التحقيق في الفروق بين الجنسين في قلق التحدث بين طلاب الـEFL في كلية التربية الأساسية ، جامعة دهوك

Investigating Gender Differences in Speaking Anxiety among EFL Students at the College of Basic Education, University of Duhok

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الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى معرفة الفروق في القلق من التحدث باللغة الاجنبية بين طلاب قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية الأساسية على أساس الجنس. تستخدم الدراسة منهج مختلط من البيانات النوعية والكمية. شارك في هذه الدراسة ١٦٦ طالبًا و ١٣ استاذا . وتم جمع البيانات الكمية من خلال الاعتماد على استبيان تم اقتباسه من (2016) Batiha والذي تم اشتقاقه من مقياس القلق في الفصل الدراسي للغات الأجنبية (FLCAS) الذي طوره (Horwitz et al., 1986).تم جمع البيانات الكمية من ١٢٤ طالبًا في السنة الأولى والثانية، بينما تم جمع البيانات النوعية من خلال أربع مناقشات جماعية مركزة مع طلاب السنة الأولى والثانية، مفصولة حسب الجنس حيث كان المجموع ٤٢ طالبًا .بالإضافة إلى ذلك ، تم إجراء مقابلات مع ثلاثة عشر معلمًا للحصول على رؤية شاملة لوجهة نظرهم حول هذه الظاهرة .تم تحليل البيانات باستخدام كل من التحليل الوصفي والاستنتاجي للبيانات الكمية، بينما تم تحليل البيانات النوعية باستخدام تحليل المحتوى .أظهرت نتائج البيانات النوعية عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في مستويات قلق التحدث التي يعاني منها الطلاب والطالبات ، بينما أظهرت البيانات النوعية للطلاب اختلافات ملحوظة ، حيث توقعت الطالبات مستويات أعلى من القلق في التحدث .

Abstract

The present study investigates the differences in the foreign language speaking anxiety among students in the Department of English in the College of Basic Education based on gender. The study utilizes a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative data with a total sample of 166 students and 13 teachers. The quantitative data were collected via an adopted questionnaire by Batiha (2016) that was derived from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by (Horwitz et al., 1986). The quantitative data were collected from 124 first and second-year students, while qualitative data were collected through four focus group discussions with first and second-year students, segregated by gender in which the total was 42 students. In addition, thirteen teachers were also interviewed to gain comprehensive insight into their perspective on the phenomenon. The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential analysis for quantitative data, while qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis. The findings of the qualitative data showed no significant difference in the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by male and female students, while the qualitative data of the students showed perceived differences, with female students anticipating higher levels of speaking anxiety.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The psychological aspect of the human being has a vital influence on human performance whether positively or negatively. There is a colossal number of research that target the impact of the psychological feelings of the human in limitless domains to indicates its impact. Within the domain of language learning, the psychological aspect has been widely studied such as in (Horwitz et al., 1986; Chastain, 1988; Young, 1992). One of the main psychological aspects that is directly linked to foreign language learning is anxiety. Anxiety is a fundamental variable that affects the learning process of a foreign language (Brown, 1987; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This is due to the fact that the process of learning a foreign language is complex and often entails various challenges for language learners, especially when it comes to speaking in public or social situations. The phenomenon of fear or apprehension from speaking is known as Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). According to Dewaele (2010), FLSA is defined as the fear or apprehension experienced by individuals when they have to use a foreign language in public or social situations. FLSA has significant implications for language learners and educators, as it can hinder language acquisition and communication skills Horwitz et al. (1986). Furthermore, FLSA may result negative effects on the language learning process, such as difficulties in understanding and producing the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). There has been an increasing interest in investigating the various factors that contribute to FLSA and exploring effective strategies to reduce it among language learners (Dewaele, 2010; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). One of the factors that have been found to exacerbate FLSA is gender. Gender is a complex concept that refers to the social, cultural, and behavioral attributes that are associated with being male or female

in a particular society. In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) context, gender roles are deeply entrenched in traditional values, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Gender stereotypes exist in relation to language learning, with females being seen as more diligent and successful language learners than males. Gender, as a variable has been foreseen as factor behind FLSA by several studies worldwide. Furthermore, research has also shown that the factors that contribute to FLSA differ between genders. Women tend to experience FLSA due to fear of negative evaluation and lack of self-confidence, while males experience FLSA due to fear of appearing incompetent or making mistakes (Dewaele, 2010; Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

