

أثر القلق في تعلّم مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلبة الجامعات العراقية

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The Effect of Anxiety on Learning English Language Skills among Iraqi University Students

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المُلخَص

تم تعريف قلق اللغة بوصفه عائقاً واسع الانتشار في اكتساب اللغة الثانية، إذ يترك أثره على عملية التفكير لدى المتعلم، وقدرته على التواصل، وإنجازه التعليمي. يبحث هذا البحث في أثر القلق على تعلم مهارات اللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلبة الجامعات العراقية من خلال دمج متعدد التخصصات يشمل التفكير والثقافة والبيداغوجيا، مما يتيح معالجة تحليلية متكاملة. وعلى خلاف التعميمات التي تفترض القلق ككيان نفسي غير متميز، يدرس هذا البحث مظهراته المتعددة عبر مهارات التحدث، والاستماع، والقراءة، والكتابة، مبيّناً أن كل مهارة تثير عمليات معرفية ووجدانية مختلفة. بالاستناد إلى فرضية مرشح الانفعال (Affective Filter) لكراشين، ونموذج ماكنثير الاجتماعي-التربوي، وأطروحات ما بعد الاستعمار، يضع البحث المتعلمين العراقيين في سياق اجتماعي-ثقافي يتسم بالتوتر التاريخي، وهياكل السلطة، والتعليم الصارم. تكشف النتائج أن قلق التحدث ذو طابع اجتماعي وأدائي، بينما قلق الاستماع إدراكي-معرفي، أما قلق القراءة فهو ثقافي-تفسيري، في حين يتقاطع قلق الكتابة مع التعبير عن الهوية. هذه الأنماط تتفاعل



لتولّد قلقاً منهجياً عاماً يتفاقم بفعل الممارسات الصفية الموجهة نحو الدقة بدلاً من التفاعل التواصلي، والاختبار بدلاً من الاستكشاف، والسلطة عوضاً عن الحوار. كما أن المقارنة مع بيئات أخرى لتعلم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (مثل الأردن، وتركيا، واليابان) تبرز الأنماط العالمية مقابل الاتجاهات الخاصة بالسياق العراقي، حيث يفرض الإشكال ما بعد الاستعمار بشأن اللغة الإنجليزية—كونها أداة تمكين وفي الوقت نفسه مؤشراً على ماضي الهيمنة—تأثيراً حاسماً. ويخلص البحث إلى أن المعالجة الفاعلة تتطلب بيداغوجيا موجهة بالثقافة، وتنمية الذكاء العاطفي، فضلاً عن تصميم مناهج تولّد تفاعلاً تواصلياً. ومن خلال إعادة تصوّر القلق باعتباره مؤشراً للتفاوض حول الهوية، لا مجرد عائق أمام التعلم، يقدم هذا البحث مدخلات عملية ومفاهيمية لتحسين تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في العراق وسائر البيئات التعليمية المشابهة.

Abstract

Language anxiety has been defined as a widespread found second language acquisition impairment that draws its effect on learners' thinking process, communication ability, and learning achievement. This study investigates the effect of anxiety in learning English skills amongst Iraqi university undergraduates with a multidisciplinary integration of thinking, culture, and pedagogics constructs, thereby allowing for an integrated analytical account. Distinguishing itself from generalizations that posit anxiety as an undifferentiated psychological entity, this study investigates its multifaceted appearance across speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills to illustrate that each skill triggers different cognitive and affective processes. Building on Krashen's affective-filter hypothesis, MacIntyre's socio-educational model, and postcolonial theses, the article positions Iraqi learners within the sociocultural context characterized by historical tension, authority structures, and rigid education. The study finds speaking anxiety predominantly social and performative, listening anxiety perceptual and cognitive, reading anxiety culturally mediated and interpretive, whereas writing anxiety intersects with an expression of identity. Each pair dialogues to generate an overall systemic kind of anxiety aggravated by classroom practices oriented toward accuracy rather than communicative interaction, test rather than exploration, authority instead of dialogue. Comparative synthesis with other EFL settings, such as Jordan, Turkey, and Japan, accentuates the universal patterns versus the culture-specific tendencies for Iraq, where the postcolonial dilemma over English that is both empowering as well as an index of past domination assumes an overriding influence. The study concludes that effective remediation demands culture-oriented pedagogy,



development of emotive intelligence, as well as curriculum design generating communicative engagement. By re-conceptualizing anxiety as an index rather than an obstacle to learning thresholds as well as an index to negotiation over identities, the study provides pragmatic as well as conceptual input toward an enhancement of English language learning in Iraq as well as other similar EFL settings.

