

Linguistic Anxiety among Linguistics Students: Levels, Dimensions, and Demographic Correlates Post-Linguistics Anxiety Scale

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Abstract:

This study investigates the levels of linguistic anxiety (LA) among first-year preservice English language teachers enrolled in a foundational linguistics course at the University of Djilali Bounaama Khemis Miliana, focusing on three dimensions: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. A total of 48 female students participated in the study, completing the Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS) on a 7-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics revealed that all three dimensions fall within the moderate range, with Test Anxiety showing the highest mean ($M = 4.409$), followed by Communication Anxiety ($M = 4.305$) and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($M = 4.180$). Reliability analysis demonstrated acceptable internal consistency for the overall scale ($\alpha = 0.799$), although Test Anxiety had lower reliability ($\alpha = 0.213$), suggesting potential heterogeneity in its items. Repeated measures ANOVA indicated no statistically significant differences across the three dimensions ($F(2, 94) = 2.043$, $p = 0.135$), confirming that moderate LA is consistently experienced across all dimensions. The findings highlight the importance of implementing anxiety-reduction strategies, such as structured practice, constructive feedback, and gradual exposure to oral tasks, to enhance students' confidence and performance in linguistics courses.

Keywords: Communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, linguistic anxiety, students' emotional responses, test anxiety

Introduction:

Linguistic anxiety (LA) is a well-documented phenomenon in language education and linguistics studies, as it can significantly influence students' academic performance, classroom participation, and self-confidence. Students experiencing LA may encounter challenges in verbal expression, comprehension, and engagement during class activities.

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In the context of linguistics education, learners face cognitive and methodological demands, including the complexity of linguistic rules, the pace of instruction, and theoretical content density. These challenges can exacerbate anxiety, potentially affecting memory, information processing, and motivation. Despite its relevance, empirical research on linguistic anxiety within linguistics programs remains limited, particularly regarding its dimensional structure and relationship with demographic variables.

This study aims to examine the levels of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students, investigate its primary dimensions (communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation), and explore potential associations with age and gender.

Research Problem

Although linguistics courses are essential to academic curricula, students exhibit varying degrees of linguistic anxiety, which may negatively impact their learning outcomes and classroom engagement. The central problem guiding this study is:

What are the levels and dimensions of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students, and how do these levels relate to demographic factors such as age and gender?

Research Questions

1. What is the overall level of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students?
2. What is the level of communication anxiety among linguistics students?
3. What is the level of test anxiety among linguistics students?
4. What is the level of fear of negative evaluation among linguistics students?
5. Are anxiety dimensions significantly different?

Hypotheses

1. Linguistics students should exhibit a moderate level of overall linguistic anxiety.
2. Communication anxiety constitutes a prominent dimension of linguistic anxiety among students.

3. Anxiety levels differ across the three dimensions: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Linguistic Anxiety as a Multidimensional Construct

Linguistic anxiety has been widely recognized as a central affective variable influencing language learning outcomes in both secondary and tertiary education. Defined as a situation-specific form of anxiety emerging in language learning contexts, linguistic anxiety differs from general trait anxiety because it is directly linked to communicative and evaluative demands in the classroom (Horwitz et al., 1986). The foundational work of Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), conceptualizing it as a distinct psychological construct composed of interrelated dimensions that shape learners' emotional and behavioral responses.

Subsequent theoretical refinement by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) proposed that anxiety interferes with language acquisition through cognitive processing mechanisms. According to their processing model, anxiety disrupts attention and working memory during input (comprehension), processing (mental organization), and output (production), thereby negatively affecting performance. This cognitive interference explains why anxiety is consistently associated with lower achievement outcomes, as confirmed by meta-analytic research (Teimouri et al., 2019; Botes et al., 2020).

