

Foreign language anxiety in online learning environments: Strategies and implications

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To cite this article (APA): Saffari, N., Amini, M., Lee, S. S., Alipour, M., & Naghmeh Abbaspour, B. (2024). Foreign language anxiety in online learning environments: Strategies and implications. *Journal of Research, Policy & Practice of Teachers and Teacher Education*, 14(1), 72–83. <https://doi.org/10.37134/jrppte.vol14.1.9.2024>

Received: 23 May 2023; Accepted: 27 April 2024; Published: 02 May 2024

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated some anxiety among students, particularly in the realm of higher education where remote learning has become the norm. Despite the escalating prevalence of anxiety among students in the context of online language education, there is a notable absence of comprehensive strategies tailored to effectively mitigate foreign language anxiety (FLA) and support learners, necessitating research to identify evidence-based approaches to address FLA and foster a positive learning environment. This paper reviews the influence of anxiety on language learners, with a focus on the challenges posed by online language education. It explores the multifaceted nature of FLA and its implications for language learning outcomes. The study proposes practical strategies to alleviate anxiety among language learners. These strategies include implementing cooperative learning activities, providing constructive feedback, creating a positive learning atmosphere, addressing individual student needs, giving clear instructions, and establishing a continuous support system. Insights from contemporary research highlight the effectiveness of these approaches in reducing anxiety and fostering a more positive and effective learning environment. Furthermore, the paper discusses the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as a valuable tool for identifying and measuring FLA in online language learning settings. It emphasizes the importance of the psychometric characteristics of FLCAS and its implications for language educators. Finally, by raising awareness of the impact of anxiety on language learning outcomes, and embracing a holistic approach that considers individual, socio-cultural, economic, and technological factors, this paper may provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers.

Keywords: Anxiety, English, FLA, Learning, Online, Teaching

Introduction

Anxiety, a ubiquitous response to life's challenges, has become increasingly prevalent among students, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the consequent shift to remote learning (Angalakuditi & Bhowmik, 2023). This transition has unveiled a myriad of educational hurdles, including diminished academic performance, heightened concerns for students' physical well-being, and disruptions to assessment methodologies (Panagouli et al., 2021; Rundle et al., 2020; Burgess & Sievertsen, 2020). While physical distancing measures aimed to safeguard public health, they inadvertently engendered feelings of isolation and loneliness, exacerbating emotional distress among some individuals (Pandya & Lodha, 2022). Research by Rice et al. (2016) suggests that while moderate levels of anxiety may stimulate learning, excessive anxiety can impede academic performance, manifesting in decreased motivation, procrastination, mood swings, and exacerbation of existing issues (Yoong & Saffari, 2019). Such challenges compound the mental and emotional burden on students, impacting their interpersonal relationships and overall well-being. Indeed, excessive anxiety can be debilitating, hindering learning experiences, and exacerbating feelings of shame and depression (Alkhazaleh & Mahasneh, 2016), or self-esteem. For example, self-esteem is often associated with increased vulnerability to anxiety disorders, including social anxiety disorder, which encompasses fear of negative evaluation (Ahadzadeh et al., 2018). In severe cases, anxiety may culminate in self-harm and suicidal ideation (Stanley et al., 2009).

Therefore, there is a need to address the heightened levels of anxiety among students, particularly in the context of remote learning (Angalakuditi & Bhowmik, 2023). The transition to online education has underscored the importance of understanding and mitigating foreign language anxiety (FLA) among learners, necessitating interventions tailored to alleviate this condition (Panagouli et al., 2021). Despite the potential benefits of online learning, its impact on students' academic performance remains unclear (Panagouli et al., 2021). Language educators and scholars have long recognized FLA as a significant impediment to language acquisition, characterized by multifaceted elements that manifest uniquely within the language learning process (Panagouli et al., 2021). Hence, there is a critical need to address students' FLA needs, particularly in the context of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), by employing tools such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and implementing practical strategies to mitigate language anxiety in online learning environments.

