in learning the English language have been discussed in the academic sphere.

Keywords: Learning English language, first-year students- anxiousness, factors.

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Introduction

Learning a new language pushes people to know exclusive cultures and different points of view (Tao & Gao, 2022). It can supply them with high-quality attitudes that may enhance their usual well-being. Thus, gaining knowledge of a new language offers psychological benefits, and develops distinct approaches of thinking. Although English is neither the leading language, nor is it the language spoken by all the world's population, it is still the official language of 53 countries, where it is considered as the primary language of 400 million speakers, and this is not all (Ali et al., 2021). If for instance, you met someone from another country, both of you will be able to speak English, as it may open many doors in the field of work, study, and may also promote cultural exchange (Le & Le, 2022). In Algeria, the English language is considered a foreign language. Students start studying it from the pre-secondary stage, unlike the French language, which is considered a second foreign language that students begin to study at the primary level. With regards to the beginning of studying the English language, at that level student studies this language three times a week with professors specialized in this subject, they take two interrogations in each semester and an exam at the end of it. In fact, the new curriculum is consistent with the school system in Algeria. The first four years at school are about promoting the discoveries and the development of the child, emotionally, physically, as well as socially. However, the learning phase does not stop here; they will continue to study this language even though their academic path has ended.

Teaching English in Algeria should follow the goal mentioned below, which helps the community to recognize and use this language almost on a daily basis, in order to live in harmony with the ongoing developments (Nadia, 2011). This can be achieved by providing students with linguistic tools that play a key role in effective communication. Supporting national and shared values, developing students' cultural criticism and tolerance between them and worldliness.

Brophy (1988) defined lecture room administration as an action taken to create and preserve a study surroundings conductively to the attainment of the desires of practice arranging the physical environment of the classroom, establishing guidelines and procedures, keeping interested to lessons and

engagement in educational activities.” (p. 21). Classroom management is a set of methods and capabilities that permits a trainer to manipulate students correctly to create a high-quality learning environment. Jones, Bailey, and Jacob (2014) declared that lecture room management is associated with the problematic and dynamic interplay between students and teachers in the procedure of merchandising academic, social, and emotional improvement in a study room setting. This is why “teachers must deal with surprising activities and manage the college student’s behavior using fine school room management strategies.

Problem Statement

Frequently hinge about being anxious whilst getting to know to learn English as a foreign language in oral expression classes and declare to have an intellectual blockage against learning this overseas language. This difficulty needs a deep investigation and a careful data analysis on the phase of the researchers. Other researchers in our department have previously taken this location of research, however, there had been necessary points that have not now been dealt with, like the signs and symptoms of FL anxiety; In addition to taking the learner into consideration as a vital exaggerated element in the studying process. For these reasons, this research tries to investigate the first-year students’ apprehension and the factors impeding them in learning the English language.

Methodology

First-year students of English language major at Mohamed El Bachir El Ibrahimy University of Bordj Bou Arreridj were taken as a sample for this study. The reason for choosing to work with them is that they are in a transitional phase which is considered as the beginning of their academic journey and learning the English language goes deeper than it was in previous stages. In other words, English in secondary schools is easier than at the university; and the latter is considered as a substance, unlike at the University; it is a major and divided into modules such as grammar, phonetics, oral expression, etc. From a population of about 300 students, 169 of them were selected randomly as the sample of this study. According to the table of determining the sample size of the unknown population by Kregcie and Morgan (1970).

Description of the questionnaire

The questionnaire aims at exploring the three major reasons for first-year university students' apprehension about learning English as a foreign language. The latter was divided into three sections, and each of these explores a reason that makes students feel fear of learning the English language. The first section contains six items; the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, and the sixth items, all of these present the students' situation in facing some difficulties in learning English because of their hesitation to share their ideas and the fear of being laughed at. This can lower their affective filter which may pose/trigger other issues that can lead them to be afraid and despise learning The English language. In addition to their fear of making mistakes while learning; these reasons cannot be separated, they all are arbitrarily related to each other, each one completes the other, and students' confidence is affected by both shyness and fear of making mistakes. On the other side, the lack of students' self-confidence could make them feel confused and stressed so they can easily lose focus and make mistakes, then feel shy themselves. For this reason, they prefer to keep their ideas to themselves and the item which is definitely suspicious is whether they think that a language can be only mastered by its native speakers. The second section aims at exploring another reason for students' apprehension presented in the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh item which is the fear of first-year English students of communicating with each other's using the English language. Avoiding English conversation, because they are afraid of not being able to decipher some parts of speech directed to them while they are part of the conversation or the inability of conveying a correct and clear idea. So that the second part of the dialogue may showcase what they want to say. It also aims at knowing if they can express their ideas and thoughts in a clear manner and confirm their fear of communicating in the English language. Another item added to this section is to define their preferences between reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The third section is presented in form of one item, the twelfth one, aimed at exploring whether the first-year students of English at Bordj Bou Arreridj University have apprehension of exams and evaluation.

