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*The Relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety,
Year of Study and Self- perceived language Proficiency
among English Major Egyptian Students at Faculty of
Education*

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Abstract:

In an attempt to delve into the issue of affective variables related to language learning, this study aims to: (1) examine whether English major students at faculty of education experience feelings of foreign language anxiety (FLA) and measure its level; (2) investigate the relationship between FLA and the year of study; (3) look into what types of anxiety do the participants experience; and (4) to explore the correlation between the students' self-evaluation of their English language proficiency and the level of FLA. For assessing the level of FLA, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Howitz & Cope, 1986) was used to collect data. The participants in this study were 194 English major students, from freshmen to seniors; at Banha Faculty of Education, Egypt. A self-evaluation questionnaire was used to get the participants' self-perception of their English language proficiency. The collected data were analyzed, using SPSS version 22 and one-way ANOVA, to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of anxiety between the students in the four years. The results revealed that senior year students experienced the highest level of anxiety followed by freshmen, then sophomore, and the junior students experienced the least level of anxiety. However, no statistically significant differences were observed across the four years of study in their FLA level. Correlation analyses revealed significant negative associations between participants' self-perceived English proficiency and their FLA levels associated with all four skills with different degrees. The study concluded that the participants' self-perception of their language proficiency, might have affected their level of FLA, and vice versa.

Keywords: FLA; year of study; self-perception; language proficiency

Background of the Study

No one can deny the fact that some learners are more successful than others at acquiring any foreign language, even though the circumstances of their learning are almost the same. This has led to investigations of individual characteristics as anticipators of successful foreign language (FL) learning. According to Olivares-Cuhat (2010), most of the studies categorized these factors as cognitive factors; language aptitude, learning strategies, affective factors; attitudes, motivation, anxiety, metacognitive factors, and

demographic factors. As Brown (2007) claims the psychological factors affecting FL learning are still attracting the attention of many scholars. Researchers in FL instruction had to accept the fact that personality traits such as self-esteem, inhibition, anxiety, risk-taking and extraversion, may well shape the ultimate success in mastering a FL, as Dorney (2005) asserts. Affective variables have long been recognized to play a crucial role in the process of learning a foreign language. As there is a increasing acceptance of learners' feelings and reflections in the learning process within the FL teaching and learning circle, one of the most highly examined variables in the field of FL learning is foreign language apprehension (FLA).

Over the last few decades, emotional aspects such as FLA have been the focus of interest. This affective factor, specifically, is thought to be one of the major obstacles to the target language learning and instruction (Krashen, 1985; Phillips, 1992; Horwitz, 2001; Pavlenko, 2011; Liu, 2013), regardless of the language teaching methodology. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined FLA as "a distinct complex construct of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of language learning process". Many researchers highlight the distinctive feature of FLA as a situation-specific type of anxiety associated with FL learning contexts. MacIntyre (1999) described FLA as the "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language". This emotional state may interfere with learning and producing the target language causing apprehension, nervousness, worry, and tension related to FL learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994). Therefore, studies provide evidence of a significant negative correlation between FLA and FL achievement (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 2000; Horwitz, 2001; Williams & Andrade, 2008; Yang, 2012). According to those researchers, FL classroom situations are especially anxiety-provoking contexts due to their interactive nature.

In fact, even though FLA has been linked to different language skills, oral production is viewed as the greatest source of anxiety in FL classroom, mainly due to students' fears to communicate in public using a language they do not completely master (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Young, 1992; Aida, 1994; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Woodrow, 2006; Mak, 2011; Park, 2014; Choi, 2016). Pellegrino (2005) claimed that "to learn another language is to redefine oneself publicly, socially, and personally." Hence, some writers, (Schumann, 1978; Ortega-Cebreros, 2003), point out that the difficulties FL learners experience at trying to express their ideas or

feelings in the FL may challenge their self-concept and identity as competent speakers, which can easily result in worry, frustration and apprehension.

Anxiety was regarded as a general term until the work of Horwitz et al. (1986) which discussed FLA as a distinguishing psychological phenomenon experienced by all foreign language learners regardless of age, gender or experience. Though FLA is widely recognized as a mental block against FL learning and conceived as an obvious factor in it, yet there are many inconsistent conclusions that could not be generalized; due to the complexity of individual differences in FL learning. Thus, some studies have suggested that FLA may have a positive impact on language learning, “drawing a distinction between beneficial/ facilitating vs. inhibitory/ debilitating anxiety” (Bailey, 1995; Spielman & Radnofsky, 2001; Dornyei, 2005), but most researchers report “the detrimental or debilitating effects” of FLA (Cheng, Horwitz & Shallert, 1999; Horwitz, 2001). These latter effects can manifest in various ways such as avoidance behavior; as arriving late, avoiding participating in the classroom or interacting, skipping classes, or face-saving; like joking, or minor physical symptoms; like sweating, headaches, etc., (Horwitz & Young, 1991; Gregersen, 2007). FLA is, therefore, believed to obstruct learning and affect the efficiency of language learning (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000). This controversial issue attracted many researchers to investigate this phenomenon and its effect on the process of language learning (Horwitz et al. 1986; Horwitz & Young 1991; Aida 1994; Ezzi 2012, Taha & Wong 2016).

The process of teaching English in Egyptian universities is still traditional as most of the lecturers use the teacher-centered approach. The teacher is the “sage on the stage”, as he does everything inside the classroom and the students are just spectators, they do not have enough chances to participate. This makes the process of teaching EFL very theoretical to a great extent and the students are passive participants most of the time. This does not help students to practice and improve their language skills, especially the communicative ones and cause their feeling of incompetence which can lead to anxiety in general and FLA in particular. Therefore, focusing on the factors that affect language learning among the students like apprehension and anxiety is crucial in order to provide practical solutions that might help the students to overcome such language restraint.

The number of Egyptian students studying English as a FL is increasing every year. There are many problems the students encounter and one of those problems is FLA. This issue has not

received enough attention from the researchers in Egypt (attia, 2015, Abul Magd, 2015, and Khalaf, 2016), especially the variables associated with anxiety like the year of study and self-perceived language proficiency. The current study attempts to bridge this gap and highlight the factors underlying the relationship between FLA, the year of study, and self-perception of language proficiency in the Egyptian context. This will help the teachers and the students to get a better understanding of FLA phenomenon in order to find practical academic solutions which might help to alleviate its level among students.

The researcher will: first, review the related literature to FLA; its characteristics, causes, and consequences, and present the studies previously conducted on learners' FLA; then preview the preceding researchers who dealt with correlation studies in the topic of FLA, with special focus on the year of study and self-perception/evaluation of language proficiency as variables with FLA, followed by a presentation of the research objectives and questions, methodology; participants and instruments of this study. Next, the findings of the study will be presented and discussed, and finally, implications for FL learners programs, limitations, and suggestions for further research will be stated.

Review of related literature

Foreign language anxiety

Anxiety is a common issue as students of FL cannot avoid such feeling. Horwitz et al. (1986), MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), Pappamihel (2002), Batumlu & Erden (2007), Na (2007), Cui (2011), Arnaiz & Guillen (2012) and Lee (2016) have investigated this phenomenon among students in different parts of the world. Horwitz et al. (1986) found that language anxiety is a distinctive feeling which differs from other types of anxiety, like learning anxiety, because students of FL cannot escape such feeling during the process of learning. The study of MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) found that the students studying French as a FL experienced anxiety and they tend to underestimate their skills. Apprehension prevents the students from showing their true potentials or expressing their ideas. Pappamihel (2002) obtained the same results when he investigated the issue of anxiety among Mexican immigrant students in the middle school in the US. Although the aforementioned mentioned studies were conducted with students studying in different levels of study, the results have shown that the students cannot avoid language apprehension/anxiety.

The anxious students tend to stay silent and avoid any kind of interactions with the teachers and with other students, as a self-defense technique for withstanding the feeling of apprehension and anxiety. Those students prefer to stay silent and would only listen without any kind of participation or interaction in the classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner 1994, Pappamihel 2002). The students would also try to avoid participating in any task or activity of learning as a mechanism to lower the level of apprehension or anxiety (Na 2007). FLA has a negative effect on the academic achievement of students and this was proven through a study by Batumlu and Erden (2007). Their study found that students who experienced high level of anxiety got low grades while those who experienced low level of anxiety get high ones. In addition, Na (2007) and Cui (2011) in their study showed a negative relationship between the level of anxiety and learning English as a FL.