This review is significant because it can increase our knowledge on how anxiety impacts learning a foreign language, particularly when it comes to online and distance learning. Teachers must be aware of the potential increase in anxiety levels and employ suitable ways to reduce them so that students can manage their anxiety in such circumstances. The review emphasizes the necessity of identifying the underlying causes of FLA and suggests several strategies that teachers could employ to reduce anxiety during online language classes. It also discusses the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as a reliable tool for identifying FLA needs. By spreading awareness on the effects of anxiety on language learning and suggesting possible solutions, this study can serve as a basis for future research on FLA in online and remote learning contexts. The study emphasizes on the need for educators and researchers to focus on anxiety-related difficulties to enhance students' language learning performance and provide effective remedies. The implications of this study extend to language education policymakers, managers, and practitioners who can apply the best strategies as proposed in the review to create a supportive learning environment and minimize the negative impact of anxiety on language learners.

Some of the various types of anxieties include neurotic anxiety, moral anxiety, realistic anxiety, social anxiety disorder, panic disorder, agoraphobia, generalized anxiety disorder, separation anxiety disorder, and selective mutism (Fanani, 2023). Specifically, according to Susi et al (2023), the different types of anxieties in language learning include Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) related to test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and communication anxiety.

Language anxiety

Language anxiety encompasses feelings of apprehension or unease experienced when using or learning a second or foreign language (James et al, 2020). Research into language anxiety has garnered significant attention from educators, learners, and scholars alike. This area encompasses a range of emotions like unease, nervousness, and apprehension experienced during various language activities such as speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Akkaş et al., 2020). Defining anxiety proves challenging due to its multifaceted nature (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), influenced by assessments of potential risks and an individual's self-efficacy. These evaluations, alongside task-irrelevant processing, can detrimentally affect learning, often unbeknownst to students. Studies confirm that learners experience anxiety when using a foreign language (Liu & Jackson, 2008), with detrimental effects including decreased self-esteem, self-control, grades, motivation, and engagement quality (Sabti et al., 2019). Furthermore, if students perceive themselves as lacking in language competence, they may experience heightened anxiety when engaging in English academic writing tasks (Han et al, 2023). This anxiety can stem from fear of making mistakes, concerns about being misunderstood, or worries about receiving negative evaluation from instructors or peers.

Test anxiety notably predicts achievement and proficiency in foreign language learning, yet its linkage to prevailing theories remains unclear, prompting researchers to explore it through descriptive and correlational studies (Elliot & McGregor, 1999). Horwitz et al. (1986) pioneered the concept of foreign language anxiety (FLA), distinguishing it as a unique form of anxiety associated specifically with language learning. Their theoretical model has significantly contributed to research in this area. Subsequent studies have seen rapid growth in both theoretical and empirical investigations, focusing on solutions in second language acquisition (SLA), such as improving communicative proficiency and expanding vocabulary (Jabbari & Eslami, 2019).

Moreover, for over fifty years, SLA researchers have examined whether linguistic and non-linguistic factors are influenced by language anxiety (Gkonou & Mercer, 2018), which has received consistent empirical and theoretical attention. Studies consistently show a negative relationship between anxiety and L2 achievement (Teimouri et al., 2019). Anxiety is prevalent across different learner types, including children, talented students, and dyslexic learners (Talebinejad & Nekouei, 2013; Kamarulzaman et al., 2013; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2006). SLA researchers have increasingly adopted a situation-specific definition of anxiety, assuming its recurrence over time in particular settings like language classrooms (Imai, 2010).

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) particularly impacts L2 achievement negatively (Horwitz, 2017), prompting a shift in how L2 anxiety is conceptualized across various contexts. Learners experience anxiety for various reasons, including lack of confidence, fear of errors, and insufficient language

proficiency (Bintang Zul Hulaifah & Sibuea, 2023). Additionally, anxiety may stem from concerns about judgment, sensitivity to threats, and misinterpretation of bodily signals (Khouni et al., 2022). Cognitive factors like inadequate language mastery and low motivation also contribute to anxiety (Diaz, 2022), influenced by curriculum and instructional tasks (Afrida & Wati, 2022). Implementing motivational models and task-based approaches in language teaching can effectively alleviate anxiety among learners.

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) refers to a specific form of anxiety encountered by language learners within the confines of a foreign language classroom environment (Horwitz, 2017; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Botes et al., 2020). Initially conceptualized by Horwitz et al. (1986), FLCA was delineated into three distinct components: test anxiety, communication anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). Test anxiety stems from the apprehension of academic failure, while communication anxiety is associated with real or anticipated interactions. FNE entails worrying about others' judgments and avoiding situations where one's competence might be evaluated (Gilbert et al., 1994; Reichenberger & Blechert, 2018).