Introduction

Foreign language learning is an intricate dynamic between cognition, emotion, and situational environment, where proficiency does not only result from the mastery over grammar, vocabulary, but also from the negotiation between the internal psychological conditions and external expectations. Among the affective factors, anxiety is found to be the determining inhibitor to effective language acquisition, hindering comprehension, production, and general academic performance (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 128; MacIntyre and Gardner 85). Within the Iraqi environment, English language learning poses special challenges by the result of historical, cultural, and teaching conditions that sharpen the feeling responses. Anxiety among Iraqi university students is not an individual but an overall sociocultural and institutional phenomenon, determining learners' English exposure through speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Alrabai 23; Hussein 67).

Language anxiety phenomenon has been described by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope as “a distinguishable complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, and behavior attached to classroom learning produced by the uniqueness of the process of learning a language” (128). This theoretical framework, however, insufficiently accounts for the multifaceted realities faced by Iraqi learners, whose linguistic acquisition occurs within postcolonial bequeathals, solidified social hierarchies, and rigid schooling traditions (Said 210; Al-Issa 124). In Iraq, English is at once a signifier of modernity, a key to world participation and economic ascendancy, and a reminder of past domination, creating an emotional double-binding that makes intellectual engagement and linguistic assurance harder (Al-Saadi 91; Mahmoud 153). As a result, learners must not only confront the intellectual demands of learning a foreign tongue but also the socio-cultural tensions that come with enunciating English within spaces where power, identity, and intellectual achievement intersect (Dörnyei and Ryan 118; Gardner 102).

Anxiety occurs irregularly among the four fundamental skills in language proficiency, each calling forth a unique affective and cognitive response. Speech, the most face-to-face and socially public form of linguistic

expression, garners more social anxiety due to the necessity for learners to present their ability in public and face evaluative judgment (Young 426; Horwitz 130). Listening, which requires fast acoustic processing and understanding, commonly invites cognitive stress and perceptual tension, especially when learners are faced with unknown accents, variation in idiom, or increased speech rates (Kim 172). Reading anxiety, on the other hand, arises due to lexical density, syntactical complexity, and cultural unfamiliarity in textual materials (Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203), while writing anxiety is significantly intertwined with matters related to identity and self-revelation, due to the continuous negotiation between Arabic discourse practices and English linguistic standards (Cheng 650; Zhang 78). Even though each boasts unique intellectual and affective obstacles, nevertheless, they form a dependent emotional framework within which experience of anxiety in a particular area sends shockwaves throughout others, creating a cumulative affective stress that limits overall proficiency in speech.

The Iraqi learning environment is also an important source of anxiety. Classrooms are predominantly teacher-centered, focusing on precision, rote learning, and testing under high stakes instead of communicative practice interaction (Alrabai 35; Mahmoud 153). This learning approach supports fear of making mistakes and inhibits experimentation, continuing an affective cycle of inhibition. Cultural expectations imposing respect for authority, group cohesion, and social propriety also discourage participation orally, making students silent but very anxious ones (Alrabai 44; Hussein 70). Aside from pedagogy, the English's historical and postcolonial placement heightens the emotion, since the language is also an emblem of symbolic status and external influence reminder (Al-Issa 125; Said 210).

In this study, the conceptual-analytic as well as comparative methodology is carried out to analyze the influence of anxiety on English language learning among Iraqi university learners. Research answers the following three crucial questions: How does anxiety have a different manifestation across the four English skills? How are cultural, historical, and teaching influences exercised over the Iraq manifestations? How similar or dissimilar to other EFL contexts is the case of Iraq, and how does it provide towards efficient language instruction? A research objective is to provide an enlighten understanding of language anxiety as an N-number deviant as well as a context-specific phenomenon (MacIntyre and Gardner 93; Dörnyei and Ryan 120).