A study by Aydin (2008) which investigated the causes of language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in Turkish students proved its negative effect. The participants mentioned that their fear of being evaluated negatively by others play an essential role in their feeling of apprehension and anxiety. The same result was obtained by Williams and Andrade (2008) where Japanese students of English language attributed their feeling of anxiety to being evaluated by their classmates and teachers. In their experimental study Andrade et al. (2009) investigated the level of anxiety among Japanese students inside the classroom, through exposing them to a situation that provoked anxiety during English class. The result of the study revealed that about 75% of the participants were affected by situation which promoted their feeling of apprehension.

Moreover, there are some studies that investigated the strategies that the students used to lower their feeling of anxiety and lessen the level of apprehension, like the study by Lucas et al. (2011). The participants in this study were Filipino students studying English language and the results showed that the students utilize vocabulary as a tool to help them express their ideas which was the strategy they used to avoid the feeling of anxiety. In addition, the study of Lee (2016) shifted the focus to the teachers and investigated the effect of corrective feedback on the level of anxiety among students. The study showed that when the teacher used corrective feedback properly, this could be a good method to lower the students' level of anxiety. Furthermore, Chan, Abdullah and Yusof (2012) argued that apprehension and anxiety can be an advocating or a frustrating factor for the students and it is the teacher's role to help his/her students

invest such feelings in a positive way, because apprehension/anxiety is one of the factors that determine the success of language learning.

To sum up, FL anxiety is experienced by students in middle school, high school or even at the university level and FL anxiety has a negative effect on students' performance and their academic achievement.

Causes of foreign language anxiety

Apprehension is a natural consequence in a situation perceived as threatening and beyond one's capabilities. Guiora (1983) stated that FL learning itself is a "profoundly unsettling psychological proposition", because it threatens the learner's self-assurance and dignity which are rarely challenged when communicating in his/her native language. Learners' self-expression is limited by their imperfect command of the target language. Inability to present oneself according to his/her self-image can set a learner into the cycle of negative self-evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

Speaking in a FL is often sensed as a "threat to peoples' self-concept, self-identity, and ego, which they have formed in their first language as reasonable and intelligent individuals" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). The controversial issue here is whether the self-perceived unsatisfactory level of FL competence and the knowledge and the ability to use it, leads to FLA or FLA affects the level of mastering the target language. This causal dilemma of FLA and FL proficiency remains debatable (Sparks, & Ganschow, 1991, MacIntyre, 1995). Horwitz (2001) examined and reviewed the literature on FLA and FL achievement which is very helpful not only in documenting the relationship but also for our understanding of this multi-faceted phenomenon. Although the results of researches were similar in demonstrating the presence of anxiety in the classrooms and its negative effect on FL achievement, more studies need to be done in this area to investigate the interplay of various contributing variables as the exact nature of this relationship is still blurry and may be influenced by various associated factors.

Several studies claimed that the typological distance between native language (NL) and FL increases FLA, for example, Turkish (Kunt, 1997), Chinese (Yan, 1998), Spanish (Sellers, 2000), Japanese (Kitano, 2001), Arabic (Alrabai, 2015) or Mandarin (Yan, & Wang, 2001). Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky (2000) relied on the fact that learners with poor NL skills are naturally anxious in the FL. There are various variables affecting FLA that can be classified into static and dynamic variables. The static kind involve characteristics; such as

gender, nationality, native language, type of personality, etc., and the dynamic ones that can change over time; like language proficiency, motivation, and stay in a FL country. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) explained that FLA mostly manifests its strongest form in testing situations. Learners fear to make mistakes and consequently, get corrected by the teacher in front of their classmates. They reported that those evaluative situations in which their knowledge and performance of FL is monitored by people around them are the most stressful situations contributing to their feeling of FLA. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) classified three types of performance anxieties that are related situation-specific; communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Communication apprehension (CA) is defined as the anxiety to communicate with people, including both the production apprehension; talking in front of others or in groups, and the reception apprehension; receiving and responding spoken message. Even though CA leads to fear of speaking, it also may develop the fear of being unable to understand the others' speech. As for fear of negative evaluation, it is described as the learners' expectation to be evaluated in a negative way by others in any situation (Worde, 2003). Test anxiety, stems from the fear of failure. It can be explained through the high expectations and prominent demands that put on the learners to master the FL. However, Aida (1994) argues that number of scholars misinterprets the communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety as the underlying subcomponents of FLA while Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) suggested them as analogies to FLA.

Consequences of foreign language anxiety

FLA has the same symptoms as any other types of anxiety; sweating, palpitations, trembling, apprehension, worry, fear, threat, difficult concentration, forgetfulness, freezing, going blank, and avoidance behavior (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). In Hashemi, & Abbasi's research (2013), the participants described their own signs of FLA; such as blushing, perspiration, headaches, tension and pain in any part of the body. They also reported symptoms of abnormal verbal behavior; such as staggered voice, either too fast or too slow speed of speech, rubbing the palms, squirming, fidgeting, and playing with hair or clothes, or touching objects. Other indications of FLA were stuttering or stammering, poor performance, less clarity of thoughts, less eye contact as distracted by reading from the paper or screen while giving presentations, etc. MacIntyre (1995) describes language learning as "a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage and

retrieval processes and FLA can interfere with each of these by causing a divided attention situation” . Eysenck (1979), and MacIntyre, & Gardner (1991) explained the negative effects of anxiety in FL learning claiming that anxiety divide the learners’ attention between task-related cognition and self-related or affective-related cognition, causing cognitive processing with all its stages; input, processing, mental planning, and output, more difficult and complicated, therefore the cognitive performance turns out to be less efficient.

According to the above mentioned researches, apprehension and anxiety of FL learners negatively influence their acquisition of the target language and hinder their performance. Each individual learner is a unique identity and therefore, FLA’s signs may differ in their manifestation or severity. Some learners may completely forget what they have learnt and be unable to perform in any way, oral or written, and some others need only a small hint or little help or motivation to be able to perform with less effort and unnoticeable signs of anxiety.

Research on foreign language anxiety

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope’s (1986) groundbreaking study proposed FLA as a situation-specific anxiety unique to the FL classroom. The authors put forward that FL anxiety was composed of three components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Based on clinical experiences with university level students studying a FL, the authors also developed the Foreign Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Using the FLCAS to measure FLA levels, they found a negative correlation between FLA and achievement in the TL. FL learning anxiety has been researched extensively in various contexts and situations (Horwitz, 1986; Kunt, 1997; Yan, 1998; Sellers. 2000; Kitano, 2001; Yan and Wang, 2001; Liu and Jackson, 2008; Yan and Horwitz, 2008). Furthermore, its effects on all language skills have been analyzed (Saito and Samimy, 1996; Cheng, 1998; Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert, 1999; Sellers, 2000; Argaman and Abu-Rabia, 2002; Cheng, 2002; Elkhafaifi, 2005). Moreover, factors influencing the levels of FL anxiety experienced by learners have also been extensively investigated in numerous studies (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley, 2000; Gregerson and Horwitz, 2002). Lastly, methods for alleviating feelings of FL learning anxiety have been put forward; as well as, a number of guidelines to follow for creating classroom environments that prevent learners from developing FL learning anxiety (Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991).

The universal scale FLCAS by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986), has been later adjusted by other researchers according to the language or cultural background where the research has been conducted. As FLA has been studied mostly in classrooms where English was taught as a second/FL, the English Learning Anxiety Scale (ELAS) (Papamihel, 2002) has been created for learners of ESL and reported homogeneous results in anxiety level. At the beginning, the majority of research has been conducted in Western countries, then later more research results have been coming from Asian countries using modified scale versions. Moreover, in Saudi Arabia, the Arabic FL Anxiety Questionnaire (AFLAQ) (Al-Saraj, 2011) has been developed.