Over time, these concepts have evolved to offer more nuanced insights into language-related anxieties. FLCA, being context-specific to language learning, is comprised of elements that may manifest differently and concurrently. Understanding these components is crucial for both educators and learners in improving language learning outcomes (Dewaele & Pavelescu, 2021). While FNE can be adaptive in certain contexts, it often leads to negative outcomes such as decreased engagement and proficiency (El Shazly, 2021).

Furthermore, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is a crucial tool extensively used to measure anxiety induced by foreign language learning devised by Horwitz et al. (1986). It has been instrumental in measuring language anxiety, including FNE (Aida, 1994). Widely used in both traditional and online learning environments (Mohamad et al., 2021), FLCAS has demonstrated reliability and validity (Sparks & Alamer, 2022). However, it is essential to note that perceived language proficiency may influence the interpretation of FLCAS scores (Sparks & Ganschow, 2007).

Studies have focused on its psychometric characteristics, including dimensionality, construct validity, and reliability (Karabulut, 2023; Lee & Ye, 2023). FLCA, as measured by FLCAS, impacts language teachers' practices and students' learning outcomes, emphasizing the need to address teacher anxiety to alleviate student anxiety effectively (Gannoun, & Deris, 2023). FLA, assessed through FLCAS, influences L2 performance and achievement, with debates on whether it is a cause or effect in L2 learning (Zhao, 2023). Factors contributing to FLCA include communication apprehension, self-confidence in speaking English, fear of negative evaluation, and peer pressure, highlighting the multidimensional nature of FLCA (Zhang & Lai, 2023). The scale's reliability has been examined using generalizability theory, indicating varying reliability coefficients based on different facets considered.

Language Anxiety in online classes

In recent years, the proliferation of online education has extended to language learning, offering students the flexibility to study languages remotely (Stahl, 2023). However, this shift to the online environment brings about its own set of challenges, including anxiety in online language learning. While some students may initially perceive online courses as providing a sense of anonymity and security, they may find themselves facing new anxieties once engaged in the virtual classroom. Online language learners often encounter situations where they must actively use audio-visual tools to communicate with instructors and peers in the target language, presenting a unique challenge compared to traditional face-to-face interactions. Moreover, the selection of appropriate delivery methods for remote language classes can induce stress, particularly for individuals who struggle with self-discipline and motivation in online learning environments (Masrun & Rusdinal, 2022). Additionally, online learners are tasked with managing their time effectively, seeking assistance when needed, and maintaining their learning momentum despite social and physical isolation from classmates. These factors underscore the importance of understanding and addressing anxiety in the context of online language learning to support the success and well-being of learners in virtual language classrooms (Li et al., 2020).

According to Simon et al (2020), understanding anxiety in online learning can stem from various sources such as uncertainty, fear of negative evaluation, and worry about distractions. To effectively address Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) and language anxiety in online learning, it is crucial to leverage evidence from previous research alongside quantitative data obtained through instruments like the FLCAS (Gannoun & Deris, 2023; Karabulut, 2023). One key strategy involves developing tailored support systems within online platforms by utilizing FLCAS data to pinpoint specific anxiety triggers experienced by learners (Prima et al., 2022). These support systems can offer instant access to resources, interactive modules, and peer support networks to alleviate anxiety effectively. Moreover, implementing regular feedback mechanisms guided by FLCAS data

enables educators to identify common anxiety triggers and areas needing improvement, fostering an environment where learners can openly express their concerns.

Encouraging virtual peer collaboration and support groups within online learning environments can further reduce anxiety levels (Lim et al., 2022), especially if FLCAS data indicates that learners perceive peer collaboration positively. Integrating mindfulness and relaxation techniques into online language learning modules offers another avenue to alleviate anxiety (Ersanlı & Ünal, 2022; Shen, 2022). Additionally, enhancing instructor presence and communication based on FLCAS data can foster a sense of support and reassurance among learners, thereby mitigating anxiety (Park & Kim, 2020). Finally, structured goal setting and progress tracking mechanisms within online platforms, guided by FLCAS data, can boost learners' confidence and motivation by providing clear objectives and measurable progress indicators (Bates, 2016). By integrating quantitative data from instruments like the FLCAS, educators, parents, and scholars gain valuable insights into learners' anxiety triggers, enabling the development of targeted strategies to enhance the overall online learning experience (Li & Yuan, 2021).

