

## AN OVERVIEW ON SKILL-BASED L2 ANXIETIES: DEFINITIONS, RESEARCH TRENDS AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

By

GÖKHAN ÖZTÜRK

*Faculty Member, Department of Foreign Language Education, Anadolu University, Turkey.*

*Date Received: 12/09/2018*

*Date Revised: 18/11/2018*

*Date Accepted: 23/12/2018*

### ABSTRACT

*Due to its influential nature on foreign language learning process, foreign language anxiety has been the focus of numerous studies in the literature of second language acquisition. In addition to its validation as a separate construct in late 80s, the last two decades have also witnessed the confirmation of skill-based anxieties as independent and unique phenomena. Based on this, the paper reports a brief review of research studies conducted on skill-based anxieties; Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety, Foreign Language Reading Anxiety, Foreign Language Listening Anxiety, and Foreign Language Writing Anxiety, in various contexts in the last two decades. The methodological perspectives used in the studies, their contexts and the important findings derived from them are presented in an orderly manner arguing their contribution to the understanding of each skill-based anxiety. Finally, suggestions for research perspectives that will guide researchers for further studies in order to present a better understanding of these phenomena are discussed.*

*Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Skill-based Anxieties, Literature Review.*

### INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning is a process that is highly influenced by psychological factors. Especially in the last two decades, there has been an increasing research trend focusing on the relationship between psychological traits and foreign language learning, and among those traits, anxiety has probably received the utmost attention. In a general sense, anxiety is defined as "an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension and worry and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Spielberger, 1983 cited in Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986, p. 125). More specifically in foreign language learning, as an educational context, it was Horwitz et al. (1986) who validated Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as a distinct phenomenon from general anxiety and they defined FLA as "a distinct complex of self perceptions, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 127). The anxiety model they proposed composed of three interrelated

components; communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, and they developed Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure the level of anxiety experienced by language learners.

Since the development and validation of FLCAS, researchers have paid a considerable attention on examining the FLA level of learners in their context, the relationship of certain variables with anxiety level, and the factors influential on it. Much of initial research in those years focusing on FLA indicated a negative relationship between anxiety level of learners and students' language learning performance (Ying, 1993; Aida, 1994). Towards the end of 90s and with certain empirical findings in their hands referring to the negative correlation between anxiety and language learning performance, researchers began to wonder and examine the potentially similar relationship between anxiety and foreign language skills. Such a research perspective led to the emergence of research on skill-based anxieties, development and validation of instruments measuring

anxiety in each skill and rigorous attempts to demonstrate each skill-based anxiety as a unique and distinct phenomenon.

## 1. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA)

After the study of foreign language learning anxiety as a distinct phenomenon from general classroom anxiety and its close relationship with speaking skill, researchers began to focus on learners' speaking a foreign language and anxiety. In initial studies (Young, 1990; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1991), it was reported that learners' speaking in a foreign language in front of their peers and being on the spot while speaking was an anxiety-provoking factor. The argument in which foreign language anxiety is mostly associated with the oral performance of students has encouraged researchers to examine FLSA as a separate phenomenon "associated with the emotional reactions with which one speaks a foreign language under uneasy, fearful, nervous, or worrying situations in EFL classroom settings" (Huang, 2004, p. 6). The instruments measuring FLSA were either adapted from FLCAS by choosing the items related with speaking anxiety, or specifically developed for that purpose. For instance, in a thesis study, Huang (2004) developed a FLSAS with 27 items and seven different sub-categories (the anxiety of speaking, preparedness, question-answer, testing, discussion, public speaking, error correction) to investigate the level of speaking anxiety among Taiwanese learners of English and its relationship with certain variables like gender, willingness to study, and the time spent for learning English. The data were collected from 502 participants and the results showed that participants experienced a high level of FLSA in general, male students were less anxious than their female counterparts and the ones who started learning English in earlier ages felt less anxious than others while speaking. It was also found that there was a negative correlation between willingness to study after class and speaking anxiety.

In a study conducted in an EAP program, Woodrow (2006) constructed a Second Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (SLSAS) based on the argument that "the existing instrumentation used to measure language learning

anxiety was not considered appropriate because it did not reflect the second language environment of the sample" (p. 313). The instruments consisted of 12 items on a five-graded Likert type reflecting the potential communicative situations for learners. The participants were 275 students, the majority of which were from Asian countries, just before enrolling to their university courses in Australia. Data collection process included three sources; the SLSAS, IELTS type oral assessment, and interviews. The findings indicated that second language speaking anxiety was a strong predictor of the oral performance of students. It was also revealed that learners from China, Korea, and Japan experienced a higher level of anxiety compared to students from other ethnic groups. The qualitative part of the analysis yielded communicating with native speakers as the most important source of speaking anxiety in an ESL context.