In university linguistics programs, students engage in complex analytical tasks such as phonological analysis, syntactic parsing, discourse evaluation, and theoretical debate. These cognitively demanding activities, often performed in evaluative classroom settings, may intensify anxiety experiences. Despite the relevance of this construct, limited empirical research has focused specifically on linguistics students as a distinct academic group. Therefore, examining linguistic anxiety within this population addresses a notable gap in higher education research.

1.1.1 Critiques of FLCA

Sparks and Ganschow's (1991, 1993) Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH) posits that language anxiety is primarily a symptom of underlying linguistic aptitude deficits rather than an independent cause, a view challenged by meta-analyses showing anxiety's unique effects after proficiency controls (Teimouri et al., 2019). Tóth's (2008) factor analysis found weak empirical support for FLCA's three distinct dimensions, aligning with this study's non-significant ANOVA results across dimensions. Meanwhile, Dewaele and MacIntyre's (2014) dual-affect model emphasizes integrating positive emotions like enjoyment alongside anxiety for a fuller picture.

1.2 Communication Anxiety

Communication Anxiety refers to apprehension associated with speaking and listening in academic language contexts (Horwitz et al., 1986). It is particularly salient in classroom environments where students are required to respond spontaneously, present arguments, or participate in discussions. Communication apprehension may manifest through physiological reactions (e.g., trembling, increased heart rate), cognitive blocks (e.g., forgetting known material), and avoidance behaviors.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) emphasize that speaking tasks are especially anxiety-provoking because they demand immediate processing and public performance, increasing cognitive load. Empirical research confirms that oral communication is frequently reported as the most stressful aspect of language learning (Aida, 1994). Furthermore, anxiety related to listening comprehension may intensify when students fear misunderstanding instructor input, particularly in fast-paced academic contexts (Zhang, 2013).

In linguistics classrooms, where theoretical explanations and data analysis often require precise verbal articulation, communication anxiety may significantly influence participation and confidence levels.

Thus, examining this dimension is essential to understanding students' overall linguistic anxiety profiles.

1.3 Test Anxiety

Test Anxiety represents performance-related stress experienced in evaluative situations such as examinations, graded presentations, or formal assessments (Horwitz et al., 1986). It is characterized by excessive worry about failure, concern over consequences, and cognitive interference during testing situations.

Research consistently demonstrates that anxiety in evaluative contexts negatively correlates with achievement (Teimouri et al., 2019). According to Horwitz (2001), language learners may experience heightened anxiety in testing environments because assessment often emphasizes accuracy, increasing fear of error. In linguistics courses, where evaluation may include theoretical explanations, rule application, and analytical reasoning, the pressure to demonstrate mastery can intensify anxiety levels.

Botes et al. (2020) note that while test anxiety contributes significantly to overall language anxiety, its magnitude varies depending on context, instructional design, and assessment methods. Therefore, understanding the degree to which test anxiety contributes to students' overall linguistic anxiety is critical for informing pedagogical strategies.

1.4 Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of Negative Evaluation involves apprehension about being judged unfavorably by instructors or peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). This dimension reflects social-evaluative concerns and is particularly relevant in interactive learning environments.

Students who experience fear of negative evaluation may avoid volunteering answers, hesitate to participate in discussions, or experience heightened stress during corrective feedback. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argue that classroom emotional climate plays a mediating role in this dimension, as supportive environments may buffer anxiety effects. The dynamic interaction between anxiety and

positive emotions suggests that fear of evaluation is not fixed but context-sensitive.

In linguistics classrooms, where analytical reasoning and theoretical interpretation are often publicly scrutinized, sensitivity to teacher correction and peer comparison may contribute substantially to students' anxiety levels. Exploring this dimension therefore provides insight into the social dynamics influencing emotional responses.

1.5 Demographic Variables and Linguistic Anxiety

Demographic factors such as age, gender, and academic experience have been examined as potential correlates of linguistic anxiety. Proficiency level and self-perceived competence are consistently identified as strong predictors of anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Teimouri et al., 2019). However, demographic variables such as gender yield mixed findings. Although some studies report higher anxiety among female learners, meta-analytic evidence suggests that gender differences are generally small and influenced by contextual factors (Botes et al., 2020).