1.2 Aim of the study

Effective communication in a foreign language is crucial in today's globalized society, yet learners' fears and apprehension when speaking in a foreign language can have a negative impact on their language learning process. Research has shown that various factors, including societal norms, cultural influences, and individual predispositions, can contribute to distinct experiences of anxiety in language learners. This study's aim is to explore foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) phenomenon among the EFL students in the English Department through investigating its differences based on gender. By focusing on gender as a potential differentiating factor, this study aims to uncover whether there are variations in the degree and nature of FLSA between male and female students. Such insights are invaluable in shaping targeted pedagogical approaches that cater to the unique needs of each gender, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. By delving into the underlying causes and variations in FLSA, this study aims to contribute to a comprehensive

understanding of FLSA as a phenomenon with specific regards to its gender-based differences within the targeted population of this study.

1.3 Anxiety and Foreign Language Learning

The process of learning a foreign language is a complex interplay between cognitive and emotional abilities (Murray, 2002), and they are in equal significance in language learning (Brown, 2007; Horwitz et al.,1986). Williams & Burden (1997) also state that the affective domain, which includes emotions, attitudes, and motivation, is an integral part of the language learning process. Moreover, the affective factors such as anxiety have been identified as having a tremendous impact on the language learning process (Melouah, 2013, p.65). Anxiety has been proposed as a negative factor that can impede the learning process of a foreign language, such as English (Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017, p. 111). However, the term "facilitative anxiety" was introduced to describe the positive effects of anxiety on language learning, as it can motivate learners to put in greater effort to overcome their anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960). Several studies have demonstrated the importance of facilitative anxiety in language learning, including research by Young (1992), Garau (2009), and Ehrman & Oxford (1995), which found that it can assist learners and encourage them to perform better. On the other hand, most studies show a negative correlation between language learning and anxiety. This negative form of anxiety is referred to as "debilitative anxiety," as it can hinder language learning and limit learners' capabilities within the process (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 189).

1.4 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)

FLSA is a subset of the general foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA). These two terms are usually confused with one another. However, there is significant difference between them as FLCA refers to the general FL anxiety that the students experience

while FLSA is the anxiety experience specifically with the speaking skill. There are several studies that tackle FLCA or FLSA as standalone phenomenon while others combine both together. One of the pioneering studies that tackled FLSA is by Horwitz et al. (1986). Although this study encompasses various aspects of anxiety in language classrooms (FLCA), it includes a specific examination of anxiety related to speaking activities. Furthermore, Young (1992) delved into students' experiences and perspectives regarding anxiety in speaking situations, shedding light on the unique challenges and anxieties associated with oral communication. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) also examined FLCA in their study and included a focus on speaking anxiety and its effects on language processing. In a study by Woodrow (2006), anxiety was explicitly investigated with its relation to speaking proficiency in English as a second language, emphasizing the unique anxieties experienced during oral communication. Several definitions were given to the phenomenon of FLSA. Research based on Horwitz's model has revealed comparable findings, such as apparent physical and behavioral symptoms among learners suffering from FLSA (Çağatay, 2015). Physical symptoms of FLSA were identified in several studies. According to Hanna & Gibson, (1992), FLSA's physical symptoms include freezing, high blood pressure, shaky hands, avoidance of eye contact, loss of breath, shaky voice, and forgetting what to say. Boyce et al. (2007) also identified other physical symptoms such as nausea, sweating, weak knees, and dry mouth. Furthermore, behavioral symptoms of FLSA include being hesitant to speak or even total reluctancy to speak and comparing their language abilities to their peers (Brown, 2007; Melouah, 2013). Behavioral systems may exacerbate reaching behaviors as skipping classes, or quit studying altogether (Melouah, 2013).