Some other studies in the literature used an adapted version of FLCAS by choosing the items directly related with speaking anxiety to measure FLSA experienced by learners. Parallel to this, Gkonou (2014), using an adapted version of FLCAS, aimed to investigate the sociolinguistic parameters of FLSA among 128 EFL students in Greece through both qualitative and quantitative data collection elements. The findings indicated that language anxiety was significantly and highly correlated with speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation caused by the teacher and peers, each group having a distinct impact on the level of anxiety. Besides, self-perceived oral proficiency in a foreign language was found to have a dynamic interplay with language anxiety and FLSA. Similarly, Öztürk and Gürbüz (2014) carried out a mixed-method study in order to examine foreign language speaking anxiety of Turkish EFL learners and its relationship with language learning motivation. The data collection instruments included FLSAS, 18 Likert-type items taken from FLCAS, Motivation and Attitude Questionnaire and an interview protocol to get in-depth data on speaking anxiety of participants. The data collected from 383 pre-intermediate university students demonstrated that participants experienced a low level of FLSA, female learners were more anxious than males while speaking

English and FLSA was negatively correlated with language learning motivation on a moderate level. Contrary to the statistical findings, the data derived from the interviews revealed that most of the students perceived foreign language speaking skill as a highly anxiety-provoking factor mainly caused by fear of making mistakes, pronunciation, immediate questions by teachers, and negative evaluation by others. The study also concluded that FLSA should be handled as a distinct phenomenon with its own sources, variables, and effects on learners.

Some other studies examining FLSA embraced a purely qualitative perspective to present a deeper understanding of it. Mukminin et al. (2015) aimed to explore the sources of FLSA among a sample of senior high school students in Indonesia through semi-structured interviews. The findings reported certain factors; low speaking skill in the target language, lack of self-confidence, fear of evaluation by others, and cultural influences as the major course of FLSA. In another qualitative study, Akkakoson (2016) reflected the existence of FLSA through the eyes of three Thai teachers of English and 88 Thai EFL learners in a university context. The teachers expressed that their students felt anxious while speaking in class, their success was hindered by this anxiety and their lack of self-confidence, having poor English background and lack of motivation were the basic reasons of it. On the other hand, data derived from student interviews indicated that participants had certain social, affective, meta-cognitive, compensatory, cognitive, and memory-related strategies to cope with their FLSA, of which social ones were the most frequent. Finally, the study came up with several suggestion for practitioners to cope with speaking anxiety in classroom atmosphere.

The primary conclusion that can be driven from the studies mentioned above is that though initially associated with general foreign language anxiety and demonstrated to be a significant part of it, FLSA has been measured and studied as a separate construct in time due to its complex nature. With the development and adaptation of different measurement tools, scholars interested in the psychological aspect of language

learning have begun to examine FLSA independent from general anxiety in addition to the qualitative studies aiming to present a richer understanding of it. For this reason, it can be concluded that FLSA is getting to be a distinct construct with its own nature and sociolinguistic variables.

## 2. Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA)

In the literature, foreign language anxiety is usually associated with the oral performance of students. However, opposing to that discussion, Saito, Garza, and Horwitz (1999) argued that foreign language reading is also regarded as an anxiety provoking factor for students and FLRA "is a specific anxiety type distinguishable from the more general types of foreign language anxiety that have been linked to oral performance" (p. 215). The instrument, Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS), they introduced in their study has been a pathway for many researchers in the field to examine learners' potential anxiety in foreign language reading and its relationship with other variables. In order to examine the level of FLRA experienced by Chinese EFL learners in a study-abroad context, Zhang (2000) used both qualitative and quantitative elements studying on 145 learners. The statistical findings indicated the existence of FLRA among learners, female one experiencing a higher level than their male counterparts. Qualitative findings, on the other hand, revealed that teacher diversity, unfamiliarity with the content, and the participants' low proficiency level were the major sources of their FLRA.

In another study, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) aimed to reveal the relationship between foreign language classroom anxiety and FLRA among 252 Japanese EFL learners in a university context. Besides, gender, overseas experiences and classroom performance were also investigated as variables effecting the level of those anxieties. Japanese versions of FLCAS and FLRAS were administered to the participants and the findings revealed that FLRA was a separate construct independent from foreign language classroom anxiety. Moreover, no significant difference was found between genders in reading anxiety, whereas overseas experience was found

to be influential on anxiety level; the ones with overseas experience demonstrating a lower level of anxiety.