Studies of FLA used mostly quantitative methods, applying correlation analysis where questionnaires and scales have been proved to be reliable instruments (e.g., FLCAS, ELAS, etc). From the qualitative methods, mostly interviews of anxious learners were performed. It seems the correlation studies only will not provide a valid and reliable answer and in-depth understanding of FLA complexity. The investigation thus should not be limited to either quantitative or qualitative methods. FLA as a complex human phenomenon needs to be explored in a holistic perspective and the solution seems to be the mixed methods research. The studies on FLA have developed from the descriptive studies to the experimental studies, which increased considerably in 1990s. They looked more into the causes and factors of FLA and its effect under various learning conditions and aspects of language learning skills and language levels (e.g., Young, 1990; Koch, & Terrell, 1991). Ohata (2005) indicated that teachers' perceptions play an important role in students' FLA, as teacher is the person in the classroom who can regulate the atmosphere, search for the signs of anxiety and help students overcome it. The classroom that follows traditional learning styles, its strictness and formality was declared as the major source of stress. Most of those researches took place in the classroom setting in non-native English speaking environments. But, Gardner, & MacIntyre (1993) assured that FLA can appear not only in a learning and classroom situation but also when using a FL in any other context.

Correlation studies on foreign language anxiety

Negative correlation between FLA and important FL learning variables, such as achievement, has been well established in literature (e.g., Horwitz, 1986; Young, 1991; MacIntyre, & Gardner, 1991; Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1996; Kunt, 1997; MacIntyre, 1999; Kitano, 2001; Yan, & Wang, 2001; Liu, & Zhang, 2013). FLA has been one

of the most studied topics for a long time and researchers have mostly focused on the negative side of it and its effects on FL learning. It has been a great concern in FL research over the last few decades and triggered many intensive debates, but the challenges play a vital role in the research of such a complex phenomenon as FLA.

Arnaiz and Guillen (2012) in their study investigated the relationship between FL anxiety and other factors like gender in a Spanish university. The result shows that females experienced a higher level of anxiety than males, and that low level students tend to be more anxious inside the classroom. On the other hand, Kitano (2001) found a different relationship between gender and FLA; male learners, who perceived themselves as less competent in a FL, suffered from FLA more than female learners. Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, & Dewaele (2016) revealed that female learners reported more fun in their FL class than male learners, but they experienced higher FLA than their male peers. Meanwhile, Na (2007) in his study with Chinese high school students found that they experienced anxiety and this feeling is irrelevant to gender or level of study. Anyway, most of gender-related studies came up with rather conflicting results. Many variables, mainly the environment where learning takes place may influence the learners' level of anxiety.

In Woodrow's research (2006) it is stated that English language learners from countries such as China, Korea and Japan were more anxious than other ethnic groups. Further, Al-Saraj (2011) explains why Saudi Arabian culture creates a social and cultural setting for examining FLA. The education system in Saudi Arabia is free for all levels, where male and female students are separated, typically attending segregated schools. The combination of factors such as the importance of learning English, the educational system and conservative culture create an environment for FLA. Spitalli (2000) found a significant negative relationship between FLA level and attitudes toward people from different cultures.

In a study about the perceptions and attitudes in the Egyptian ESL classroom in relation to FLA, Attia (2015) investigated FLA and teachers' perceptions and awareness of its presence in the classrooms. She also explored the relationship between students' sex and FLA and different activities used in English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms to determine the possible effects they have on FLA. The findings of the study have revealed the importance of teachers' awareness of FLA and the effects of sex and different activities on it. Some teachers are aware of the presence of FLA in the ESL classrooms and some others are not; and even when they notice it,

they do not always relate it to FL/SL learning. Several teachers believed FLA has negative effects on students, while others thought it can have both negative and positive effects. Teachers, however, were unaware of the effect sex has on FLA and the effect it has on different skills and on affective anxieties. Both male and female Egyptian students suffered from different levels of skill-specific anxiety and affective anxieties.

Unequal language competencies are often reported as very stressful and it can considerably influence the level of FLA, especially when communicating with someone having better command of the FL. In addition to the above-mentioned influences, many other factors have received research attention: age; length of FL study; self-perceived FL proficiency; academic achievement (e.g., On-wuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley, 1999; Kunt, & Tum, 2010; Hashemi, & Abbasi, 2013); perfectionism (Gregerson, & Horwitz, 2002); societal interference and lack of preparation (Wei, 2014); error correction techniques (Young, 1991; Gregersen, 2007); and self-presentation concerns (Cohen, & Norst, 1989). As effective EFL oral communication is seen as a highly valued skill, this can serve as a motivator for learners, or may be perceived by learners as pressure and consequently negatively contribute to FLA (Tran, Moni, & Baldauf, 2012). Nevertheless, the factors involved in FLA as its inhibitors or activators are numerous and the list of potential sources of FLA can be rather long.

Foreign language anxiety and the year of study

Some researchers have looked into how FL learners' language level and their year of study might be associated with language anxiety experiences. The relationship between anxiety and level of study has been the focus of attention of many researchers, and some of them found that the level of study does not influence anxiety like Cheng's (2002) study. In the meantime other studies, like Elkhafaifi (2005), found that the level of anxiety is different among advanced and beginner learners. Cheng's (2002) study concentrated on writing and its relationship with FL anxiety. He explored anxiety in writing skill in Taiwanese students of English. He concluded that there were no statistically significant differences in the level of writing anxiety between juniors, sophomores, and freshmen. But he noted that as levels of proficiency advanced, the students' anxiety did increase with year of study, freshmen claiming to be the least anxious and juniors to be the most anxious about writing in English. Another research by Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) had subjects who were studying foreign languages at different levels; freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. They observed an almost linear rise in anxiety as year of

study advanced, “with exception of sophomores, language anxiety appeared to increase directly as a function of year of study”.

Inconsistent results regarding anxiety and language level were confirmed Rodriguez and Abreu (2003), who explored stability in anxiety across target languages; French and English, in trainee teachers at two Venezuelan Universities. Surprisingly the results indicated that at one university, students became more language-anxious as they advanced through levels, whereas at the other, levels of anxiety tended to go down as learners passed from one level to another. The researchers suggested that these mixed results were perhaps due to “classroom activities and instructors’ personal characteristics and behaviors”.

However, the study of Elkhafaifi (2005) observed that learners of Arabic who were in their third year of study had significantly lower levels of general language anxiety and of listening anxiety than students in the first and second years. He found statistically significant negative correlation between listening anxiety and year of study, and listening anxiety and the number of years the participants studied Arabic: $r = -.13^{**}$, and $r = -.19^{**}$, respectively. He also proved the same correlation between general language classroom anxiety and year of study, and general language classroom anxiety and number of years the participants studied Arabic: $r = -.15^*$ (at $p < .05$), and $r = -.22^{**}$ (at $p < .01$), respectively. He showed that the beginners experienced a higher level of anxiety than the advanced students, and he concluded that the students gain experience with the passage of time during the process of learning a FL, which reduces the level of anxiety. Ezzi (2012) conducted a study in Hodeidah University, where the participants were second year and fourth year EFL students. The results of the study revealed that students in second year experienced higher level of anxiety than fourth year, but the difference between the two groups is not significant.

In the same field of study, some studies showed that the level of anxiety increases when the students move to higher levels (Samimy & Tabuse 1992, Saito et al. 1996). Samimy and Tabuse (1992) revealed that the level of anxiety among students increases as they move from one level to another. Saito and Samimy (1996) who investigated FLA among learners of Japanese at three different levels; beginners, intermediate, and advanced, reported that advanced learners had the highest level of FLA, intermediate ones were the least language-anxious, and the beginners were in between. They supposed that intermediate learners became familiar with the classroom activities and consequently be more relaxed. As for the advanced learners, the

focus turned away from speaking towards translation, reading and writing, which leads to lack of oral practice. This deficiency in oral performance may have been responsible for making advanced learners feel less sure of their proficiency when speaking, which in consequence caused their FLA to elevate. They found that anxious students avoid taking risk to communicate with other students using Japanese language, which means that they become less motivated and less positive. The researchers argued that this is due to the change in the curriculum as the subjects in the advanced levels concentrate more on reading and less instructional time is given to the students. Loo and Kitjaroonchai (2015) conducted a study among Thai high school students and one of the aims of the study was to investigate the relationship between FL anxiety and the year of study. The results showed that there is a weak positive correlation between FL anxiety and year of study. However, they concluded that the feeling of anxiety is different from one environment to another, assuring that the results of the other studies were different because of different settings.

Many research results showed that the relationship between FLA and year of study is a controversial matter, taking into consideration the studies that have been published in different parts of the world. Some of them had revealed that the year of study do not have any influence on the level of anxiety (Anyadubalu 2010), however, some other studies that have suggested that the years of study elevate the students' experience and this has a positive influence on the level of anxiety which means that advanced students experience lower level of anxiety than beginner students (Trang et al. 2013). But Ekstrom (2013) supports the opinion that the progress in the level of studying a FL will not help the learners to alleviate the level of anxiety because, according to him, it is a characteristic of FL learning.