1.5 Gender and its relation to Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Gender differences in FLSA have been extensively studied in the field of language learning. There are several factors that lead to gender differences in FLSA that can be categorize into three groups: social factors, cultural factors, and psychological factors.

A. Social Factors: Social factors refer to the influence of social interactions and social contexts on FLSA. Studies have shown that social support, particularly from peers and teachers, can help in reducing FLSA for both genders (MacIntyre & Charos, 1996). However, females tend to report less social support compared to males, which may contribute to higher levels of FLSA in women (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). In addition, social gender roles and expectations may also contribute to gender differences in FLSA. For instance, traditional gender roles may lead females to be more concerned about social evaluation and appearance, which can increase their anxiety in public speaking situations (Horwitz, 2001). Furthermore, gender stereotypes about language ability may also contribute to higher levels of FLSA for females, as they are often stereotyped as having weaker language abilities than men.

B. Cultural Factors: Cultural factors refer to the influence of cultural values and beliefs on FLSA. Studies have found that the collectivist cultures that depends on group harmony and cooperation tend to feel more anxious when speaking a foreign language compared to those from cultures that emphasize individualism (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). Gender roles and expectations can also vary across cultures and impact FLSA. For instance, in some cultures, women are expected to be quieter and more reserved in social situations, which can make them more nervous about speaking a foreign language in public (Elkhafaifi, 2005).

C. Psychological Factors: Psychological factors refer to individual differences in personality, thinking patterns, and emotional responses that can contribute to FLSA. Studies have found that females tend to have higher levels of trait anxiety than males, which can make them more prone to experiencing FLSA (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017). Additionally, self-efficacy, or one's belief in their ability to perform a task, is also an important factor in FLSA. In this regard, females often report lower levels of self-efficacy than males (Horwitz, 2001). Other psychological factors that can contribute to FLSA include perfectionism, fear of failure, and negative self-talk. Individuals who have high standards for themselves and fear making mistakes may experience more FLSA. Moreover, negative self-talk, or the habit of criticizing oneself, can lead to increased anxiety and further intensify FLSA (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002).

1.6 Gender Differences' influence in Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety on performance and Self-Esteem

Impact on Performance: FLSA has been found to have a significant impact on language performance, especially in language learners with high levels of anxiety. Research has shown that FLSA is negatively related to oral proficiency and can lead to decreased willingness to communicate in the target language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Moreover, gender differences in FLSA may further contribute to differences in language performance between men and women. FLSA can also have a significant impact on the self-esteem of language learners. Research has shown that individuals with high levels of FLSA may experience negative emotions such as fear and shame (Horwitz et al., 1986). Furthermore, gender differences in FLSA may also contribute to differences in self-esteem between men and women. For example, a study conducted by Dewaele (2010) found that women

reported significantly higher levels of FLSA and lower self-esteem compared to men in language learning contexts.

1.7 Related Studies of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and Gender

FLSA has been a topic of interest for many researchers in the field of language learning and teaching. While some studies investigate the factors behind FLSA in different contexts, similar studies to this study were found that trigger FLSA and its relation to gender. Some of these studies illustrate significant differences in FLSA between both genders while some others showed no significant difference between them.

In the Iraqi context, Albayati (2022) conducted a recent study titled " Iraqi EFL Learners' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety". 120 college students participated in the study. The results showed that the level of FLSA among Iraqi EFL learners was relatively moderate, with females reporting a higher level of FLSA than males. Moving to the Turkish context, Cagatay (2015) investigated the correlation between speaking anxiety and gender among students in a study titled "Examining EFL Students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: The Case at a Turkish State University. 147 university students participated in this study through a questionnaire The result of the study showed higher FLSA levels among the females than males. While there are studies that suggest different speaking anxiety factors such as personal, interpersonal and environmental factors. Other studies exclusively studied the correlation between gender and speaking anxiety among the students in which their results showed no significant difference in the phenomenon based on gender.

In the Kurdistan region context, one of the recent studies that studied speaking anxiety among the university students was by Sayer (2022) under the title "Speaking Anxiety in the Interlanguage of

Kurdish University Students of English: A Quantitative Study". The study tackled the level of speaking anxiety among the students of the University of Human Development. The study was conducted using the qualitative method through a 5Likert questionnaire in which 106 students answered. One of the main findings of this study showed no significant difference between male and females' speaking anxiety.