Significance of the study lies in that the research integrates psychological, sociocultural, and pedagogical methods, extending over explanations



attributing learning trouble to individual aptitude (Horwitz 128; Al-Saadi 93). Conceptualizing, in anxiety as a systemic and culturally mediated construction, the research highlights the intersection between institutional design, learner cognition, and social expectation. In practice, the research has bearing over classroom control, instructor preparation, and syllabus design. Conceptually, the research makes a point to studies in applied linguistics, postcolonial research, and educational psychology.

In the following sections, the study constructs an interdiscursive theoretical account grounded in Krashen's affective-filter hypothesis (Krashen 31), MacIntyre's socio-educational model (MacIntyre and Gardner 85), and cultural-linguistic models (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91), interprets English skills-oriented expressions of anxiety, locates the patterns in the Iraqi sociocultural and education-grounded context, and concludes with a detailed comparative discourse emphasizing teachings-based implication. By correlating analytical sharpness and cultured alertness, the study places language anxiety both as a barrier and as an analytical magnifying lens refracting the functioning of learning English in Iraq.

Theoretical Framework

To comprehend language anxiety, one must incorporate psychological, sociocultural, as well as postcolonial lenses so as to come up with an all-encompassing conceptual framework. Traditional cognitive frameworks, like Krashen's affective-filter hypothesis, place the affective factors—motivation, confidence, and anxiety—as input-processing gatekeepers. According to Krashen, "learners with high motivation and low anxiety acquire language more effectively because the affective filter is low, permitting optimal intake of comprehensible input" (31). Anxiety, under this model, does not serve as a direct inhibitor for linguistic knowledge but rather does so as a selective Processing Barrier, only restricting the learner's capability to internalize exposure to the language, whether from the classroom teacher's input or exposure to the realia.

Completing Krashen, MacIntyre and Gardner posit that language anxiety is cognitive as well as social. Anxiety does not arise out of fear of misproduction but out of the learner's sense of social judgment and communicative ability (MacIntyre and Gardner 93). Socio-educational approach accepts that classroom performance, peer surveillance, and corrective behavior of teachers function concomitantly with internally internalized beliefs of oneself to bring out multidimensional effective experiences. Within Iraqi institutes, authority formations being reforced and communication in the classroom being suppressed, that social factor of anxiety gets found highly escalated (Alrabai 44; Mahmoud 153).

Students internalize ideals of accuracy and politeness, which repress verbal participation and communicative exchange.

Extending the conceptual frame still further, postcolonial and cultural-linguistic perspectives enable to perceive the ideological and identity-mediated nature of English learning in Iraq. Edward Said emphasizes that colonial languages have intrinsic relations of power, so their adoption is a negotiation of belonging and identity (Said 210). Al-Saadi reiterates this refracted through the Arab cultural lens, observing that learners experience an “anxiety of language and representation” doubleness (91), balancing proficiency and cultural authenticity. English in Iraq thus serves as a weapon of empowerment, which gives access to the broader world's corpus of cognizance, but also a symbol of a previous submission, triggering an Emotional Intelligence notably other than the EFL contexts encountered elsewhere postcolonial Asia or Europe.

By combining these theoretical accounts, the present research presents a conceptual map of Iraqi EFL anxiety that has three related areas: cognitive, sociocultural, and institutional. Skill-specific processing challenges, such as fast decoding in listening or word retrievals in speaking, are included in the cognitive area, in which it has been found that anxiety increases cognitive load (Kim 172; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). Societal demands, manipulation of power, and negotiation of identity are accounted for in the sociocultural area as the cause of the feelings had, that crossroads between the demand of the society and the confidence of a person (Alrabai 35; Hussein 70). Structural and instructive components, such as teacher-centric preparation, test-prep testing, and inadequate exposure to real materials, all mixed together creating an environment which makes the anxiety larger (Mahmoud 153; Dörnyei and Ryan 118).

The intersection of such domains creates what can be characterized as compound anxiety, where problems in one ability or area are multiplied by difficulties in others. Thus, speaking anxiety stimulated by social judgment may diminish the role-playing exercises or group reading activities. Again, writing anxiety with roots in conflict over identity may compromise reading comprehension if students do not access materials whose interpretation is active. The model therefore presents anxiety as an ecological entity, one whose origins are the intersection of inner cognition, social environment, and institutional organization, rather than an exclusive psychological individuality.