According to Pichette (2009), some students with language anxiety may select online courses because they feel more secure in their perceived anonymity and believe they will have to participate in speaking exercises or interact with other students in the target language. However, in the actual online class, online language learners must frequently use their audio-visual capabilities to communicate with the teachers and other students in the target language. This could be challenging for both instructors and learners. Pichette examined anxiety among 186 French university students who were learning English or Spanish in Canada. The students were at different levels including beginning, intermediate, and advanced language courses attending the courses face-to-face and online. The researcher used a comprehensive test to gauge how anxious students were about speaking, reading, and writing in English. When all three levels were taken into consideration, quantitative analysis revealed no differences in the reported levels of anxiety between face-to-face and online language learners. However, it was shown that more advanced language learners who were learning in an online environment experienced lower reported anxiety levels than those who were learning in a face-to-face setting at intermediate and advanced levels. After finishing their first semester of study, online language learners showed fewer levels of anxiety, suggesting the benefit of remote learning.

Furthermore, choosing the right delivery method in remote language class can also be stressful, especially for those who lack the drive and self-control needed for online learning. It is also noted in the literature that online students are required to set aside enough time for learning, ask for assistance when necessary.

In another study, Majid et al. (2012) unearthed an interesting dynamic among adult learners regarding their attitudes toward online language learning. While many adult learners did not express significant concerns about the prospect of learning a language online, other pertinent issues emerged during their exploration of online language programs. Among these concerns was the cognitive capacity of adult learners to grasp the intricate procedures involved in online language learning. Additionally, there was a palpable apprehension among adult learners regarding the decision to enroll in such programs, stemming from uncertainties about the efficacy and suitability of online platforms for language acquisition. The study shed light on several significant correlations, including the relationship between learners' confidence and their readiness to engage in online language learning, the influence of motivation and prior experience on learners' perceptions of online language programs, as well as the connection between learners' confidence levels and their personal attributes. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of adult learners' considerations when navigating the realm of online language learning, highlighting the importance of addressing various factors to ensure their successful engagement and satisfaction with online language programs.

Although the advent of online education has revolutionized language learning, offering students unprecedented flexibility and accessibility, this transition to virtual classrooms presents unique challenges, notably anxiety among learners (Mutunhu et al., 2022). Understanding the sources and manifestations of anxiety in online language learning is paramount for educators and policymakers to develop effective strategies that support learners' well-being and success. By leveraging evidence from research and quantitative data obtained through instruments like the FLCAS, tailored support systems can be implemented within online platforms to address specific anxiety triggers. Encouraging virtual peer collaboration, integrating mindfulness techniques, enhancing instructor presence, and implementing structured goal-setting mechanisms are among the strategies informed by FLCAS data that can alleviate anxiety and enhance the overall online learning experience. Ultimately, by employing a holistic approach informed by research and data, educators can create inclusive and supportive online language learning environments that empower learners to thrive and succeed.

Proposed Ways in reducing students' anxiety level

This section lists and discusses several practical ways to mitigate and reduce students' anxiety level in online language classes as proposed by contemporary studies in the field.

Cooperative learning and engagement

In a classroom context, cooperative learning may help pupils feel less anxious and enhance teamwork, group problem-solving, reciprocal dependency, and aiming for a common objective. Cooperative learning may also be an effective tool for attaining various goals, such as learning conflict resolution strategies, establishing, and maintaining ties across communities, and cultivating empathy. In comparison to personalised direct instruction, it can more often suit the demands of different learning styles. Think-pair-share dialogues, role-plays, and small group discussions can be utilized to promote interactions in the foreign language. For example, before making their presentation to the class, students can rehearse in smaller groups (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). Therefore, learners can develop confidence and lower anxiety by repeating spoken tasks and giving themselves plenty of practice time before oral presentations (Gregersen et al., 2014). For cooperative learning and engagement in online language classrooms, real examples include implementing think-pair-share dialogues where students discuss topics in pairs or small groups before sharing with the whole class virtually. Additionally, role-plays can be conducted using video conferencing tools where students act out scenarios in the target language, promoting interaction and reducing anxiety. Furthermore, small group discussions can be facilitated through online forums or chat rooms, allowing students to collaborate on language tasks and projects asynchronously (Miller & Young, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023).