In Turkey, Debreli and Demirkan (2015) examined FLSA in relation to gender under a study titled "Sources and Levels of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety of English as a Foreign Language University Students with regard to Language Proficiency and Gender". The data were gathered from 196 students through FLCA questionnaire. Furthermore, 10 interviews were made with the students to collect qualitative data. The findings of this study show no significant difference between males and females' level of FLSA.

2. Methodology:

2.1 Research question:

- How do male and female students differ in their experiences of foreign language speaking anxiety in classroom settings?

2.2 Research Design:

This is descriptive study that utilized an exploratory sequential mixed method that included both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were first collected, followed by qualitative data. The quantitative method is known to be credible and objective in nature due to its reliance on numerical data, while the qualitative method is subjective due to its reliance on the research sample's opinions and beliefs. Therefore, mixed methods allow consolidation of data that enables the researcher to view the research problem from a variety of perspectives.

2.3 Context:

This research study was conducted in the English Department-College of Basic Education-University of Duhok-Duhok City-Iraq. The main reason behind selecting this university was that the University of Duhok is the only public university in Duhok governorate. Other private universities exist that are considered different in context; therefore, combining them with the University of Duhok would have been less effective. Furthermore, the researcher's main objective was to contribute to the development of the English Language department through this research study, as an employee of this university.

2.4 Research sample:

This study used a sample of 166 students from the first and second stages. 124 participants filled out the questionnaire of the research. The first-year students included 61 students, of which 18 were males and 43 were females, while the second-year participation was made up of 63 students, of which 17 were males and 46 were females.

42 other students participated in four focus group discussions that were segregated based on gender and stages. The first-year students' focus group discussions consisted of 24 students (12 males and 12 females), while the second-year focus group discussion contained 18 students (10 males and 8 females). The different numbers of students between males and females is due to the fact that the majority of the students within the English department are females, while the male students are only one portion of the total population of the department.

The table below shows the student breakdown per sample, stage, and gender:

Table (1)

Student Breakdown Per Sample, Stage, and Gender

Students sample	1st stage		2nd stage		Total
	males	females	males	females	
Questionnaire's sample	18	43	17	46	124
FGD's sample	12	12	10	8	42
Grand total	30	55	27	54	166

2.5 Instruments

The researcher used three instruments for data collection: a questionnaire, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews to ensure a sound investigation.

2.5.1 Questionnaire:

To collect quantitative data, the researcher utilized an adopted questionnaire by Batiha (2016), which was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The original questionnaire consists of 33 items, however the adopted version by Batiha (2016) consisted of 23 close-ended items that are the most related to FLSA. The researcher utilized several

statistical tests to indicate the consistency of the 23 items and in result, only 19 items were statistically proven to be consistent in which the researcher relied on them and ignored the remaining 4 items. The items have 5-point Likert-Scale, ranging from strongly agree (5 points) to strongly disagree (1 point). This instrument has been shown to be reliable and valid based on previous studies (Aida, 1994; as cited in Woodrow, 2006). The 19 items were segregated into five main factors in which the gender differences were analyzed in accordance with these variables. The variables are:

Table (2)

Factors behind the speaking anxiety

Factors	**Factor title**	**Items under each factor**
Factor 1	lack of self-confidence	1,2 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 19, 20
Factor 2	Pressure to speak	5,7, 8
Factor 3	Fear of Making Mistakes	13,18,21
Factor 4	Tension while speaking	6, 12
Factor 5	lack of understanding	4,22

2.5.2   Focus Group Discussions (FGD): The researcher conducted four semi-structured FGDs with first- and second-year students, segregated by gender and stage, to collect qualitative data. The FGDs began with setting the chairs in a circle to increase the involvement of the students in the discussions. The researcher introduced herself and explained the objective and expected outcome of the FGDs. Students were asked for their consent to record the discussions on the researcher's mobile phone, and they were informed that the recordings would only be used for the purpose of the research and not shared with others, ensuring the confidentiality of the students and the information shared.