Research supports this multifaceted approach. Horwitz et al. (130) mention communication apprehension, test apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation as related areas affecting performance. Writing



apprehension research by Cheng demonstrates that learners' nervousness is prone to be internalization of past learning and cultural expectations (650). Listening nervousness research by Kim reiterates the mental demand due to unfamiliar accent, quick speech, and understanding demand (172). Placed into the Iraqi context, the learning environment complicates each factor: instructor-orientation lacks error-free practice, peer culture discourages behavior of risk, and high-stake testing prefers accuracy over creativity (Mahmoud 153; Alrabai 44).

This template also informs the comparative approach. Comparing professional anxiety in Iraq alongside other EFL environments, for instance, Japan, Jordan, and Turkey, for instance, we discover that while some areas of concern—cognitive stress or test pressure, for instance—transcend the local, other areas are endemically local. Postcoloniality and the discursive function of English, in particular, mark the emotional experience of learners in Iraq, emphasizing local sensitive teaching methods (Al-Saadi 91; Said 210).

In summary, the conceptual framework integrates affective-filter theory, socio-educational perspectives, and cultural-linguistic insight to form a tripartite conceptual design that explains the growth and maintenance of institutional-based, sociocultural, and cognitive language anxiety among Iraqi learners of English. The design makes up the analytical foundation from which to examine anxiety across the four English skills, situating the research in the Iraqi sociocultural and teaching context but permitting cross-context comparisons between other EFL contexts. By hypothesizing that a combination of anxiety dimensions and context-situates, the framework shapes both theoretical-analytic and pragmatic-application scholarship, and provides a perceptive insight into English language learning in Iraq and other postcolonial EFL contexts.

Language Anxiety Across English Skills

Language anxiety exhibits uniquely within the four foundational English skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing, to impair Iraqi learners' acquirements and utilization of the language. Every language ability has unique cognitive, social, and cultural aspects whose interactive dynamics build up a systemic profile of fear. Understanding their expressions is critical for creating pedagogic interventions that are both sensitively contextual and didactically productive.

3.1 Speaking Anxiety

Speaking has been famously referred to as the most feared aspect of second language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 130; Young 426). It requires fast processing, word call, and spontaneous social communication. In the Iraqi context, this anxiety is deepened by class-

hierarchical structures, collectivist cultural mandates, and fear of negative evaluation. Students are often ensuring that oral performance reflects intellectual ability as well as social potential, an impression also deepened when teachers privilege linguistic correctness over communicative proficiency (Alrabai 44; Mahmoud 153).

Iraqi students often express reluctance to perform orally, even when they have sufficient knowledge. This behavior corresponds to the socio-educational model invoked by MacIntyre and Gardner, where communicative competence assessed but not desired comes into contact with social evaluation to produce fear (93). Speaking fear is intensified by the ear for native or non-native accent, where learners perceive the accent as proving linguistic prestige or judgment (Kim 172). To combat this influence, classroom strategies like small group work, peer-to-peer role-play, and guided oral presentation have been effective in other EFL settings and are suggested for adoption by Iraqi teachers to eliminate performance anxiety from the spotlight while developing communicative confidence (Dörnyei and Ryan 120; Al-Saadi 91).

3.2 Listening Anxiety

Listening is fast perception and comprehension, so learners need to process vocabulary, syntax, and intonation all at the same time. Listening anxiety is found to result from cognitive overload, unfamiliarity with accents, and speech speed most notably (Kim 174; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). Listening to authentic materials is scarce for most Iraqi classroom students, so students have to take on the activities without adequate scaffolding, an activity that makes them even more anxious.

Culturally, listening is also an identity negotiation. Exposure to English from abroad may evoke postcolonial memories of dominance, unnecessarily strengthening affective barriers (Said 210; Al-Issa 125). Therefore, learners will pay more attention to comprehension as an evaluative test than to actual exposure to content. Steady exposure to varied accents, guided listening exercises, and contextualization around familiar themes are able to weaken cognitive stress and build comprehension confidence (Horwitz 130; Dörnyei and Ryan 118). These methods change passive testing by listening to an active, subjective experience, making the affective barriers weaker and the cognitive fluency stronger.