Age and academic stage may also shape anxiety experiences, particularly in cognitively demanding university programs. Investigating demographic correlates in linguistics programs is therefore important for determining whether anxiety operates uniformly across subgroups or varies according to background characteristics.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

Given the multidimensional and context-sensitive nature of linguistic anxiety, this study aims to:

1. Examine the overall level of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students.
2. Investigate its three primary dimensions: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation.
3. Explore potential relationships between linguistic anxiety and selected demographic variables.

By organizing the investigation around these core variables, the study seeks to contribute to theoretical understanding of linguistic anxiety in higher education and provide empirically grounded recommendations for linguistics pedagogy.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

2.1 Conceptual Foundation

The present study is theoretically grounded in Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) theory as developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) and further elaborated by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991). FLCA conceptualizes language anxiety as a situation-specific construct emerging from the unique cognitive, affective, and social demands of language learning contexts rather than as a general personality trait (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed that language anxiety comprises three interrelated dimensions:

- 1. Communication apprehension**
- 2. Test anxiety**
- 3. Fear of negative evaluation**

This tripartite structure directly corresponds to the three dimensions measured in the Post-Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS) used in the present study. Therefore, FLCA theory provides the most conceptually aligned framework for interpreting the findings.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) further expanded this model by proposing a processing-based perspective, arguing that anxiety interferes with language learning at multiple stages: input, processing, and output. Anxiety consumes attentional and working memory resources, thereby affecting comprehension, retention, and performance. This perspective is particularly relevant to linguistics students who must process abstract theoretical content and perform orally under evaluative conditions.

Additionally, empirical syntheses confirm the negative association between language anxiety and achievement (Teimouri et al., 2019;

Botes et al., 2020), reinforcing the theoretical assumption that anxiety is not merely emotional discomfort but a factor with measurable academic consequences.

Finally, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) contribute an affective-dynamic extension of FLCA theory, emphasizing that anxiety coexists with other emotions (e.g., enjoyment) and fluctuates depending on classroom climate. This supports viewing anxiety as a dynamic, context-sensitive phenomenon rather than a fixed learner trait.

2.2 Justification for the Choice of Framework

The selection of FLCA theory as the theoretical framework is justified for several reasons:

1. **Dimensional Alignment**

The LAS dimensions: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation are conceptually identical to those proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986). This direct correspondence ensures theoretical coherence between measurement and interpretation.

2. **Context-Specific Relevance**

The participants are linguistics students operating within structured academic classrooms. FLCA theory specifically addresses anxiety arising in classroom language contexts, making it more appropriate than general anxiety theories.

3. **Empirical Support**

The framework is supported by decades of peer-reviewed research indexed in Web of Science and Scopus (Horwitz, 2001; Teimouri et al., 2019; Botes et al., 2020), providing strong theoretical validity.

4. **Compatibility with Moderate Anxiety Findings**

The study found **moderate levels across all three dimensions** with no statistically significant differences between them. FLCA theory conceptualizes anxiety as multidimensional yet interrelated, which explains why the three components may coexist at similar intensity levels.

5. **Applicability to Female University Samples**

Given that the entire sample consists of female students, FLCA

research provides comparative benchmarks, while also acknowledging that gender effects are typically small and context-dependent (Botes et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019).

For these reasons, FLCA theory provides both conceptual clarity and empirical robustness for interpreting the present findings.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Study Design

The study adopted a descriptive-analytical design to examine the levels and dimensions of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students.

3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 48 linguistics students, selected using a convenience sampling method to represent the target population. It is important to note that the sample consisted exclusively of female students (100%), which precludes gender-based comparisons. This demographic characteristic is reflective of the specific cohort enrolled in the program at the time of data collection.

Given this demographic composition, the analysis focuses primarily on age as the only variable with sufficient variability. This ensures alignment between the study's analytical scope and the characteristics of the sample.