2.5.3 Key Informant Interviews (KII): KIIs were conducted with 13 English language teachers within the department. The teacher selected for the KIIs were the teacher who taught the either first- or second-year students or both. The KIIs were conducted in person and lasted between 30-45 minutes in a semi-structured manner, allowing for the collection of qualitative data from the perspective of the teachers.

2.6 Pilot Study:

To ensure the validity and accuracy of the data collection instruments, the researcher tested 10 questionnaires on first- and second-year students and timed their response duration. Additionally, the researcher asked the participants to identify any unclear or ambiguous statements for further revision. The FGD and KII items were also piloted by the researcher with a few students and 2 teachers, resulting in minor modifications to the instrument statements. These preliminary steps enabled the researcher to identify any discrepancies or inconsistencies in the research instruments and make necessary revisions prior to data collection.

2.7 Validity:

The validity of a research instrument refers to its ability to accurately measure what it is designed to measure. To ensure both face and content validity, the researcher shared the three instruments with a panel of experts, who were English language teachers with PhD degrees from College of Basic Education and College of Arts. The instruments were sent to the teachers via email, and after a week, the jury provided feedback to the researcher. The feedback included minor language adjustments and the deletion of some repetitive items in the questionnaire instrument. The researcher then made the necessary modifications to the tool to align with the research purpose. Furthermore, ensuring the validity of the qualitative instruments of

FGD and KIIs was crucial for minimizing subjectivity and bias. Therefore, the researcher used neutral language in the instrument items to ensure neutrality, and the FGDs and KIIs were recorded on a mobile phone by the researcher.

2.8 Reliability of the Instruments:

Reliability is a critical aspect of academic research, as it reflects the consistency and accuracy of research instruments. cohTo establish the reliability of the questionnaire used in this study, the researcher employed Cronbach's Alpha, which measures the inter-item correlations among questionnaire items. The analysis was conducted using SPSS, and the results indicated a Cronbach's alpha of 0.6 for the questionnaire. This value exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.5, suggesting that the items are reliable. The reliability coefficients for the questionnaire's factors (variables) ranged from 0.621 to 0.865, with a total of 19 items yielding a coefficient of 0.872 as shown in the table below:

Table (3)

reliability of the instrument

Factors (Variables)	Coefficient	No. of Items
Factor 1	0.865	9
Factor 2	0.736	3
Factor 3	0.748	3
Factor 4	0.621	2
Factor 5	0.634	2
Total Items	0.872	19

3. Data Analysis:

The SPSS program was used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the variables. Furthermore, inferential data analyzed was also used through t-test to determine the differences between both genders. The qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis. The data were coded to generate categories and themes based on the research question. Furthermore, the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data were triangulated with the literature review.

3.1 Preparation of quantitative data

Data preparations are essential as primary steps to identify any threat that may hinder the validity of the data such as invalid values. Therefore, the researcher applied the below procedures to the data, starting by data filtering, univariate Outliers, and Normality Test as shown in the below points:

3.1.1 Data Filtering:

The researcher distributed 124 questionnaires on the targeted sample in the Department of English- College of Basic Education in Duhok.. After entering the data into SPSS program (SPSS V.26), the researcher applied Outliers Data in which the researcher depended on Likert Scale of 5 options. Furthermore, the questionnaire contained negative items in which their values were converted as illustrated in the table below:

Table (4)

scoring method based on Likert scale

Scoring					
	Strongly Agree	**Agree**	**Not Sure**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
Positive	5	4	3	2	1
Negative	1	2	3	4	5
Negative (Converted)	5	4	3	2	1

3.2 Exploratory Factor Analysis:

The 23 items of the questionnaire were tested under Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). This analysis is used to illustrate the relevance or description of the items within a number of factors or variables using the (AMOS V.26) program.

The results of the test show the below findings:

- **Communality test:**

Based on communality test that was applied in two iterations, 19 items out of 23 of the questionnaire exceeded the standard value of the communalities of items that is 0.5. On the other hand, the items 11, 14, 17, and 23 were excluded as their values were below 0.5. Therefore, further analysis were applied to 19 items from the original 23 items of the questionnaire.