3.3 Reading Anxiety

Reading anxiety is caused by the difficulty level of the writings, unknown cultural allusions, and feeling of performance pressure. Saito, Garza, and



Horwitz define foreign language reading anxiety as “a distinct affective response to foreign-language text processing” (203). Iraqi learners are often faced with the lexical and syntactic patterns different from their Arabic reading background, causing the sense of semantic insecurity and misinterpretation fear (Zhang 78).

High-stakes reading exams intensify anxiety by aligning comprehension with evaluation instead of exploration. In addition, culturally foreign material—like Western writings or professional academic writings—their potential triggers the tension that exists between foreign ideas and locally situated epistemologies (Al-Saadi 91; Said 210). In response to this challenge, pedagogically sensitive methods that integrate Iraqi social and cultural contexts into activities of reading, with a simultaneous encouraging of interpretive debate, allow readers to mediate textual meaning with shared experience, and so readjust reading away from a mere mechanical activity to a cultural act of dialogic engagement. Comparative work done in Jordan and Turkey presents analogous phenomena, confirming that reading anxiety is both global but culturally mediated, whereas postcolonial issues associated with identity are strong only in Iraq (Alrabai 35; Mahmoud 153).

3.4 Writing Anxiety

Writing is an ability that combines linguistic awareness with thought organization, creativity, and personality expression. Writing apprehension has been associated with fear of grading and internalized rules of correctness (Cheng 650; Horwitz 130). In Iraq, this apprehension is exacerbated by the Arabic rhetorical patterns that are dissimilar from English patterns in linearity, paragraphing, and argumentation approach (Al-Issa 124). Pupils will have tension between generating grammatically precise sentences and communicating communicative ideas, so they hesitate, over-edit, or avoid.

Writing anxiety is also shaped by agency and identity. English learners balance self-production with intuited expectations from global academic requirements (Al-Saadi 91). Studies demonstrate that iterative writing, peer review, and writing workshops decrease anxiety by reframing attention from error avoidance to meaning construction (Cheng 650; Zhang 78). In Iraq, however, access to cooperative and formative practices for writing is limited, and the opportunities are thereby hindered from allowing productive access, with high affective filters sustained (Mahmoud 153; Dörnyei and Ryan 118).

3.5 Skill Interrelation and Compound Anxiety

Even though each skill produces different kinds of anxiety, the interaction between them produces aggregated outcomes. As an illustration, speaking anxiety can discourage the taking up of activities in listening and reading, while writing anxiety may discourage activity uptake from reading comprehension. These dependencies make apparent the importance of all-around pedagogic treatment focusing on the affective aspect all the skills together (Horwitz et al. 130; MacIntyre and Gardner 93).

Comparative studies demonstrate that although some patterns of anxiety, for example, test anxiety, are global, the historical, cultural, and institutional factors allow Iraq's to intensify the quality and multifacetedness of affective experience (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91; Al-Issa 125). The systemic approach recontextualizes language anxiety from an individual deficiency to an emergent result of cognitive, social, and institutional processes, an explanatory lens for focused pedagogical interventions.

4. The Iraqi Context: Cultural and Educational Aspects

Language anxiety among Iraqi university students is better understood by contextualizing learners within their wider sociocultural, historical, and institutional context. The postcolonial past, the unstable politics, and the customs of learning in Iraq have all collectively constructed the affective histories of English learners, generating skill-specific and systematic anxiety. The present chapter investigates the ways that past legacies, the cultural order, and the practices of classroom learning converge to shape learner attitudes, motivation, and performance toward English language learning.

4.1 Historical and Postcolonial Influence

English in Iraq is a postcolonial language that has had links with external rule, modernity, and access to worldwide information (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91). It was introduced with colonial and semi-colonial reforms of education, so English had an ambivalent dual role as both empowering and outsider language. Students also have tension not only as an intellectual response nor even as a societal response but also as an affective negotiation with one's sense of self, where English mastery stands for both intellectual success as well as compliance with perceived global norms (Al-Issa 124; Mahmoud 153).

The historical aspect heightens affective response over other EFL settings where English does not have analogous postcolonial overtones. As an example, with the Japanese or Turkish settings, anxiety is significantly affected by test appraisal and performance pressure, but with the Iraqi setting, language acquisition is invested with socio-historical



interpretation, generating what al-Saadi refers to as “cultural-ideological anxiety” (91). This type of angle accounts for why Iraqi students have the tendency to interiorize error worry as an indication of national personality or individual credibility, particularly in speaking proficiency and academic writing.