Data Collection

This questionnaire contains 12 items which are divided into three sections addressed to first-year university students of the English major, dealing

with the factors and reasons that led them to be afraid and have apprehension in learning the English language. It was delivered online where only 73 of them have responded and the other 96 filled out the questionnaire at the end of their session, it takes from seven to ten minutes to respond. The questionnaire was distributed to first year students of English at Al Bachir Al Ibrahimi University. 169 students have participated in answering this questionnaire, they were from two groups where they were 96, and the rest of the answers were gained through online Google form.

Data Analysis

The study that is used is descriptive statistics to analyze data. It aims at investigating the influences of apprehension on student's learning EF. The total number of the participants was 169 as a sample of 300 student of first year English branch, according to Krejcie & Morgan's table of determining sample size of population (1970). The vast majority of answers explain that the most of students' report on three factors which are: shyness and less self-confidence, fear of communication and negative evaluation and exams in learning and producing English language. The statistical data were used to analyze the research data using SPSS version. The data were collected through quantitative method. The twelve items were used to explore the reasons and factors behind first-year English students' apprehension at Mohamed Al Bachir Al Ibrahimi University-Bordj Bou Arreridj, Algeria.

Results and Discussion

The questionnaire contains twelve items which are divided into three sections aimed at finding the reasons and factors behind students' apprehension in learning the English language. It shed light on the difficulties faced by students in learning English. In other words, what reasons and factors are behind the apprehension of learning the English language for first-year university students? After analyzing the data, the findings revealed that the majority of first-year English students have a negative sight of learning English, and they cannot be comfortable or be at ease at producing and learning this language because of different reasons. 1. Shyness and less self-confidence. 2. Fear of communication. 3. Fear of exams and evaluation.

Shyness and Lack of Self-confidence

Results of the first section of the questionnaire, which was addressed to first year English students show that the majority of first year university students of Bordj Bou Arreridj suffer from shyness and less self-confidence in learning and producing English language.

Table 01

Description of the participants' Shyness and less confidence

N.	Item	Yes (Percentage)	Yes (Frequency)	No (Percentage)	No (Frequency)
01	Do you feel afraid of making mistakes and getting into an embarrassing situation in front of your classmates	55.03	93	44.97	76
02	Does shyness prevent you from speaking English language fluently?	79.29	134	20.71	35
03	Does the tension and confusion overcome you during your practice of the English language?	78.11	132	21.89	37
04	Do you think that a language can only be mastered by native speakers?	73.96	125	26.04	44
05	Are you ashamed to share your thoughts with your colleagues and participate in the class?	59.76	101	40.24	68
06	Do you feel no confidence in yourself when you fall in errors and mistakes while learning English?	57.99	98	42.01	71

The current section contains six items directed to first-year English students at Mohamed Al Bachir Al Ibrahimi University. The table above presents the results of the six items after gathering students' responses to each item, while each of them reveals the percentage of the participants who answered YES and answered NO. This was done to confirm that shyness and less confidence are one of the major reasons behind students' apprehension in learning English. According to the previous research, these two are the main causes of students' apprehension in learning the English language. Most of them see that learning a foreign language must be difficult and no one could master it except native speakers. Also, most of them avoid participating in the class because they are afraid of making mistakes and that can lead others to laugh at their mistakes and make them feel shy, which may affect their psyche and their self-confidence. Additionally, most of them declare that shyness makes them stammer in producing the language well.

Fear of communicating

Results of the second section from the questionnaire which was addressed to first year English students, contains five items to explore students' fear of communicating through the English language.

Table 2

Fear of communicating

N.	Item	Yes (%)	Yes (n)	No (%)	No (n)
07	Do you like participating in group discussions?	49.7	84	50.3	85
08	Do you feel comfortable while writing or reading English language more than listening or speaking it?	95.86	162	4.14	07
09	Do you avoid dialogues because of fear of not being able to leave a positive impact on the listener?	56.8	96	43.2	73
10	May you feel embarrassed not being able to decipher an audible piece or speech directed at you in English language?	76.33	129	23.67	40
11	Can you express your thoughts clearly in English class?	39.64	67	60.36	102

By showing the results of these items in the second section, the majority of first-year English students at Mohamed Al Bachir Al Ibrahimi see that English is easier in writing and reading domains, whereas, speaking and

listening could be one of the big issues which they want to avoid. A large number of first-year English students fear to speaking in the English Language publicly (classmates). They avoid engaging in English discussions because they are afraid to communicate particular ideas and are not able to convey clear and correct information. They may also be hesitant about not being able to understand an idea directed to them and be unable to complete the dialogue with the speaker. Horwitz, Tallon & Luo (2010) pointed out that scare of communicating in a foreign language that appears because of student's inability to clearly express their thoughts and ideas in a clear way.

Fear of exams and negative evaluation

Table 3

Fear of exams and evaluation.