4. Results:

4.1 Differences of FLSA based on Gender

The researcher used a t-test, a commonly used inferential statistical technique that compares the means of two groups to indicate the difference in FLSA based on gender. The table below provides a summary of the results of the t-tests for each of the five variables based on gender. The results of the t-tests show that there are no significant differences in any of the five variables between male and female students. The significance level (Sig.) for each t-test is above the commonly used threshold of 0.05, indicating that the differences observed are not statistically significant. The calculated t-values for each variable and gender group are relatively small, further suggesting that there are no significant differences between male and female students.

Table (5)

t-test results

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Calculated t value	Sig. *	Result
1	Male	35	2.9746	0.464	0.643	No Differences
	Female	89	3.0574			
2	Male	35	3.2000	0.032	0.974	No Differences
	Female	89	3.1948			
3	Male	35	3.4667	1.114	0.267	No Differences
	Female	89	3.3296			
4	Male	35	3.3000	0.773	0.441	No Differences
	Female	89	3.1798			

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Calculated t value	Sig. *	Result
5	Male	35	3.4143	1.402	0.164	No Differences
	Female	89	3.1573			
N = 124		*** P ≤ 0.05**		**Tabulated T with d.f. 122 = 1657**		

The qualitative data gathered from 42 students revealed that a significant number of students (31 out of 42) agreed that female students feel more anxious when speaking in English in the class than male students. According to the students, several factors contribute to this gender difference in FLSA. Seven students pointed out that the shy nature of females plays a significant role in their experience of FLSA. They believe that females are generally more reserved and introverted, which can make them more anxious when speaking in front of others. Additionally, four students noted that the emotional nature of females also makes them more anxious to speak in front of a whole classroom. They fear being laughed at or judged by others. Male students also pointed out that females may experience more anxiety in mixed-gender classrooms due to the conservative nature of society and the educational system's gender segregation from elementary to high school stages. Four male students believed that females may feel anxious when speaking in front of male students because they are not used to mixed-gender classrooms. However, there were some female students who disagreed with this gender difference in FLSA. Five female students within the second stage stated that there is no difference in FLSA based on gender among the students and 6 students aniticipate that males to experience higher levels of FLSA that females.

Table (6)

students FGDs' findings

Perception on the difference in speaking anxiety	Frequency
Females feel more anxious than males	31
No difference based on gender	5
Males feel more anxious than females	6

The teachers' responses in the qualitative data did not show any significant difference between the genders in FLSA. Seven teachers pointed out that there is no difference in the level of speaking anxiety on a gender basis. One teacher suggested that speaking anxiety is a psychological barrier that is not based on gender. They believe that speaking anxiety is related to a student's psychology and personality rather than their gender. Another teacher also pointed out that both male and female students can feel anxious about speaking and may prefer to keep silent sometimes. Some teachers noted that although females are more anticipated to suffer from FLSA, they observed that male students are more anxious towards speaking. For instance, one teacher suggested that females tend to be better than males when it comes to speaking. One teacher pointed out that males may be frightened to make mistakes in front of females. 2 other teachers suggested that female students are more active than male students in class, which may be due to the fact that the male number in the classrooms is only one third of the total number of students. However, one teacher suggested that female students are mostly anxious towards speaking, especially in the first stage as they are new to the college environment. Overall, the qualitative data from the teachers suggest that speaking anxiety is a complex issue that may be influenced by

various factors such as personality, interest in the subject, and classroom environment, rather than solely based on gender.

Table (7)

teachers' KIIs findings

Perception on the difference in speaking anxiety	Frequency
No difference based on gender	7
Females feel more anxious than males	3

5. Discussion

The difference in findings between the quantitative and qualitative data regarding the presence of gender differences in speaking anxiety raises interesting questions and prompts for discussion. On one hand, the quantitative data indicates that there is no significant difference in speaking anxiety levels between male and female students. On the other hand, the qualitative data, which is based on a smaller sample size and open-ended interviews, suggests that female students tend to experience more anxiety when speaking in English in the classroom than their male counterparts.