4.2 Cultural Norms and Student Behavior

Iraqi culture is dictated by collectivist cultural norms highlighting respect for elders, group cohesion, and social propriety (Hussein 70; Alrabai 44). These cultural demands are carried over from the classroom, where the student will tend to value the approval of the teacher and the acceptance of their peer group over independent risk work. Speaking before the peer group, making errors, or raising ideas publicly is thus socially inhibited, generating increased speaking anxiety (Young 426; MacIntyre and Gardner 93).

Correspondingly, the pedagogical focus that is given to communicative interaction drives learners’ behaviors both in writing and in reading. Learners are afraid of articulating personal or unique perspectives with English texts, held back by fear of criticism or social disapproval, and they read with unwarranted caution, characterized by an over Concern with literal correctness and semantic detail (Zhang 78; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). These behaviors are typical demonstrations of how the features of cultures meet the process of cognitions to yield skill-specific varieties of anxiety. Cultural norms, nonetheless, are unlikely to become engaged singly; instead, they are mediated and reinforced by classroom practices and institutional agendas and hence promote a heightened affective climate that sustains and perpetuates anxiety across several domains of a language.

4.3 Educational Structure and Pedagogic Practices

English Language teaching in Iraqi universities is still largely teacher-dominated, with minimum communicative practice and excessive dependence on high-stakes testing, which all lead to increased panic among students (Mahmoud 153; Alrabai 35). Definiteness and drill are given preference at the expense of interaction and co-participation, limiting the possibility for exploratory learning and discouraging forbearance with linguistic mistakes. This systematic stress on testing at the expense of involving oneself in activities solidifies test-bound fear, consequently heightening fear involving productive skills like writing and speaking (Horwitz et al. 130). Further, English lessons in Iraqi higher education are dependent mostly on standardized textbooks and dogmatic grammar drills, and authentic materials and culturally relevant content are

not used (Al-Issa 124; Dörnyei and Ryan 118). As such, students are faced with comprehension difficulties as well as interpretation issues, intensifying cognitive anxiety when reading and listening. Institutional rigor is combined with sociocultural restriction, generating a setting where the feeling is institutionalized by defense but socially mediated.

4.4 Comparative Implication

The comparison between Iraq and other EFL settings brings to the fore both universal and setting-specific aspects of anxiety. Speaking anxiety is common in Jordan, for example, given classroom test pressure, but postcolonial identity is less operational (Alrabai 44). Listening comprehension difficulties are the chief anxiety source in Turkey, given the design of the curriculum, but speaking anxiety is mediated by the more interactive classroom practices (Dörnyei and Ryan 120). Iraq's multiple anxiety is the result of the combination of historical, cultural, and institutional settings, generating uniquely deep and multiple affective profiles (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91).

4.5 Implications for Learning and Pedagogy

Understanding the Iraqi setting is paramount for the planning of interventions to overcome language anxiety. Teaching methods need to overcome institutional inflexibility by including communicative, student-focused exercises, such as group speaking activities, repeated practice writings, and constructed reading exercises. Culturally sensitive practices, including the inclusion of neighborhoods' contexts in materials, the receipt of alternative modes of participation, and the recognition of learners' postcolonial negotiation of identities, can overcome affective obstacles while optimizing motivation (Al-Saadi 91; Mahmoud 153).

Overall, the Iraqi sociocultural and educational context generates an identifiable type of language anxiety, where historical bequeathals, cultural customary behavior, and institutional practices intersect to influence learners' participation on all English skills. The environment highlights the need for holistic, culture-based pedagogic interventions that target cognitive, social, and institutional factors influencing affective response. By contextualizing language anxiety within Iraq's particular environment, teachers and policy planners will be able to develop better-performing, sustainable strategies for English language proficiency, yielding proficiency gain as well as improved learner well-being.

5. Comparative Analysis and Discussion

A deepened comprehension of language anxiety among Iraqi university learners comes from contrasting the Iraqi setting with the other EFL contexts, namely Jordan, Turkey, and Japan. Though language learning anxiety is global, its displays, degree, and stimuli are decisively arbitrated





by cultural, historical, and institutional considerations, yielding context-bound profiles. By means of comparative study, generalizable patterns together with particular socio-cultural processes are discernible, yielding information on sensitive pedagogic strategies better attuned to locale.