Al-Shboul et al. (2013) affirmed that the Arab studies that have investigated the issue of FLA among Arab students are scarce and there is a need for further investigation. Taha and Wong (2016) in their study investigated the effect of language anxiety on the academic achievement among Iraqi students and Alsowat (2016) investigated the sources of anxiety and its effects on academic achievement of Saudi students while Abdul Razak and Yassin (2017) investigated the effect of foreign language anxiety on gender and academic achievement among Yemeni university EFL students. Ezzi (2012) investigated the issue of anxiety and its impact on gender in Yemen. Accordingly, the issue of anxiety is still worth investigating in the Egyptian context as it needs attention from the sides of the researchers. The conflicting points of view concerning the relationship

between the year of study and the level of anxiety needs more research and investigations in order to highlight the factors that might have an effect on the relationship between those two variables.

Looking at the related studies, we conclude that Cheng (2002) and Ezzi (2012) revealed that there is no significant difference between the students when the year of study is taken into consideration. On the contrary, the study of Loo and Kitjaroonchai (2015) showed that there is a weak positive relationship between anxiety and year of study. Meanwhile, Elkhafaifi (2005) showed that the level of anxiety is different from one level to another as beginners experienced a higher level of anxiety than advanced students, but Samimy & Tabuse (1992), Saito et al. (1996) claimed that the level of anxiety increases when the students move to higher levels. Therefore, the relationship between FL anxiety and year of study is a controversial issue and there are external factors that have an influence on this matter which needs further investigation in different settings.

Foreign language anxiety and self-perceived language proficiency

Bailey (1983) was the pioneer who examined FLA from the learners' point of view and he claimed that the competitive nature of learning FL can lead to anxiety because students tend to compare themselves or idealize their self-images. On the other side, low-esteem causes worry and fear of unpleasant responses or negative evaluation from the teacher and/or their peers as well. MacIntyre, Clément, Dorney, & Noels (1998) proposed a strong correlation between FLA and self-evaluation and considered them as a single construct; self-confidence. Self-confidence was indicated as a key variable of FL performance in several other studies (e.g., Matsuda, & Goebel, 2004). Gardner & MacIntyre (1993) reported significant relationship between learners' FL self-rating and their level of FLA and postulated that anxious learners often underestimate their actual language proficiency. Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, & Daley (2000) confirmed that learners with high FLA level have negative perception of both their academic competence and their self-confidence. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986) also state that this type of learners tend to over-studying, as a FLA related phenomenon. Although they devote a lot of time for studying, they still do poorly in tests or oral exams. They become even more frustrated when they realize they do the same mistakes repeatedly as FLA has a recurring nature; as learners experience more failure, their FLA level may increase even more.

Research objective& questions

The research aims at exploring FLA among English major students at Banha Faculty of Education, with focus on the relationship between FLA and both the year of study and self-evaluation of language proficiency. Therefore, it aims to tackle the following issues; whether English major students experience feelings of FLA and its level, what kind of relationship is there between FLA and the year of study, and the correlation between the participants' self-perception of their language proficiency and the level of FLA. More specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the level of FLA among English major students at Banha faculty of education?
2. Are there any differences in the level of FLA that English major students experience across the years of study?
- 3- What types of foreign language anxiety do the participants experience?
4. What is the correlation between FLA level and the participants' self- perception of their language proficiency?

Methodology

Participants

The number of the Egyptian students who join English departments at the faculty of Education every year is increasing and it is huge in comparison to other majors. The participants are from the four levels of study: freshmen in first year (N=50), sophomore in second year (N=50), juniors in third year (N=50), and seniors in fourth year (N=44). Over 25% of the total number of students has been taken as participants from all level (total number =194), and this percentage is considered sufficient in quantitative data analysis according to Singh (2006).

Instruments and data collection

Horwitz et al., (1986) designed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure the level of anxiety of FL learners while learning the target language in the context of the classroom. The FLCAS has been extensively used in language anxiety studies across different disciplines (i.e. psychology, education, applied linguistics, etc.) due to its high reliability and validity (Aida, 1994; Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012, 2013; Choi, 2016; Mak, 2011; Park, 2014; Park & French, 2013; Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003). The scale deals with general FLA although it especially highlights speaking and listening skills. According to many researchers, FLA can be associated with

three main interrelated types of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension (CA) is described as fear about communication with people or in front of others. Apparently, the lack of proficiency in the FL can lead to anxiety, frustration and self-consciousness in some learners. Test anxiety refers to fear of failure or failing in tests. Test-anxious learners tend to feel constantly evaluated and are usually afraid of making mistakes. Finally, fear of negative evaluation is related to learners' worry about others' negative judgments or evaluations. In order to reduce the possibility of obtaining negative evaluations from their teachers or classmates, anxious students may avoid interacting in the FL, which prevents them from improving and developing their oral communication skills in the target language (Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012; Gregersen, 2007). Therefore, these three main interrelated factors negatively affect FL learning (Horwitz et al., 1986).

A closed questionnaire that consisted of three sections was administered to all participants. The first section intended to collect background information about participants (age, sex, year of study, etc.). The second section of the questionnaire asked participants to provide self-rating of their proficiency in English in the four language skills (i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing) on a 10 point scale ranging from 1 (the worst) to 10 (the best). The third section included the adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al., (1986). The FLCAS is a widely recognized instrument to assess FLA. The researcher specified the target language measured; English language, and adapted the scale accordingly to be English language anxiety scale (ELAS). The internal reliability of the English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) was measured through alpha coefficient = .927, and it was close to that obtained by Horwitz et al., (1986) in their study ($\alpha = .93$), which indicates a high level of internal consistency with this specific sample (194 participants). Test-retest reliability over 8 weeks was $r = .83$, $p = .001$. Criterion-related studies that bear on the construct validity of the scale have also been conducted. Correlation of the ELAS with the Trait scale of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1983) obtained $r = .29$, $p = .002$, $n = 108$; with the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (McCroskey, 1970), $r = .28$, $p = .063$, $n = 44$; with the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Watson & Friend, 1969), $r = .36$, $p = .007$, $n = 56$; and with the Test Anxiety Scale (Sarason, 1978), $r = .53$, $p = .001$, $n = 60$. Results suggest that foreign language anxiety can be

reliably and validly measured and that it plays an important role in language learning.

The ELAS consists of 33 items which are scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The ELAS aims to assess three types of performance anxieties associated with foreign language anxiety: communication apprehension (items 1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30 and 32), test anxiety (items 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26 and 28) and fear of negative evaluation (items 2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31 and 33). According to Horwitz (2013), the ELAS can be tricky to score because some of the items reflect anxiety and some others reflect lack of anxiety. Reverse values were assigned to 9 items (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28 and 32). An anxiety score is derived for each participant by adding up his/ her ratings on the thirty-three items. Total scores of the scale ranged from 33 to 165. So, in all instances, a higher total score on the ELAS represents a higher level of anxiety. To determine the participant's anxiety level, their responses to all the items were added up, then divided by 33 (the total number of items). Participants with average around 3 are considered slightly anxious, while the ones with average below 3 are probably not very anxious, and those who averaged near 4 and above are likely fairly anxious.

Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire at the end of a regular class period time for about 30 -40 minutes. The test administrator stayed in the classroom in order to solve any possible questions or required explanations from the participants, and collected the questionnaires after completion. This study is a quantitative study, since scales and questionnaires were used to collect data, and the quantitative approach is a suitable method for the study since it helped to get objective data for the issue under investigation. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 was used for data analysis.

Results and Discussion

Question 1. What is the level of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among English major students at Banha faculty of education?

In order to determine the participants' level of English language anxiety (ELA); (FLA and ELA will be used interchangeably), the total score of each respondent was calculated. The actual range of scores was as follows; from 53 to 142 for freshmen, 78 to 138 for sophomores, 67 to 124 for juniors, and 62 to 131 for seniors. Following Horwitz (2013), to determine the participant's anxiety level, the researcher added up their responses to all the items,

remembering to reverse-score the items that need that, then she divided the total by 33; the total number of items. Participants with average above 2.5 and around 3 are considered to have moderate levels of anxiety, while those with averages below 2.5 are not very anxious, and the ones who averaged near 4 and above are experiencing a fairly high anxiety levels.