One possible explanation for this discrepancy could be the limitations of the quantitative methodology. While the questionnaire provides valuable information on students' self-reported speaking anxiety levels, it may not capture the nuances of gendered experiences in the classroom, particularly those related to cultural and social norms. The qualitative data, on the other hand, allows for a more in-depth exploration of students' perceptions and experiences, which may shed light on some of the underlying reasons for gender differences in speaking anxiety. It is also worth noting that the teachers' perspectives on this issue vary. While some teachers see no difference in speaking anxiety levels between male and female students, others observe that female students tend to experience more anxiety due to their socialization and the conservative nature of society. These observations further highlight the complex interplay between gender, culture, and language learning.

The findings of this study have important implications for educators, as they suggest that gender should not be a significant factor in predicting academic performance, particularly in terms of speaking anxiety. Furthermore, it highlights the need to pay attention to the

complex nature of speaking anxiety and the factors that contribute to it when designing language learning programs. Further research is needed to better understand the complex nature of speaking anxiety and develop effective strategies for reducing it.

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that while the quantitative data did not illustrate any statistically significant gender differences in FLSA among EFL students, the qualitative data shed light on a more nuanced picture. The quantitative analysis, employing t-tests, demonstrated that the mean FLSA scores for both genders were not significantly different. However, the qualitative insights, gathered through interviews, revealed a spectrum of perspectives. The difference between the two data sets prompts us to consider the intricate interplay of factors influencing FLSA. While the quantitative data provides a valuable snapshot of self-reported anxiety levels, the qualitative findings offer depth to the phenomenon. The qualitative data unveils that while no universal pattern exists, a notable portion of female students perceive higher levels of anxiety when speaking English in the classroom compared to their male counterparts. This discrepancy highlights the limitations of relying solely on quantitative measures when addressing complex emotions like language anxiety. It also highlights the importance of qualitative methodologies in capturing the contextual, cultural, and individual nuances that quantitative tools may overlook.

Educationally, this study emphasizes the need for pedagogical strategies that consider these nuanced gender differences. Educators must recognize that learners' experiences are multi-faceted and design the teaching strategies to boost the students confidence and reduce their FLSA with cautious attention to the gender implications alongside. Furthermore, the study calls for future research that delves deeper into the cultural and social aspects that contribute to gendered experiences of FLSA in other universities or colleges.

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Appendix 1

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire

Dear Participants:

*The current questionnaire is meant to investigate the level of speaking anxiety and its factors experienced by undergraduate learners of first and second stages within the English Department/college of Basic Education. The questionnaire consists of 23 objective questions that will take around 7 minutes to complete. After reading each statement, please circle **ONE** option that is true to your experience. Your answers will be confidential and will be used for pedagogical purposes only as a requirement of a MA thesis.*

Stay blessed and thank you in advance

Hazheen Hamdi,

MA student, English Department, College of Basic Education

Name *(Optional):*	**Stage:**
Gender *(Male/Female):*	**Age:**

Foreign Language Anxiety Questionnaire

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I never feel quite confident of myself when I am speaking in English					
2.	I often feel like not going to the speaking class					

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3.	I feel extremely anxious when I know that I am going to be called on in the speaking class					
4.	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the speaking class					
5.	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more speaking classes per week					
6.	During the speaking class, I find myself thinking about matters that have nothing to do with the course					
7.	I don't feel pressured to prepare very well					

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	to my speaking presentation					
8.	I am usually at ease during the speaking class					
9.	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my speaking class					
10.	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my speaking class					
11.	In the speaking class I can get so nervous I forget things I know					
12.	It would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers					
13.	I don't worry about making mistakes in the speaking class					

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14.	I feel confident when I speak in the speaking class					
15.	I am afraid my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make while speaking					
16.	I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in the speaking class					
17.	I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do					
18.	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students					
19.	I am afraid the other students will laugh at me					

	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	when I speak English					
20.	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in my speaking class					
21.	I feel more tense and nervous in the speaking class than in my other classes					
22.	When I am on my way to the speaking class, I feel very sure and relaxed					
23.	I feel nervous in the speaking class when the English teacher asks me questions and I must reply to them					