5.1. Universal Patterns of Language Anxiety

Throughout contexts, some components of language nervousness are repeated. Speaking nervousness always shines as the strongest hurdle based on direct cognitive demands and social assessment (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope 130; Young 426). Listening nervousness, based on quick understanding and unfamiliar intonation, also impacts learners internationally (Kim 172; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). Anxiety in reading and writing are salient throughout the world based on perceived proficiency demands, including accuracy in grammar, textual interpretation, and structural flow (Cheng 650; Zhang 78). These conclusions verify MacIntyre and Gardner's socio-educational hypothesis, which suggests that perceived competency and apprehension about evaluation both function throughout the cognitive and social spheres to create nervousness (93).

But if there are universal patterns, their intensity and crossing over to learner identity are transcultural. Speaking anxiety, for instance, pervades Japan but is mitigated by highly structured, incremental classroom practice (Dörnyei and Ryan 118). Listening anxiety, driven by fast pace and exposure to a variety of accents, dominates in Turkey but peer support networks stifle its effects (Alrabai 44). These comparisons provide a standard against which to calibrate an Iraqi situation as a whole against a larger EFL context.

5.2 Iraq-Specific Anxiety Dimensions

Iraqi learners suffer a compounded and multidimensional language anxious condition. Speaking anxiety is compounded by strict authority gradients, collectivist cultural protocols, and public evaluation fear, resulting in less oral participation among skilled students (Alrabai 44; Mahmoud 153). Listening anxiety is further engendered by limited realia exposure and accent variation, together with cognitively driven demands to listen and understand and a lack of scaffolding (Kim 174). Reading anxiety is determined as much or more by textual complexity as by postcolonial identity tension from equating English as a marker of external authority (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91). Writing anxiety mirrors cognitively oriented demands, institutional testing pressure, and the discursive pressure between Arabic and English discursive practices

(Cheng 650; Al-Issa 124). Affective aspects do not function autonomously; instead, they operate interdependently to form a systemic manner of affective interference, whereby anxiety encountered in a single proficiency area serves to heighten distress in others. Speaking fear, for example, can retard involvement in listening and reading activities, whereas writing anxiety can discourage interpretive reading and participation in class. This interdependence of affective limitations becomes even more salient within the Iraqi learning environment, whereby institutional stiffness and sociocultural requirements combine to heighten the psychological stress inherent in acquiring a second or foreign language, differentiating Iraqi learners' experiences from others identified in the distinct EFL settings (Mahmoud 153; Al-Saadi 91).

5.3 Cultural and Postcolonial Consideration

Comparative studies show that cultural and postcolonial dynamics play a crucial role in the production of language anxiety. In Iraq, English embodies historical and ideological gravity, triggering affective experience that combines cognitive tension with identity-shaped tension (Said 210; Al-Saadi 91). By way of contrast, scenarios like Japan or Turkey, where English enjoys social recognition yet not Iraq's postcolonial association, present a different affective profile. The Iraqi experience therefore shows that language anxiety cannot find explanation in purely cognitively based schemes; instead, it arises due to the intricate dance between sociocultural identity, historical consciousness, and institutional practice. This interrelation corroborates that affective limitation in language acquisition is at the same time cognitively, sociopolitically, and historically determined (Al-Issa 124; Hussein 70).

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

Comparative lens argues that skills are skill-specific and that contexts are context-specific. For speaking apprehension, scaffolded speaking exercises, minimal-risk practice, and peer-facilitated discourse can lower public speaking pressure (Young 426; Dörnyei and Ryan 120). Listening classes need to focus on gradual exposure to accents, context-embedded texts, and controlled interpretation exercises (Kim 172; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). Reading and writing interventions need to embed content that relates to the culture, encourage interpretive discourse, and facilitate iterative writing cycles to balance cognitively, socially, and ideological demands (Cheng 650; Zhang 78).