Table1. English language anxiety level among all the participants

N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Level of anxiety
194	100.805	14.981	53	142	3.055

Descriptive statistics indicate that the majority of the participants in this study were experiencing moderate anxiety levels.

Question 2. Are there any differences in the level of foreign language anxiety (ELA) that English major students experience across the years of study?

Table 2. Levels of English language anxiety according to year of study

Level of Study	N	Mean	St. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Freshmen	50	100.9592	16.61947	2.37421	96.1855	105.7329
Sophomore	50	100.4043	14.31427	2.08795	96.2014	104.6071
Juniors	50	98.4600	13.71311	1.93933	94.5628	102.3572
Seniors	44	103.7273	15.14483	2.28317	99.1228	108.3317
Total	194	100.8053	14.98143	1.08687	98.6613	102.9492

95% Confidence Interval of Mean

The results revealed that junior students experienced the lowest level of anxiety followed by sophomore ones, then freshmen, and the senior students experienced the highest level of anxiety. At this point the results agree with Samimy & Tabuse (1992), Saito et al. (1996), Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999), Cheng (2002), and Ekstrom (2013) who claimed that the level of anxiety increases when the students move to higher levels. They found that anxious students avoid taking risk to communicate with other students using the target language, which means that they become less motivated and less positive. They showed that advanced students experienced the highest level of anxiety while beginners and intermediate students came after that respectively. The researchers argued that this is due to the change in the curriculum as the subjects in the advanced levels concentrate more on reading and less instructional time is given to the students.

Table 3. Means and levels of English language anxiety among participants in homogeneous subsets

Level of study	N	Mean	Level of anxiety
Juniors	50	98.460	2.984
Sophomores	50	100.404	3.043
Freshmen	50	100.959	3.059
Seniors	44	103.727	3.143
Sig.		.405	

Subset for alpha = 0.05

The relationship between foreign language anxiety and year of study is a controversial matter if we take into consideration the studies which have been published in different parts of the world. Some studies had revealed that the year of study do not have any influence on the level of anxiety (Anyadubalu 2010). However, there are other studies that have suggested how the year of study are related to the students' experience and this has a positive influence on the level of anxiety as advanced students experience lower level of anxiety than beginner students (Trang et al. 2013). Ekstrom (2013) is also with the opinion that the progress in the level of studying a foreign language will not help the learners to alleviate the level of anxiety since it is a characteristic of foreign language learning.

Table 4. Levels of English language anxiety percentile by year of study

Level of study	N	% low level of FLA	% moderate level of FLA	% high level of FLA
Freshmen	50	24%	66%	10%
Sophomores	50	32%	62%	6%
Juniors	50	40%	60%	0%
Seniors	44	20.5%	72.7%	6.8%
Overall Mean	194	29.13	65.18%	5.7%

However, in the current study no statistically significant differences were observed across the four years of study in their ELA level. The results of the current study match those of the related studies, as Cheng (2002) and Ezzi (2012) revealed that there is no significant difference in the level of anxiety between the students when the year of study is taken into consideration.

Question 3. What types of foreign language anxiety (FLA/ELA) do the participants experience?

The mean scores and standard deviations were analyzed for the three types of performance anxieties associated with FLA (Horwitz et al. 1986); communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The data have been arranged in descending order to facilitate comprehension. The highest scores obtained by the

instrument indicate in all instances a higher level of FLA and vice versa.

Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension is the uncomfortable feeling an individual experiences when expressing himself/herself in front of others. According to Horwitz et al. (1986) self-consciousness and anxiety in some FL learners is due to the mismatch between their mature thoughts and their incomplete FL mastery. Williams & Andrade (2008), also, indicated that the inability to communicate correctly can easily result in frustration and apprehension.

Table 5. Participants' level of Communication apprehension (freshmen through seniors)

Item No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
15	I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.	194	3.51	1.324
29	I get nervous when I do not understand every word the English teacher says.	194	3.38	1.295
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	194	3.34	1.306
4	It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.	194	3.32	1.280
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.	194	3.28	1.181
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	194	3.24	1.242
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	194	3.08	1.399
18	* I feel confident when I speak in English language class.	194	2.93	1.333
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	194	2.88	1.274
14	* I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	194	2.80	1.306
32	* I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	194	2.70	1.265

Overall mean = 3.13

***Reversed values**

Table (5) shows participants results on communicative apprehension (hereafter CA). As can be observed, the highest anxiety-provoking factors reported by participants are clearly related to speaking anxiety: The first seven items within this category registered a mean score above 3 points on a 5-point scale, which indicates a considerable level of FLA. In light with previous research studies (Aida, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, 1991; Yang, 2012), these results confirm that the participants seem to feel uncomfortable and self-conscious when they have to use English language in class, which

can easily result in apprehension and anxiety for most of them. As for the two lowest scoring anxiety items, the data reveal the following: ‘I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers’ (item 14*, $x = 2.80$), and ‘I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language’ (item 32*, $x = 2.70$), are believed to be the least anxiety-provoking factor in terms of CA. Thus, the participants are found to feel less nervous and very much more comfortable speaking, and being around foreign native language speakers (item 14, and item 32), than speaking in the context of the classroom. Another interpretation could be that the probability of them encountering that situation is less than likely. This finding is congruent with the situation-specific characterization of FLA advocated by Horwitz et al., (1986). The overall mean of CA was ($x = 3.13$) which indicates that this factor is anxiety-provoking for the participants.

Table 8. CA level among juniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 15	50	3.90	.99488
Item 24	50	3.62	.98747
Item 29	50	3.60	1.29363
Item 30	50	3.42	1.03194
Item 4	50	3.12	1.23949
Item 9	50	3.08	1.27520
Item 1	50	2.82	1.30447
Item 14	50	2.74	1.32187
Item 27	50	2.62	1.06694
Item 18	50	2.46	1.24884
Item 32	50	2.18	1.02400
Overall mean = 3.05			

Table 9. CA level among seniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 9	44	3.8864	1.08297
Item 15	44	3.6818	1.19637
Item 1	44	3.5682	1.20845
Item 4	44	3.5227	1.15111
Item 29	44	3.4773	1.10997
Item 30	44	3.3182	.93443
Item 24	44	3.2955	1.13259
Item 27	44	3.1136	1.16571
Item 18	44	2.9091	1.21652
Item 14	44	2.7727	1.09680
Item 32	44	2.7045	1.13259
Overall mean = 3.296			

The descriptive statistics, as shown in tables 6,7,8, and 9, indicate that, in general, the senior students experience the highest level of FLA in the items associated with communication apprehension ($x = 3.30$) and the juniors have the lowest level ($x = 3.05$). However, the data did not reveal statistically significant differences across the years of study in terms of communication apprehension.

Fear of negative evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation is likely to be manifested in the students’ excessive worries about academic and personal evaluations of his/her performance and competence in the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Even though making errors is a

necessary part of any learning process, FL learners are afraid of trial and error which is a natural part of language learning. Accordingly, errors can be the source of anxiety in some individuals (Gregarsen & Horwitz, 2002; Kim, 2009; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989), because they constitute an obstacle for making positive social impression when speaking a new language.