N.	Item	Yes (Percentage)	Yes (Frequency)	No (Percentage)	No (Frequency)
12	Do you have concerns about tests and negative evaluation?	51.48	87	48.52	82

This section contains only one item that refers to the students' fear of exams and being judged by others. The question was asked in a direct manner, so students can think and answer, 51. 48% said that they are really concerns about exams and afraid of the negative feedback of the teacher and their classmates. Whereas 48. 52% say that exams are not something that the student should be afraid of and evaluation is part of the learning process, Horwitz pointed out in the context of fear of exams and academic assessment (getting low grades in the subject).

Results revealed that the majority of first-year students suffered from learning the English language because of their fear of different reasons and shyness as well as the lack of self-confidence. Results of the quantitative data confirm the point of view of Horwitz (1986) in dividing types of apprehension in learning a foreign language that is presented in fear of communication which is the inability of students to produce the language in a correct way, fear of exams and evaluation that leads students to be stressed and messy and could affect their learning negatively based on Rapee and Heimberg, (1997). In addition, Rapee and Spence (2004) related

fear of evaluation with social anxiousness which prevents them from doing anything with the feeling of freedom, shyness and lack of self-confidence were impediments for the majority of students. Furthermore, Zheng et al. (2008) confirms the idea that the answers of first-year English students of Bordj Bou Arrerridj University about their fear of making mistakes, most importantly, they need an excessive stage of "felt security." Insisting on policies like "It's okay to make mistakes" and do not snort at each other in this class!" can assist shy kids reap self-confidence in the school setting.

Furthermore, this section revealed an important discussion of the current study findings. The majority of the findings were similar to what we expected and to what previous researchers stated. Results of the questionnaire, which was addressed to first-year university students of English. The latter presented the reasons behind students' apprehension in learning the English language that they presented in the form of questions divided into 3 sections. Each one of these sections described the image of apprehension that the student faced in learning English as a foreign language. The first section of the questionnaire contained both direct and indirect questions about shyness and lack of self-confidence. After collecting data and analyzing students' responses, we found that the majority of them cannot learn English and produce it comfortably, because of their shyness of making mistakes and losing confidence because of these mistakes in several English domains, they even believe that any language can only be mastered only by native speakers. The second section shows the results of students who are afraid of communicating with others. Other reasons include fear of not being able to leave a positive impact on the second part of the speech, fear of not being able to convey the idea clearly that the listener may not understand well, and also, they become afraid of the inability to understand what is said by the other part of a dialogue. These reasons make them prefer avoiding any English dialogues and not putting themselves in an embarrassing situation. The last section was about students' fear of exams and negative evaluations. All of these reasons are related to each other and negatively affect students' language. First-year English students must overcome these difficulties to develop their English language as it is an easy language to learn and an important one as it is a worldwide language.

Conclusion

This study tackles the issue of anxiousness in using the English language among university students in the department of English. The majority of first-year students have many reasons for being apprehensive. First-year university students want to build self-confidence in their abilities. They also want to improve their level of the English. In addition, research effects show that students have a positive attitude and willingness toward using English in their academic contexts. Therefore, based on the findings of students' responses, it is hoped that the suggestions and recommendations proposed in this study will be beneficial for elevating instructors; focusing on the importance of education techniques as an integral undertaking that set up in the disappearing of students' apprehension. Possessing a higher level of apprehension in learning due to the fact of many reasons, it is advocated that lecturers can provide his/ her students activities to help them limit that anxiety (Benraghda, Radzuan & Ali, 2018). Teachers and educators should attempt to deal with students' worry about making errors by encouraging them to talk and engage in different speaking and communication tasks outside the university. This will lead them to build self-confidence in their speaking competencies. In addition, when students have self-belief in their abilities, they will not be afraid to speak in public. Students may have to be involved in using non-verbal communication skills (eye contact, gestures, and facial expression) which are fundamental for effective learning strategies (Benraghda, Mohd Radzuan & Lardhi, 2022). Therefore, the instructor can assist his/ her students to enhance these components of communication performance by a way of giving them extra practice. Moreover, teachers ought to teach their students how to reply truly without taking into consideration their classmate's feedback to describe themselves freely.

Suggestions and Recommendations

- Teachers should take into consideration the factors and reasons of apprehension, as this issue has a big impact on the students' performance. For example, there is a type of student who has a fear of concerns their classmates' comments as the teacher may give an oral task to students and that type gets anxious if the answers are incorrect, they will be anxious as their classmates will criticize them, and that will reduce students' participation in the classroom,

so teacher here should do his best to avoid this matter and keep the students always engaged in oral activities.

- Teachers are advised to give more strategies to students who have any type of apprehension. It must be noted that teachers play a main function in inspiring students to reduce their anxiety. A study proposed that teachers, who utilize nonthreatening methods, are supportive in the direction of their students, and create a favorable environment, will most probably minimize degrees of anxiety amongst students and will improve the procedure of learning, whereas teachers, who don't, will probably encounter a number blocks and the technique of learning will not be as successful as the instructors want it to be. (Price 1991; Young 1990).
- EFL teachers are recommended to avoid students' apprehension by giving them more tasks and putting them in group work and warm-up. Engage students in bodily and Intellectual activities before teaching as well as use visual aids, provide visible aids, which will seize your students' imaginations, encouraging them to continue to be focused and motivated participants.

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