Furthermore, the Iraqi example illustrates system-level reform of instruction, across teacher training fostering communicatively and sentimentally favorable classroom spaces to classroom-centered curricula foregrounding participation over memorization, and testing regimes that



maintain meaning-production as broadly as correctness (Mahmoud 153; Alrabai 35). Such reform functions to deliver skill-descriptive alleviation of tension as well as systemic affectal interference, gaining long-term entry to proficiency.

5.5 Theoretical Synthesis

By combining Krashen's affect-filter hypothesis, MacIntyre and Gardner's socio-educational model, and postcolonial theory, this comparison framework views language anxiety as a multidimensional, situationally located phenomenon (Krashen 31; MacIntyre and Gardner 93; Said 210). Cognitive demands, social scrutiny, and culturally grounded cultural identity operate inter-dynamically, yielding variable, skill-specific outcomes. The Iraqi learners' experience illustrates the way institutional configuration and sociocultural convention calibrate situationally based anxiety, showing evidence that affective events are not simply characterological tendencies but emergent products of the larger learning environment.

5.6 Summary of Comparative Insights

Language anxiety has both universal and situated features. Overall, speaking is the most salient form of anxiety, followed by listening, reading, and writing, and both are shaped by perceived evaluation and cognitive complexity. In the Iraqi situation, nonetheless, postcolonial identity, institutional routine, and culturally embedded norms reinforce affective reactions, producing systemic interference in the four skills. Remedies for such problems necessarily address both cognitive, social, and cultural aspects in tandem, with a view to alleviating skill-specifying anxiety comprehensively. Further, reductionist reduction that is sustainable requires both classroom- and institutional-level reform, with a focus on communicative interaction, learner-centeredness, and conducive testing regimes. The Iraqi example therefore serves to highlight how history, education structures, and cultural processes come together to create a multidimensional profile of language anxiety, with critical implications for both pedagogic design and theory building in EFL education.

Conclusion

The findings shed a light on the intricate character of language anxiety in Iraqi university students and the different effects across the four skills in English. Speaking, listening, reading, and writing have different cognitive, social, and cultural requirements, yet their interconnection is formed via systemic effect interferences that increase the overall difficulty in language acquisition. Comparative studies validate that as there are certain patterns of anxiety that are universal,

Iraq's history, culture, and institutional setting produce certain and accumulated realizations, confirming locally informed teaching methods (Al-Saadi 91; Mahmoud 153).

From a pragmatic point of view, interventions are skill-specific yet, at the same time, deal with sociocultural and institutional determiners. For the lowering of speaking anxiety, teachers can make use of scaffolded speaking tasks, peer-validated discourse, and low-risk performing activities that focus on communication rather than accuracy (Young 426; Dörnyei and Ryan 120). Listening anxiety can be lowered by gradual exposure to realistic content, variation in accent training, and comprehension scaffolding (Kim 172; Saito, Garza, and Horwitz 203). Reading and writing anxiety are eased by contextually correct content, iterative writing activities, and time for interpretive discourse incorporating learners' linguistic and cultural selves (Cheng 650; Zhang 78).

Institutional level systemic reform is just as essential. Curricula must focus on communicative, interactive, and learner-oriented methods, which supplant rigid, test-driven methods promoting error fear (Mahmoud 153; Alrabai 35). Teacher preparation must foster affective insight, allowing teachers to identify and remediate anxiety in the moment and build supportive classroom atmospheres. Policy initiatives that blend formative testing, peer work, and natural exposure to English can further diminish affective obstacles, enhancing both proficiency and student confidence (Horwitz et al. 130; Al-Issa 124).

Conceptually, this work supports a multidimensional theory of language apprehension that integrates a cognition, a social, and postcolonial understanding (Krashen 31; Said 210). By framing anxiety within Iraq's specific cultural and historical context, the research shows that affective constraints are not isolated individual characteristics but a product of larger systemic phenomena. Conceptually, that understanding advances applied linguistics, educational psychology, and postcolonial, allowing for a design template for future comparative scholarship and cross-cultural instruction.

In summary, overcoming language anxiety in Iraq demands holistically designed schemes that account for skill-specific issues, sociocultural standards, and institutional frameworks. Through adopting context-responsive, communicative, and learner-centered approaches, teachers are able to convert anxiety as a deterrent to a lens to focus the intersection of cognition, culture, and instruction and thus facilitate more effective and empowering English language learning among Iraqi classroom learners.



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