3.3 Instrument

The Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS) is a 34-item adaptation of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), customized for linguistics students. It covers three dimensions, Communication Anxiety (11 items), Test Anxiety (8 items), and Fear of Negative Evaluation (14 items), rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Pilot testing on 20 similar students showed good overall reliability ($\alpha=0.82$). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) supported the three-factor structure, with a Comparative Fit Index (CFI=0.92;

≥ 0.90 =acceptable) and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA=0.06; ≤ 0.08 =good), though Test Anxiety items had some cross-loadings.

The Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991, 1993) offers a key critique: it views language anxiety as a symptom of underlying native-language cognitive deficits rather than an independent emotional factor, reversing FLCA's causal direction.

The LAS demonstrated good overall reliability ($\alpha=0.82$) and conceptual alignment with FLCA theory, supporting its suitability for measuring linguistic anxiety despite minor subscale limitations.

3.4 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS, employing:

- Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations)
- Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha)
- Independent-samples t-test and one-way ANOVA to examine demographic differences (specifically age)
- Computation of composite scores for each dimension and the overall scale

4.DESRIPTIVE AND INFERENTIAL DATA ANALYSIS

The present study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses to examine linguistic anxiety among linguistics students. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were first calculated to summarize the demographic characteristics of the participants and their responses to the Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS). Inferential analyses were subsequently conducted to investigate potential differences in linguistic anxiety levels across demographic variables and its three dimensions: communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

4.1. Demographics

Participants' demographic characteristics are presented in **Table 1**. The study sample consisted of 48 linguistics students. Regarding age, 5 participants (10.4%) were under 18 years, 40 participants (83.3%) were between 18 and 20 years, and 3 participants (6.3%) were between 20 and 25 years, indicating that the majority of the sample consisted of younger university students. All participants were female (100%), which limited the analysis of gender as a variable and directed the focus toward age-related comparisons.

Table 1: Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	Less than 18	5	10.4	10.4
	18–20	40	83.3	93.8
	20–25	3	6.3	100.0
Gender	Female	48	100.0	100.0

Source: SPSS V29.0. Footnote : (Age ANOVA: $F(2,45)=0.89$, $p=0.418$, $\eta^2=0.038$ - no effect).

4.2. Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS) was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha following reverse coding of positively worded items. The overall scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.799$), indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

However, subscale analysis revealed acceptable reliability for Communication Anxiety ($\alpha = 0.785$) and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($\alpha = 0.812$). The Test Anxiety subscale demonstrated a lower coefficient ($\alpha = 0.213$), which may reflect the multidimensional nature of test-related experiences in this context rather than a single homogeneous construct.

This variability suggests that students may respond differently to distinct evaluative situations (e.g., written exams, oral performance, grading pressure).

Accordingly, results related to Test Anxiety are interpreted with caution, while still providing useful descriptive insight into this dimension.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Scale / Dimension	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Interpretation
Full Linguistics Anxiety Scale	33	0.799	Good
Communication Anxiety	11	0.785	Good
Test Anxiety	8	0.213	Low (Heterogeneous)
Fear of Negative Evaluation	14	0.812	Good

Source: SPSS V29.0

4.3 Descriptive Analysis of Dimensions

Descriptive statistics for the three dimensions of the Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS) were computed to assess overall anxiety levels among participants (N = 48). As shown in **Table 3**, all dimensions fell within the moderate range on the 7-point Likert scale:

- **Communication Anxiety:** M = 4.305, SD = 0.749
- **Test Anxiety:** M = 4.409, SD = 0.736
- **Fear of Negative Evaluation:** M = 4.180, SD = 0.873

These results indicate that participants experience moderately elevated anxiety across all measured dimensions, with Test Anxiety showing the highest mean, followed closely by Communication

Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Although numerical differences exist, the inferential analysis (presented in Section 4.4) revealed that they were not statistically significant.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Dimensions of the Linguistics Anxiety Scale

Dimension	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
Communication Anxiety (LAS)	48	4.305	0.749	0.561
Test Anxiety (LAS)	48	4.409	0.736	0.541
Fear of Negative Evaluation (LAS)	48	4.180	0.873	0.762

Source: SPSS V29.0

4.4 Inferential Analysis

4.4.1. Age Differences

An one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine differences in linguistic anxiety based on age groups. Results indicated no statistically significant differences between age groups ($F(2, 45) = 0.89, p = 0.418$). This suggests that within this young adult cohort, age does not significantly influence anxiety levels.