Table 10. Fear of negative evaluation among the participants (freshmen through seniors)

Item No.	Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
33	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.	194	3.53	1.332
2	*I do not worry about making mistakes in English class.	194	3.45	1.183
23	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	194	3.15	1.216
19	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	194	3.11	1.305
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	194	3.06	1.337
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than me	194	3.01	1.247
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	194	2.93	1.181
Overall mean = 3.177				

***Reversed values**

Regarding fear of negative evaluation (Table 10), the participants admitted getting very nervous when the language teacher asked them questions that they had not prepared in advance (item 33, $x = 3.53$) (Choi, 2016; Mak, 2011). In fact, this was the highest scored item within this category with a mean value above 3.50 on a 5-point scale, which means it was a highly anxious-provoking aspect. It was followed by the participants' worry about making mistakes (item 2, $x = 3.45$). These aspects clearly point to participants' concern about the academic and personal evaluation of their performance in the target language in front of their classmates. As some previous researchers explain, this excessive worry about the impression they may transmit can constitute an obstacle to taking risks and engaging in activities that might help them improve their language skills (Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012; Gregersen, 2007; Kim, 2009). In spite of this, when comparing themselves with other students, participants do not necessarily believe that the other students in class are better at languages than they are (item 7, $x = 3.01$). Likewise, they are not afraid that their fellow classmates will laugh at them when they speak English (item 31, $x = 3.06$). These two latter aspects might be attributable to the homogeneity of the English level of the participants in each year of

study. Finally, participants show little concern about their inhibition to volunteer answers in the language class due to embarrassment or loss of face (item 13, $x = 2.93$), maybe because most of them rarely try to volunteer. The overall mean score of fear of negative evaluation ($x = 3.177$) indicates that this type of performance anxiety was considered to be the second source of participants' FLA after communication apprehension

Table 11. Fear of negative evaluation for freshmen

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 2	50	3.44	1.18080
Item 23	50	3.30	1.19949
Item 33	50	3.26	1.41147
Item 7	50	3.24	1.30243
Item 19	50	3.20	1.39971
Item 31	50	3.18	1.43839
Item 13	50	3.04	1.17734

Overall mean = 3.237

Table 12. Fear of negative evaluation for sophomores

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 2	50	3.58	1.23040
Item 19	50	3.42	1.32619
Item 33	50	3.40	1.51186
Item 23	50	3.04	1.39913
Item 31	50	2.96	1.29300
Item 7	50	2.82	1.27279
Item 13	50	2.80	1.44279

Overall mean = 3.146

Table 13. Fear of negative evaluation for juniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 33	50	3.56	1.29615
Item 2	50	3.48	1.21622
Item 23	50	3.10	1.12938
Item 19	50	2.92	1.25909
Item 13	50	2.82	1.04374
Item 31	50	2.80	1.37024
Item 7	50	2.70	1.11117

Overall mean = 3.054

Table 14. Fear of negative evaluation for seniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item 33	44	3.9545	.93894
Item 31	44	3.3409	1.19967
Item 7	44	3.3182	1.21565
Item 2	44	3.2727	1.10735
Item 23	44	3.1818	1.12628
Item 13	44	3.0682	.99762
Item 19	44	2.8636	1.17317

Overall mean = 3.2857

With regard to fear of negative evaluation, the descriptive data show more mixed findings, as presented in tables 11 through 14, although once again senior students seem to experience a higher degree of anxiety in all the items within this category except for item 19. Results indicate that senior students as well as juniors are likely to be more concerned about making errors when asked questions without preparation (item 33) and volunteering answers in the language class (item 13) came out as the least that freshmen and sophomore are concerned about. The seniors also seem to be more afraid that their classmates will laugh at them when they speak (item 31); second highest, than the juniors who do not care that much about that; second

lowest. However, the statistical analysis indicates no significant differences between the years of study means. This finding indicates that junior students are found to experience a significantly lower degree of anxiety about negative evaluation ($x = 3.05$) than the other students, and the seniors who seem to be more anxious in this regards scored ($x = 3.29$).

Test anxiety

Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety springing from a fear of failure. As far as test anxiety is concerned, as can be observed in Table (15) , the three most anxiety-inducing factors related to this type of performance anxiety were the following: ‘I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class’ (item 10, $x = 3.66$), ‘In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know’ (item 12, $x = 3.39$) and ‘ I can feel my heart pounding when I’m going to be called on in English class. The findings show that most students do not feel at ease in their English language class and that they are especially concerned about the consequences of failing the course subject. In fact, this latter aspect exhibited the most critical level of classroom anxiety associated with FLCA across the three main performance anxiety subtypes (Salehi & Marefat, 2014).

Table 15. Test anxiety among all participants (freshmen through seniors)

Item No.	Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	193	3.66	1.302
12	In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	194	3.39	1.415
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	194	3.24	1.416
22	* I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.	194	3.14	1.286
25	English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	194	3.06	1.278
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.	194	2.91	1.258
16	Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.	194	2.87	1.313
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.	194	2.85	1.206
28	*When I am on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	194	2.84	1.292
8	* I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	194	2.84	1.161
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	194	2.79	1.295
5	*It would not bother me at all to take more English language classes.	194	2.79	1.388
11	*I do not understand why some people get so upset over English language classes.	194	2.74	1.182
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	194	2.74	1.275
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	194	2.63	1.159
Overall mean = 2.966				

*Reversed values

The least anxiety-provoking factors related to test anxiety were the following: ‘It would not bother me at all to take more foreign language classes’ (item 5*, $x = 2.79$), followed next in order by ‘I do not understand why some people get so upset over English language classes.’ (Item 11*, $x = 2.74$), and ‘During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course’ (item 6, $x = 2.74$) on the same level, and ‘I often feel like not going to my language class.’ (Item 17, $x = 2.63$), which was ranked last in order of importance. As can be observed, the low scores registered in these items indicate that students do not feel highly anxious about attending their English classes. In fact, it is worth mentioning that all the items related to test anxiety except for item 10 registered mean scores below 3.40 points on a 5-point scale. Furthermore, 10 out of 15 items scored below 3 points on the scale, which indicates that students do not generally seem to experience a high degree of anxiety during tests in their English class, although, admittedly, they reported feeling very anxious about the possibility of failing the subject (item 10). The overall mean score of test anxiety was the lowest of the three subtypes of performance anxiety associated with overall FLA ($x = 2.97$).

With regards to year of study in relation to test anxiety (Tables 16,17,18 and 19), freshmen had the highest level of test anxiety ($x = 3.02$), as the whole context is new for them, followed by sophomores ($x = 2.98$), then seniors ($x = 2.97$); who got used to it, and the lowest level of test anxiety was for the juniors ($x = 2.90$); as they already had the lowest level of FLA in general.

Table 16. Test anxiety among freshmen

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item10	49	3.59	1.36806
Item03	50	3.38	1.27600
Item22	50	3.30	1.23305
Item12	50	3.30	1.47427
Item20	50	3.14	1.53875
Item08	50	3.14	1.22907
Item26	50	3.02	1.28556
Item05	50	3.00	1.47080
Item25	50	2.88	1.43769
Item28	50	2.88	1.31925
Item06	50	2.84	1.40495
Item21	50	2.78	1.32926
Item11	50	2.72	1.16128
Item17	50	2.66	1.25536
Item16	50	2.62	1.41263
Overall mean = 3.02			

Table 17. Test anxiety among sophomores

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item10	50	3.46	1.55459
Item22	50	3.40	1.38505
Item05	50	3.28	1.47136
Item12	50	3.16	1.41940
Item08	50	3.14	1.32496
Item20	50	3.02	1.58423
Item28	50	3.00	1.45686
Item11	50	2.96	1.21151
Item25	50	2.92	1.38269
Item03	50	2.88	1.31925
Item17	50	2.88	1.23949
Item26	50	2.88	1.28793
Item16	50	2.66	1.30321
Item06	50	2.62	1.44123
Item21	50	2.44	1.26427
Overall mean = 2.98			

Table 18. Test anxiety among juniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item10	50	3.58	1.21370
Item12	50	3.52	1.48791
Item20	50	3.18	1.25666
Item25	50	3.12	1.22291
Item21	50	3.06	1.26829
Item16	50	3.02	1.28556
Item22	50	2.98	1.33233
Item11	50	2.94	1.37633
Item26	50	2.80	1.22890
Item05	50	2.70	1.29756
Item06	50	2.64	1.20814
Item08	50	2.64	1.02539
Item28	50	2.52	1.23288
Item17	50	2.46	.95212
Item03	50	2.36	1.12050
Overall mean = 2.90			

Table 19. Test anxiety among seniors

Item No.	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item10	44	4.0455	.91384
Item20	44	3.6591	1.18013
Item12	44	3.6136	1.24295
Item25	44	3.3636	.96668
Item16	44	3.2045	1.17294
Item03	44	3.0455	1.09872
Item28	44	2.9773	1.08881
Item21	44	2.9091	1.27258
Item06	44	2.8636	.97863
Item22	44	2.8409	1.11945
Item26	44	2.6818	.98294
Item17	44	2.5000	1.15134
Item08	44	2.3864	.81315
Item11	44	2.2727	.75832
Item05	44	2.1136	.99337
Overall mean = 2.97			

Finally, as far as test anxiety is concerned, all years of study show a consensus on item 10, ‘I worry about the consequences of failing my English class’, to be on the top of their list as the most provoking-anxiety in this category. In spite of this, the freshmen appear to show a higher level of FLA, in overall, followed by sophomore students, then seniors, and juniors have the least overall mean, in relation to test anxiety. The findings indicate that junior students do not perceive English classes and tests as a potential cause of anxiety (items 3). They also feel more sure and relaxed than other students in the English class (item 28) even though, interestingly, they admit feeling significantly less motivated to attend the language class (item 17) than sophomore and senior students.