Positive feedback

The provision of regular opportunities for feedback on students' learning can reduce levels of stress and anxiety in the classroom. The integration of formative assessment into teaching can assist students to have a feeling of being in control and less alienated, thereby reducing their anxiety (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). Lai (2011) argues that students require feedback on various aspects of their learning, such as roles, rules, group performance, and task behavior. Teacher feedback may help students to explain, support, and personalize their answers to questions, and become more engaging with the entire class in the learning process. Following student replies, teachers are advised by Good and Brophy (2003) to ask questions that ask for more elaboration and clarity. By emphasizing effort and strategy, effective feedback may encourage students to participate more, especially those who are less competent. This could eventually reinforce learning for everyone. Instructors can provide regular feedback on students' written assignments or language exercises through online platforms. For example, teachers can use commenting features in document-sharing platforms to offer constructive feedback on students' language proficiency and usage. Additionally, instructors can create audio or video recordings to provide personalized feedback, addressing specific areas for improvement and offering encouragement to boost students' confidence in their language learning journey.

Constructive learning environment

Additionally, relationships that lessen students' anxiety can be fostered in a helpful and courteous learning environment (Thompson et al., 2008). Such settings encourage collaboration, assisting the learners in becoming less defensive while taking criticism, and not posing a threat to instructors' or pupils' faces. As it promotes informality and familiarity, creating a homely atmosphere in the classroom helps promote conversation (Dörnyei, 2002). According to Bledsoe and Baskin (2014), building trust and having a good attitude toward all learners can help pupils who are predisposed to anxiety. To create a positive and stress-free atmosphere in the classroom, learner-oriented activities, personalized instruction, connecting learning to students' experiences, assessing student needs, encouraging student participation in the learning process, positive climate building, and maintaining flexibility are crucial (Miglietti & Strange, 1998). In addition, by fostering a supportive environment, educators may help students become more culturally sensitive and less prejudiced or stereotypical. Teachers should be aware of and responsive to these nonverbal communication signals to establish a safe atmosphere in the classroom since many cultures rely on a variety of visual indications during relational interactions (Bledsoe & Baskin, 2014). Relaxation activities, such as deep breathing exercises and mindfulness classes in the foreign language being taught, may help reduce anxiety levels (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students may be reassured and made aware that their nervousness will subside with practice by posting regular notes of encouragement on discussion boards and course announcements, as well as by receiving emails.

Moreover, language anxiety can be exacerbated by various factors, including social interactions and performance expectations, both of which are relevant in online settings. As individuals spend more time on the internet, especially during periods of lockdown or movement restrictions like those imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sam et al, 2022), they may increasingly engage in online language learning platforms or virtual language classes; hence, the individual may feel the lack of the sense of community and support found in traditional classroom settings.

Therefore, in creating a constructive learning environment online, educators can foster supportive relationships by encouraging student collaboration through virtual breakout rooms during live classes. Teachers can facilitate group activities where students work together to solve language-related tasks or discuss cultural topics, promoting a sense of community and belonging. Furthermore, instructors can incorporate interactive

multimedia elements, such as videos or interactive quizzes, to engage students and create an immersive learning experience that reduces anxiety and enhances learning outcomes.

Addressing students' individual needs

Addressing students' individual needs in online language learning can involve providing differentiated instruction and personalized learning paths tailored to each student's language proficiency level and learning style. For instance, instructors can offer flexible assignments that allow students to choose topics or formats that align with their interests and strengths. Moreover, teachers can use adaptive learning platforms that adjust the difficulty of language exercises based on students' performance, providing targeted support and scaffolding to help learners progress at their own pace. Considering students' individual learning needs is another strategy to create a trustworthy and encouraging environment for foreign language learners in the classroom. For example, the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework provides a means for instructors to acknowledge the needs of different learners, such as providing methods, flexible goals, assessments, and materials (Meo, 2008).

Language learners may experience anxiety not only about their own linguistic abilities but also about how they are perceived by others, such as peers or instructors. Fear of making mistakes, being judged, or not meeting expectations (Ahadzadeh et al., 2022) could exacerbate language anxiety and hinder language learning progress. Adolescents who exhibit "perfectionistic tendencies" (Peng Aik et al., 2020) may be more prone to experiencing language anxiety in social interactions where language use is required, particularly in the context of language learning. For example, they may feel anxious when speaking in front of classmates or when participating in group discussions in a second language. Furthermore, loneliness can be a significant stressor for individuals, particularly in social or communicative contexts (Azhar et al., 2021). In language learning environments, social isolation can contribute to language anxiety, as individuals may lack opportunities for social interaction or support, leading to increased feelings of insecurity or fear when using the target language.