4.4.2. Dimension Differences

Repeated measures ANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences among the three anxiety dimensions, $F(2, 94) = 2.043, p = 0.135$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.042$. While the p-value indicates non-significance, the effect size (partial $\eta^2 = 0.042$) suggests a small practical effect. This implies that while the dimensions are numerically different, the variance explained by the dimension type is minimal, reinforcing the view that anxiety is experienced relatively uniformly across communication, testing, and evaluation contexts.

Table 4: Repeated Measures ANOVA for Linguistic Anxiety Dimensions

Source / Contrast	Mean Square	df	F	p	Partial η^2
Within-Subjects: Anxiety Dimension	0.630	2	2.043	0.135	0.042
Error (Anxiety Dimension)	0.308	94	—	—	—

Source: SPSS V29.0

Notes:

- Sphericity assumption was met (Mauchly's $W = 0.884$, $\chi^2(2) = 5.658$, $p = 0.059$).
- Partial η^2 indicates effect size.
- Differences between dimensions were **not statistically significant**.

4.5 Interpretation and Hypotheses Testing

The first hypothesis proposed that students exhibit a moderate level of overall linguistic anxiety. The results support this hypothesis. The mean scores for the three dimensions: Communication Anxiety ($M = 4.305$), Test Anxiety ($M = 4.409$), and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($M = 4.180$), all fall within the middle range of the 7-point Likert scale. These findings indicate that participants experience a moderate degree of linguistic anxiety rather than extremely low or high levels. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported.

1. **Hypothesis 1 (Moderate Level):** Supported. Means fall within the moderate range.

The second hypothesis stated that Communication Anxiety constitutes a prominent dimension of linguistic anxiety among students. The findings also support this hypothesis. Communication Anxiety recorded a relatively high mean score ($M = 4.305$), slightly lower than Test Anxiety ($M = 4.409$) but higher than Fear of Negative Evaluation ($M = 4.180$). This suggests that communication-related concerns represent a substantial and central component of students' overall anxiety in linguistics classes. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2 is supported.

2. **Hypothesis 2 (Communication Anxiety):** Supported. Communication Anxiety is a substantial component ($M = 4.305$).

The third hypothesis predicted that anxiety levels would differ significantly across the three dimensions. Descriptive statistics indicate numerical differences, with Test Anxiety ranking highest, followed by Communication Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation. However, the repeated measures ANOVA revealed no statistically significant differences among the dimensions, $F(2, 94) = 2.043$, $p = 0.135$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.042$. Although minor variations exist in mean scores, these differences are not statistically meaningful. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is only partially supported, as the dimensions differ descriptively but not significantly.

3. **Hypothesis 3 (Differences across Dimensions):** Not supported. No statistically significant differences across dimensions were found (supported by ANOVA, $p = 0.135$).

4.1 Interpretation of Results

The findings of this study indicate that students enrolled in linguistics courses experience moderate levels of linguistic anxiety across all three measured dimensions: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. The descriptive statistics show that Test Anxiety had the highest mean ($M = 4.409$, $SD = 0.736$), followed closely by Communication Anxiety ($M = 4.305$, $SD = 0.749$), and then Fear of Negative Evaluation ($M = 4.180$, $SD = 0.873$). Although the numerical differences suggest that students are slightly more anxious during tests, the repeated measures ANOVA revealed no statistically significant difference across the three dimensions, $F(2, 94)$

= 2.043, $p = 0.135$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.042$. This indicates that moderate anxiety is consistently present in all areas of linguistics learning, whether related to communication, evaluation, or performance. Rather than reflecting isolated stressors, this pattern suggests that anxiety is embedded in the overall learning experience of linguistics students.