The overall mean of communication apprehension was the highest ($x = 3.21$) of the three types of performance anxieties associated with FLA, which indicates that this factor is the most anxiety-provoking for the participants, meanwhile the mean of test anxiety was the lowest ($x = 2.97$), which is an indicator that it is the least anxiety-causing and have the least negative effect on the participants.

Question 4. What is the correlation between FLA level and the participants’ self-perception of their language proficiency?

Language proficiency is “ a person’s skill in using a language for a specific purpose ... referring to the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand language” (Richards et al, 1992). Some researchers, such as Wilson (2006), and Takahashi (2014), suggest

that FL learners suffer anxiety because of their self-perceived inadequate language ability. They correlated negative self-perception of English learners with their awareness of an overwhelming gap between their knowledge of English and those of native English speakers.

Rajagopalan (2005), for example, argues that, although there is no such person in the real world who possesses all the characteristics of the ideal native speaker, many FL learners could not realize this and experience a crisis of confidence. The sense of inferiority to native speakers discourages FL learners and puts them under constant stress as they learn English. The researcher in the present study probed the participants' views of their overall language abilities by asking them to provide self-ratings of their English proficiency in the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking on a 10-point scale ranging from 1 (very poor) to 10 (excellent).

Table 20. Participants' self-perception of English language proficiency (all participants)

Skill	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Writing	7.6907	1.32227	194
Reading	8.0979	1.43808	194
Listening	7.2062	1.70302	194
Speaking	6.5258	1.42947	194

Results, shown in Table 20, indicate that participants regard their command of the English language as rather low, since the mean score of all the skills except for reading registered values 7 and below on a 10 point-scale: reading ($x = 8.09$), writing ($x = 7.69$), listening ($x = 7.21$), and speaking ($x = 6.53$). As can be noticed, the participants ranked speaking as the most critical area followed by listening.

Tables 21, 22, 23 and 24 present the results of the participants' self-perception and evaluation of their language proficiency, including the four skills consecutively; reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Table 21. Participants' self-perception of reading skill (freshmen through seniors)

Year of study	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean St.		Std. Deviation	Variance
					error			
Freshmen	50	9.00	1.00	10.00	7.8000	.24744	1.74964	3.061
Sophomore	50	5.00	5.00	10.00	8.2400	.19910	1.40785	1.982
Juniors	50	8.00	2.00	10.00	8.4400	.18552	1.31180	1.721
Seniors	44	6.00	4.00	10.00	7.8864	.16962	1.12510	1.266

Table 22. Participants' self-perception of writing skill (freshmen through seniors)

Year of study	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. error	Std.	
							Deviation	Variance
Freshmen	50	8.00	2.00	10.00	7.500	.2104	1.48805	2.214
Sophomore	50	4.00	6.00	10.00	8.080	.1637	1.15776	1.340
Juniors	50	6.00	4.00	10.00	7.820	.1822	1.28873	1.661
Seniors	44	6.00	4.00	10.00	7.318	.1861	1.23463	1.524

Table 23. Participants' self-perception of listening skill (freshmen through seniors)

Year of study	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Error	Std.	
							Deviation	Variance
Freshmen	50	6.00	4.00	10.00	6.840	.2027	1.43371	2.056
Sophomore	50	7.00	3.00	10.00	7.080	.2455	1.73605	3.014
Juniors	50	9.00	1.00	10.00	6.960	.2355	1.66550	2.774
Seniors	44	6.00	4.00	10.00	6.954	.2320	1.53947	2.370

Table 24. Participants' self-perception of speaking skill (freshmen through seniors)

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Error	Std. Deviation	Variance
Freshmen	50	6.00	3.00	9.00	6.1800	.17772	1.25666	1.579
Sophomore	50	7.00	3.00	10.00	6.7400	.22644	1.60115	2.564
Juniors	50	6.00	3.00	9.00	7.0800	.18701	1.32234	1.749
Seniors	44	6.00	2.00	8.00	6.0455	.19495	1.29318	1.672

Some researchers have looked into how students' language level and their year of study might be associated with anxiety experiences. It might seem logical to suppose that as the learner progresses through language levels; presumably achieving higher proficiency, his/her language anxiety levels would decrease. Tables (21) through (24) show mixed results among the participants in all four skills, which proved that it is not always true that the more advanced through the years of study the higher proficiency they achieve. Skehan (1989) claimed that students at higher levels might enjoy a "wider repertoire of behaviors" which would help them to deal with anxiety in language

learning contexts “more flexibly”. Yet this is not always seemed to be the case.

Table 25. Correlation between participants’ self-perceived proficiency in speaking and ELA

		Speaking	FLA
Speaking	Pearson	1	-.218**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	194	194
FLA	Pearson	-.218**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	194	194

** Significant correlation at **p< 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 27. Correlation between participants’ self-perceived proficiency in writing and ELA

		Writing	FLA
Writing	Pearson	1	-.134*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.031
	N	194	194
FLA	Pearson	-.134*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.031	
	N	194	194

* Significant correlation at *p< 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 26. Correlation between participants’ self-perceived proficiency in reading and ELA

		Reading	FLA
Reading	Pearson	1	-.183**
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.005
	N	194	194
FLA	Pearson	-.183**	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.005	
	N	194	194

** Significant correlation at **p< 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 28. Correlation between participants’ self-perceived proficiency in listening and ELA

		Listening	FLA
Listening	Pearson	1	-.141*
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.025
	N	194	194
FLA	Pearson	-.141*	1
	Correlation		
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.025	
	N	194	194

* Significant correlation at *p< 0.05 level (1-tailed).

In fact, results of the correlation analyses (Tables 25 and 26) showed strong significant negative correlations at **p< 0.01 level between the total ELAS score and participants’ perceived level of English proficiency in both skills: speaking skill (r = - .218), and reading (r = - .183). The correlation analyses also indicated significant negative correlations at *p< 0.05 level between the participants’ total FLA score and their perceived level of English proficiency in writing skill (r = -.134), and listening (r = -.141), as shown in tables 27 and 28.. This means that language anxiety levels seem to increase with participants’ self-perceived lack of proficiency in these skills. Therefore, it is clear that the participants’ self-perception or evaluation of their level on all four language skills was affected by FLA (Horwitz et al., 1986) and vice versa. All the language anxiety correlations were negative. The more anxious a student was, the lower his/her self-perceived proficiency. These links were observed across all four skills. These findings also suggest that, in line with previous research (Phillips, 1992; Liu, 2006; Koul, Roy, Kaewkuekool & Ploisawaschai, 2009; Mak, 2011), the lower the

participants' perceived their level of English proficiency, the higher their anxiety level. Therefore, ELA/FLA may have a negative impact on students' attempts to learn and use the target language.

Table 29. Correlation between participants' self-perceived English proficiency and FLA for freshmen

		Writing	FLA			Reading	FLA
Writing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.304*	Reading	Pearson Correlation	1	-.430**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.016		Sig. (1-tailed)		.001
	N	50	50		N	50	50
FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.304*	1	FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.430**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.016			Sig. (1-tailed)	.001	
	N	50	50		N	50	50
* Significant correlation at *p< 0.05 level (1-tailed).				** Significant correlation at **p< 0.01 level (1-tailed).			

		Listening	FLA			Speaking	FLA
Listening	Pearson Correlation	1	-.430**	Speaking	Pearson Correlation	1	-.278*
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.001		Sig. (1-tailed)		.025
	N	50	50		N	50	50
FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.430**	1	FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.278*	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.001			Sig. (1-tailed)	.025	
	N	50	50		N	50	50
** Significant correlation at **p< 0.01 level (1-tailed).				* Significant correlation at *p< 0.05 level (1-tailed).			

As for the year of study, there was strong negative significant correlation between FLA and the freshmen' self-perception (Table 29); $r = -.430$ at 0.01 level for reading and listening, $r = -.304$ at 0.05 level for writing, and $r = -.278$ at *p< 0.05 level.