By offering multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement, teachers can assist students who experience extreme fear in the classroom (Ariane et al., 2019). For example, allowing students to write down their ideas instead of verbally expressing them during a lecture and then providing a specific time for them to share their questions and ideas may assist the learners in managing their responses and be not afraid of their responses.

Teacher's clear instructions

Students that have limited tolerance for ambiguity may experience negative effects from unscheduled activities or confusing, open-ended tasks (DeRoma et al., 2003). To reduce stress and improve learning, teachers are advised to set clear objectives for activities. Teachers are also encouraged to evaluate students' reactions to what is said and done in class (Hess, 2002). Exams and assignments that are well-structured concisely stated and allow for some degree of flexibility in completing the tasks and assignments can also help boost self-efficacy and lower anxiety (Salend, 2011).

Clear instructions in online language classrooms can be reinforced through detailed assignment guidelines and rubrics shared with students (Gao et al., 2023). Instructors can create instructional videos or screencasts demonstrating language concepts or tasks, providing step-by-step guidance to help students understand expectations. Additionally, teachers can use synchronous sessions to clarify instructions and address any questions or concerns students may have, ensuring a clear and supportive learning environment conducive to reducing anxiety.

Assignment completion

Students who fail to complete assignments and demonstrate disinterest or unpreparedness may be experiencing language anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), highly anxious students may be motivated to avoid activities they fear, which can hinder their engagement in classroom activities. During times of isolated learning, it is crucial to reach out to struggling students and provide effective language learning strategies, particularly for those who are completely disengaged from the course in certain cases such as those immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional time and support may be necessary to help these students complete the course.

Practice activities and level adjustment

In online language learning, addressing anxiety among students is crucial, particularly in activities involving peer interaction and recording submissions. Research by Pichette (2009) highlights the comparable anxiety levels between online and traditional learners in such scenarios. To alleviate this anxiety, a phased approach is beneficial. Firstly, offering practice activities with lower cognitive demands prior to recording or synchronous interactions can help ease students into the process. These activities could include scaffolded exercises (Catherine & Devi, 2023) on specific language skills or structured conversations in pairs or small groups. By gradually increasing the complexity of tasks, students can build confidence before engaging in more demanding activities.

Moreover, providing avenues for students to express their apprehensions can be invaluable. Oral discussions, journaling, or written and oral discussion boards offer platforms for students to voice their concerns and receive support from peers and instructors. Encouraging collaborative problem-solving and sharing strategies for managing anxiety can foster a supportive online learning community.

In addition to targeted practice and emotional support, leveraging adaptive learning platforms can enhance the efficacy of online language instruction (Ismail & Hastings, 2023). These platforms utilize algorithms to tailor exercises and quizzes to students' proficiency levels, ensuring appropriate challenge and support. By offering a personalized learning experience, students are more likely to stay engaged and motivated, thereby reducing anxiety associated with performance.

Furthermore, integrating authentic materials into lessons adds relevance and authenticity to the learning experience. Podcasts, videos, and news articles provide real-world context, allowing students to apply language skills in meaningful contexts. Engaging with authentic materials not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters cultural awareness and appreciation, further enhancing motivation and reducing anxiety. By promoting flow experiences through immersive tasks, intrinsic motivation, and supportive learning environments (Amini & Amini, 2017), instructors can help learners navigate language anxiety and achieve optimal learning outcomes.

Therefore, addressing anxiety in online language learning requires a multifaceted approach. By providing targeted practice, emotional support, personalized learning experiences, and authentic materials, instructors can create an inclusive and supportive learning environment conducive to student success.

Creating a continuous support system

Another strategy for reducing students' anxiety in online learning could be designing and implementing a student support system, such as a discussion board, or learners support groups where students can connect with peers and instructors. Such support systems can also be beneficial in correcting the false perceptions about language learning (Russell, & Topham, 2012; Horgan, et al., 2013; Brindley, 2014). Therefore, supportive strategies for language students' learning need online could facilitate teaching and learning, particularly for those new to online or remote learning.

Creating a continuous support system in online language learning can involve establishing virtual study groups or discussion forums where students can connect with peers and instructors to seek help and share resources. Instructors can also offer virtual office hours or one-on-one tutoring sessions to provide individualized support and guidance to students experiencing language anxiety. Moreover, educators can leverage technology to create online communities and social networks where students can interact with fellow learners, share experiences, and support each other throughout their language learning journey.