The absence of statistically significant differences between dimensions reinforces the interpretation of linguistic anxiety as a unified, multidimensional construct. Students appear to experience comparable levels of tension across different academic demands, including oral participation, assessment situations, and peer or instructor evaluation.

This consistency may be attributed to the cognitively demanding nature of linguistics courses, which require both analytical reasoning and precise verbal expression.

As a result, anxiety is not confined to specific tasks but emerges as a general response to the academic environment.

5. DISCUSSION

This study examined linguistic anxiety (LA) among first-year preservice English language teachers enrolled in a foundational linguistics course, focusing on communication anxiety, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The findings reveal a consistent pattern of moderate anxiety across all three dimensions, with no statistically significant differences between them. This aligns with the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) framework, which conceptualizes language anxiety as a multidimensional, situation-specific construct rather than a fixed personality trait (Horwitz et al., 1986).

5.1 Interpretation of Moderate, Multidimensional Anxiety

The moderate anxiety levels observed (Communication Anxiety: $M = 4.305$; Test Anxiety: $M = 4.409$; Fear of Negative Evaluation: $M = 4.180$) support Horwitz's (2001) assertion that university students typically experience persistent but manageable anxiety. Rather than indicating pathological distress, these levels reflect the normative tension inherent in academic language performance. MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) processing model further clarifies why even moderate anxiety warrants attention: it can consume attentional and working memory resources during input, processing, and output stages, potentially hindering comprehension and participation in cognitively demanding linguistics courses.

The repeated measures ANOVA confirmed no significant differences across dimensions, $F(2, 94) = 2.043$, $p = 0.135$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.042$. This suggests that LA in this sample operates as a balanced, interrelated construct. Students appear to experience anxiety uniformly across speaking, testing, and evaluative contexts, reinforcing FLCA's premise that the three dimensions are interconnected manifestations of a broader anxiety profile.

5.2 Dimension-Specific Insights

Although differences were not statistically significant, Test Anxiety recorded the highest mean. Within FLCA, this reflects performance-based evaluative pressure (Horwitz et al., 1986), potentially linked to concerns about academic consequences in a discipline that emphasizes accuracy and theoretical precision. However, given the low internal consistency of the Test Anxiety subscale ($\alpha = 0.213$), this finding should be interpreted cautiously and underscores the need for context-specific instrument refinement in future applications.

Communication Anxiety also emerged as a prominent component, reflecting students' discomfort with spontaneous verbal expression. Linguistics tasks often require articulating abstract concepts under time pressure, increasing both cognitive load and social-evaluative concerns. This dimension closely interacts with Fear of Negative Evaluation, as sensitivity to teacher correction and peer

comparison may lead students to avoid participation. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) note that classroom climate mediates these effects; the moderate scores observed may indicate a generally supportive instructional environment, though evaluative sensitivity remains present.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

These findings carry clear implications for linguistics instruction in EFL contexts. Since anxiety is moderate and consistently experienced across dimensions, pedagogical responses should address both cognitive and affective factors. Instructors can mitigate anxiety by scaffolding complex theoretical content into manageable tasks, providing low-stakes opportunities for oral practice (e.g., structured discussions, think-pair-share), and implementing formative assessments that normalize evaluative contexts. Constructive, growth-oriented feedback and collaborative learning environments can further buffer fear of negative evaluation while maintaining academic rigor.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

Grounded in the FLCA framework, this study reinforces that linguistic anxiety among linguistics students is: (1) moderate and multidimensional; (2) activated consistently across communication, testing, and evaluative demands; (3) capable of influencing cognitive processing even at non-extreme levels; and (4) best addressed through holistic instructional strategies rather than dimension-specific interventions. These insights extend FLCA's applicability to discipline-specific language contexts and provide a theoretical foundation for future research on emotionally aware pedagogy in linguistics education.