Table 30. Correlation between participants' self-perceived English proficiency and ELA/FLA for sophomores

		Writing	FLA			Reading	FLA
Writing	Pearson Correlation	1	-.097	Reading	Pearson Correlation	1	-.032
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.251		Sig. (1-tailed)		.431
	N	50	50		N	50	50
FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.097	1	FLA	Pearson Correlation	-.032	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.251			Sig. (1-tailed)	.431	
	N	50	50		N	50	50

		Listening	FLA			Speaking	FLA	
Listening	Pearson	1	-.196	Speaking	Pearson	1	-.175	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.086		Sig. (1-tailed)		.112	
	N	50	50		N	50	50	
FLA	Pearson	-.196	1	FLA	Pearson	-.175	1	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.086			Sig. (1-tailed)	.112		
	N	50	50		N	50	50	

As for sophomores there were negative correlations between FLA and their self-perception across the different skills (Table 30); writing ($r = -.097$), reading ($r = -.032$), speaking ($r = -.175$), except listening ($r = .196$); but statistically they were all not significant.

Table 31. Correlation between participants' self-perceived English proficiency and FLA for juniors

		Writing	FLA			Reading	FLA	
Writing	Pearson	1	-.043	Reading	Pearson	1	-.078	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.385		Sig. (1-tailed)		.294	
	N	50	50		N	50	50	
FLA	Pearson	-.043	1	FLA	Pearson	-.078	1	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.385			Sig. (1-tailed)	.294		
	N	50	50		N	50	50	

		Listening	FLA			Speaking	FLA	
Listening	Pearson	1	-.124	Speaking	Pearson	1	-.175	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.195		Sig. (1-tailed)		.112	
	N	50	50		N	50	50	
FLA	Pearson	-.124	1	FLA	Pearson	-.175	1	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.195			Sig. (1-tailed)	.112		
	N	50	50		N	50	50	

The correlation between FLA and juniors' self perception of their English proficiency (Table 31) across the four skills were negative; writing ($r = -.043$), reading ($r = -.079$), listening ($r = -.124$), and speaking ($r = -.175$), but they were statistically not significant.

Table 32. Correlation between participants' self-perceived English proficiency and FLA for seniors

		Writing	FLA			Reading	FLA	
Writing	Pearson	1	.048	Reading	Pearson	1	.050	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.378		Sig. (1-tailed)		.374	
	N	44	44		N	44	44	
FLA	Pearson	.048	1	FLA	Pearson	.050	1	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.378			Sig. (1-tailed)	.050		
	N	44	44		N	.374	44	

		Listening	FLA			Speaking	FLA

Listening	Pearson	1	-.189	Speaking	Pearson	1		
	Correlation				Correlation			-.376**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.110		Sig. (1-tailed)			.006
	N	44	44		N	44	44	
FLA	Pearson	-.189	1	FLA	Pearson	-.376**	1	
	Correlation				Correlation			
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.110			Sig. (1-tailed)	.006		
	N	44	44		N	44	44	

** Significant correlation at **p< 0.01 level (1-tailed).

As shown in table (32), there was a strong negative correlation between FLA and seniors' self-perception of their speaking skill; ($r = -.376$ at $**p < 0.01$), a negative correlation with listening skill ($r = -.189$) but not statistically significant, and non-significant correlation with writing and reading skills.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that, similar to other research studies (Arnaiz & Guillén, 2013, 2012; Liu, 2006), a great majority of the participants (87.5%), who are English major students at faculty of education, suffer from FLA with different degrees; from low to high. The ones who seem to experience average-to-high levels of anxiety in the English language classroom represent a considerable percentage too (%70.88). This finding suggests that FLA may negatively affect the learning of the English language.

As for participants' year of study, results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences between all four years; freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors in terms of their FLA level. Nevertheless, the results revealed that junior students experienced the lowest level of anxiety ($x = 2.98$) followed by sophomore ones ($x = 3.04$), then freshmen ($x = 3.06$), and the senior students experienced the highest level of anxiety ($x = 3.14$). At this point the results agree with Samimy & Tabuse (1992), Saito et al. (1996) who claimed that the level of anxiety increases when the students move to higher levels.

Among the different types of performance anxiety, communication apprehension appears to be the major source of the participants' anxiety, especially as far as speaking anxiety is concerned. Thus, the participants admit feeling confused, uncomfortable and self-conscious using English in the context of the FL classroom. In fact, fear of negative evaluation appears to be the second more anxiety-provoking factor related to FLA. Again, participants highlighted aspects related to oral skills as the top anxiety-inducing aspects (see also Aida, 1994; Choi, 2016; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004) within this category. Thus, they admitted getting nervous when being asked questions they had not prepared in advance or feeling tight-lipped to volunteer answers in the teacher's questions

due to embarrassment or loss of face. This excessive concern about the academic and personal evaluation of their use of the target language may prevent students from improving their oral communication skills (Gregersen, 2007; Kim, 2009). The least anxiety-provoking factor related to FLA seems to be test anxiety, although it is worth mentioning that the top highest anxiety-provoking factor across the three main subtypes of performance anxiety was found to be participants' worry about the consequences of failing their foreign language class (Salehi & Marefat, 2014).

The descriptive statistics indicate that, in general, the senior students experience the highest level of FLA in the items associated with communication apprehension and the juniors have the lowest level. However, the data did not reveal statistically significant differences across the years of study in terms of communication apprehension. As for fear of negative evaluation, the results indicate that junior students are found to experience a significantly lower degree of anxiety about negative evaluation than the other students, and the seniors who seem to be more anxious in this regards scored the highest. But, again statistically, there is no significant difference between all years of study in that regard. The result concerning test anxiety came as no surprise, since freshmen had the highest level of test anxiety, as the whole context is new for them, followed by sophomores, then seniors; who got used to it, and the lowest level of test anxiety was for the juniors; as they already had the lowest level of FLA in general.

Finally, correlation analyses reveal strong significant negative correlations between FLA and learners' perceptions of their English proficiency in all four skills with different levels, which suggests that participants' anxiety levels increase as their perceived language proficiency levels in all four skills decrease (Koul et al., 2009; Liu, 2006). As for the year of study, there was strong negative significant correlation between FLA and the freshmen self perception; $r = -.430$ at $**p < 0.01$ level for reading and listening, $r = -.304$ at $*p < 0.05$ level for writing, and $r = -.278$ at $*p < 0.05$ level. As for sophomores and juniors, there were negative correlations between FLA and their self-perception across all four skills, but statistically they were not significant. Lastly, there was a strong negative correlation between FLA and seniors' self-perception of their speaking skill; ($r = -.376$ at $**p < 0.01$ level), and negative correlation with the other skills but not statistically significant.

In any event, the results of this study clearly indicate that the participants suffer a considerable level of anxiety in their FL

classroom mainly associated with oral communication skills (Choi, 2016; Mak, 2011; Park, 2014). Since communicative methodologies have encouraged the promotion of oral skills, it is crucial that we ensure the creation of more supportive instructional environments that may help teachers identify those aspects of the FL classroom that are more anxiety-inducing (Al-Saraj, 2014; Ortega-Cebrenos, 2003) so that students may overcome FLA and become more successful FL learners.

Certainly, it would be interesting to examine if further contextual circumstances may have an influence on the perceived level of students' anxiety in our study, causing anxiety-provoking situations (Choi, 2016). Likewise, further research on FLA and its association with other variables such as motivation, learning styles, personality, individual differences, as well as with findings in cognitive science (Kormos, 2014) could also yield interesting results since all these aspects seem to be closely interrelated in second/foreign language acquisition (Park, 2014). Conclusively, the presented results of the study are neither exhaustive nor definite to understand the entire phenomenon of FLA. However, it is hoped that it will add more systematized information to the study of anxiety among FL learners which could prove to be of interest for FL teaching methodology.

FL learning is a life-long commitment (Horwitz, 1996), so it should be the main objective of FL methodologists to find the most efficient methods for FL learning and teaching. They should take into consideration the real needs of FL learners and teachers, thus making the acquisition of FL more effective, enjoyable and less frustrating. The multifactorial nature of FLA and the demand on communication in modern language learning pose a challenge to researchers to help FL learners. Nevertheless, the phenomenon of FLA cannot be defined in a linear way, it should be better understood as a complex psychological phenomenon influenced by many different factors. As every human is individual and distinct in their character, FLA influences each learner in a different way and intensity. It is human and natural to feel stress or anxiety in certain situations. However, it is important to be able to cope with the negative feelings so that they do not affect one's life, learning and performance, because an anxious FL learner is a less effective FL learner.

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