Discussion

This study aims at proposing practical ways to reduce language anxiety in online learning settings. It should be noted that the use of online teaching and learning has significantly increased within the past decade, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic. The study promotes pedagogical interventions aimed at lowering students' perceived levels of language anxiety via classroom activities and approaches that can be instantly adopted by language educators.

Expanding on the effectiveness of the proposed activities in reducing anxiety in foreign language learning and assessment (FLA and FLAS), it is essential to draw insights from contemporary studies that have investigated these strategies' impacts. Implementing cooperative learning techniques can significantly alleviate anxiety among students. Collaborative learning environments play a key role in promoting a sense of camaraderie and support among students, which may ultimately contribute to reduced anxiety and improved academic performance.

Moreover, feedback plays a crucial role in alleviating anxiety in language learning contexts. Students who receive supportive and constructive feedback experience significant reduction in anxiety, leading to increased motivation and engagement in the learning process (Toyama, & Yamazaki, 2021). This highlights the importance of providing students with timely and meaningful feedback to help alleviate their anxiety and foster a positive learning environment.

Creating a positive learning atmosphere is another effective strategy for reducing anxiety (Manley, et al., 2023). By cultivating an environment where students feel valued and supported, educators can help mitigate anxiety and create conditions conducive to effective language learning.

Addressing individual student needs is paramount in reducing anxiety in language learning settings. By providing personalized support and accommodations, instructors can empower students to manage their anxiety more effectively and achieve success in their language learning endeavors.

Clear instructions also play a critical role in reducing anxiety among language learners. Research by Li and Zhang (2023) found that students who received clear and explicit instructions were less likely to experience feelings of uncertainty and anxiety during language learning tasks. By providing students with clear expectations

and guidance, educators can help alleviate anxiety and create a sense of confidence and competence among learners.

Finally, establishing a continuous support system for students is essential in reducing anxiety in FLA and FLAS. Fostering a sense of community and belonging, educators can create a supportive learning environment (Strayhorn, 2018) where students feel empowered to overcome challenges and achieve their language learning goals.

By implementing cooperative learning activities, providing constructive feedback, creating a positive learning atmosphere, addressing individual student needs, giving clear instructions, and establishing a continuous support system, instructors can effectively reduce anxiety and foster a more positive and effective learning environment in FLA and FLAS. Drawing on insights from contemporary research in this field can enhance the value and credibility of these strategies in practice.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that foreign language anxiety (FLA) plays a crucial role in influencing the learning outcomes of L2 students. Therefore, there must be effective ways of mitigating and reducing it so that student performance is not adversely affected. Consequently, educators may employ the recommended methods and strategies put forth by scholars to mitigate learning anxiety. Such solutions involve a broad pedagogical framework that encompasses educators, parents, and scholars to approach and analyze this issue comprehensively. Quantitative data on this matter can be obtained through strategic instruments such as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The most effective solution is to understand the fundamental concepts and implement the best approach. Increasing research in this field can raise public awareness. As for future research, teachers' use of effective self-implementation techniques, such as using humor to lessen fear and fostering a stimulating learning atmosphere is suggested.

In addition to the strategies discussed, future research in FLA/FLAS should explore the intersectionality of anxiety with other factors such as cultural background, socioeconomic status, and individual learning styles. Understanding how these variables interact with FLA can provide deeper insights into effective interventions tailored to diverse student populations. Moreover, there is a need to investigate the long-term effects of anxiety reduction techniques on students' language proficiency and overall well-being. Longitudinal studies tracking students' progress over extended periods can shed light on the sustainability and efficacy of anxiety-reducing interventions in the language learning context.

Furthermore, given the increasing prevalence of online language learning platforms, there is a pressing need to examine how technology-mediated instruction influences FLA. Research in this area can identify innovative ways to leverage technology to alleviate anxiety and enhance language learning outcomes. Additionally, exploring the role of social support networks within online learning environments and their impact on anxiety levels warrants attention. Understanding how virtual communities and peer interactions can mitigate FLA in online settings can inform the design of more supportive and engaging language learning platforms.

Finally, as globalization continues to drive the demand for multilingualism, addressing FLA becomes increasingly pertinent. Future studies should investigate how FLA manifests in different linguistic contexts and explore culturally responsive strategies to address anxiety among diverse language learners. By embracing a holistic approach that considers cultural, socio-economic, and technological factors, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower students to thrive in their language learning journey while minimizing anxiety-related barriers.

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