5.5. Comparison with Regional Studies

Algerian studies report moderate-high foreign language anxiety (FLA; $M \approx 4.0-5.0$ on FLCAS-like scales) among multilingual undergraduates, with communication anxiety dominant (33% variance explained) and proficiency mediating effects (Idri, 2014; AL-Qadri,

2023). The present study reveals lower, more uniform moderate levels ($M=4.18-4.41$) across dimensions without communication dominance. This pattern may reflect preservice teacher context and training support that foster greater emotional resilience than in general EFL cohorts (AL-Qadri, 2023).

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the levels and dimensions of linguistic anxiety among linguistics students using the Linguistics Anxiety Scale (LAS). The findings revealed that students experience moderate levels of linguistic anxiety across all three dimensions: Communication Anxiety, Test Anxiety, and Fear of Negative Evaluation. Although Test Anxiety showed the highest mean score, followed by Communication Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation, repeated measures ANOVA indicated that these differences were not statistically significant. This suggests that linguistic anxiety is experienced as a balanced, multidimensional construct rather than being dominated by a single component.

The reliability analysis demonstrated good internal consistency for the overall scale ($\alpha = 0.799$), confirming that the LAS is an appropriate instrument for assessing linguistic anxiety within linguistics programs. However, the relatively low reliability of the Test Anxiety subscale indicates potential item heterogeneity and suggests the need for refinement in future applications.

The results support established theoretical models of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991), which conceptualize language anxiety as a situation-specific and multidimensional phenomenon. The moderate anxiety levels observed align with previous empirical findings indicating that university students commonly experience persistent but manageable language-related anxiety (Horwitz, 2001; Teimouri et al., 2019). Moreover, the absence of statistically significant differences among the three dimensions reinforces the notion that communication concerns,

evaluative pressure, and test-related stress operate interdependently within academic language contexts.

Pedagogically, the findings highlight the importance of implementing structured and supportive instructional strategies in linguistics classrooms. Approaches such as gradual exposure to oral tasks, constructive and transparent feedback practices, collaborative learning environments, and formative assessment methods may help mitigate anxiety and enhance students' confidence. Given that the entire sample consisted of female students, future research should include more diverse demographic groups to examine potential gender-based differences more comprehensively.

Overall, the findings position linguistic anxiety as a stable and contextually embedded feature of linguistics learning rather than a fluctuating or task-specific reaction, which highlights the need for instructional approaches that address both cognitive demands and emotional factors simultaneously. By integrating structured practice, supportive feedback, and low-stakes participation opportunities, instructors can help mitigate anxiety while maintaining academic rigor. Such approaches are particularly relevant in linguistics contexts, where abstract reasoning and verbal precision are central to student performance.

7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations should be acknowledged. The relatively small, all-female sample drawn from a single institutional context limits the generalizability of the findings and precludes examination of gender-based differences in linguistic anxiety. Additionally, the cross-sectional design does not allow for examining longitudinal changes in anxiety levels over time. Future research may benefit from larger samples, mixed-method designs, and longitudinal approaches to explore how linguistic anxiety evolves throughout students' academic progression.

Additionally, the low Test Anxiety reliability ($\alpha = 0.213$) may indicate cultural differential item functioning (DIF) in evaluative items as for example, written exam pressure may resonate differently than oral performance in Algerian academic contexts. Future exploratory (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) are recommended to refine subscale items.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on linguistic anxiety by providing empirical evidence from linguistics students, a population that remains underexplored in anxiety research. The findings confirm that linguistic anxiety is moderate, multidimensional, and consistently present across communication, testing, and evaluative contexts. Addressing this phenomenon through theoretically grounded pedagogical interventions can play a crucial role in improving both emotional well-being and academic performance in linguistics education.

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Appendix

<https://dept.english.wisc.edu/rfyoung/333/FLCAS.pdf>