Wu (2011), in a similar study, focused on the relationship between language anxiety and reading anxiety and whether learners' reading comprehension performance differed according to their anxiety level in these two constructs along with the impact of gender and the length of language learning as variables. FLCAS, FLRAS, and two reading comprehension tests were completed by 91 first-year college students studying English in a private university in Taiwan. The results showed that FLRA was partly related to FLA, but they were two different phenomena in language learning process. In terms of the relationship between FLRA and FLA, it was found that reading comprehension of participants did not significantly change according to different levels of FLA and FLRA, but a general tendency of high performers with low anxiety levels was demonstrated. In terms of the variables, it was found that gender did not have any impact on anxiety levels whereas participants' FLA, not FLRA, significantly decreased based on the time they spent in learning English. Finally, the study concluded that FLRA seemed to be a more stable phenomenon compared to LA and coping with it might require much more time.

In another empirical study, Subaşı (2014) aimed to confirm the existence of FLRA among freshman students with relatively higher level of English in an ELT department in Turkish higher education context. The participants included 55 pre-service teachers and the instruments included FLCAS, FLRAS, and semi-structured interviews. Similar to other findings in the literature, this study revealed that reading in a foreign language was an anxiety-provoking situation for language learners and it was distinguishable from general FLA. Besides, it was found that personal reasons, teachers' manner in the classroom, teaching procedures in class, the features of reading texts, reading test anxiety, and previous experiences were the major factors causing FLRA. Similarly, a recent study was conducted in Turkish EFL context by Genç (2016) focusing on the relationship of FLRA with certain variables, such as ambiguity tolerance, gender, and success and

reading. The participants were 295 EFL learners and the data collection instruments included FLRAS and Second Language Ambiguity Tolerance Scale (SLATS). The findings indicated that learners felt anxious while reading in their foreign language mainly due to nature of the text and personal factors. It was also found that the variables at the centre of the study, second language ambiguity tolerance, success in reading in a foreign language, and gender, were strong predictors of foreign language reading anxiety. Based on those findings, the study came up with the conclusion that ambiguity tolerance was a negative predictor of reading anxiety and "when employed, can alleviate reading anxiety and facilitate the complex nature of foreign language" (p. 146).

In a recent correlational study, Chow, Chiu, and Wong (2017) aimed to test the relationship between FLRA, foreign language listening anxiety, and learner variables, such as language learning strategies, learning motivation, and performance in Chinese EFL context. The participants included 306 undergraduate Chinese learners of English and they were administered a comprehensive questionnaire including FLRAS, foreign language listening anxiety scale and scales of the learner variables. The data were analysed both through descriptive and advanced statistics such as path analysis and regression models. The statistical findings revealed students who felt higher level of anxiety while reading in their foreign language indicated lower level of EFL motivation and less usage of language learning strategies. Besides, it was revealed that EFL performance and EFL learning motivation were the strong predictors of FLRA, whereas the relationship between FLRA and EFL learning strategies was not significant. Supporting a negative relationship with FLRA and listening anxiety, the study concluded that enhancing learners' positive attitudes and motivation towards learning English might play an important role in decreasing their anxiety level in reading and listening.

In addition to those quantitative or mixed-method designs, some scholars interested in FLA research embraced a qualitative perspective and aimed to present an in-depth understanding of FLRA based on

unique views and expression of their participants. For instance, Al-Shboul et al. (2013) examined FLRA of six Jordanian EFL learners to uncover the underlying factors causing to FLRA and problems experienced by the learners. Data collection process included observations, semi-structured interviews, and diaries collected from participants. The findings indicted that FLRA had two aspects, which were personal factors and text features, the former included two main sources as afraid of making errors and worry about reading effects, whereas the later consisted of three major sources as unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture. In a single-case study, Bektaş-Çetinkaya (2011) reported on the academic reading process of a Turkish graduate student in an ELT department by focusing on his reading habits, difficulties he experienced in academic reading, and the strategies applied with a special link to FLRA. The data were collected through interviews, think-aloud and recall protocols and analysed through coding, comparing, and contrasting. The following findings quoted from the study presents a detailed picture of FLRA cycle (Bektaş-Çetinkaya, 2011, p. 53):

The data shows a very low tolerance of ambiguity, and an excessive sensitivity towards unfamiliar words or concepts, frequently causing him to reread sections unnecessarily. In focusing on intricate details, he risked overlooking the main points, and frequently experienced problems in making wider connections between the important ideas in the text. In addition, his excessively pessimistic beliefs about his own English proficiency and his reading ability adversely affected his comprehension, causing problems in focusing on reading, especially where he lacked the subject background. This in turn led to a continuing cycle of anxiety and further negative impacts.

The findings derived from all those studies mentioned so far particularly highlights that FLRA exists as an independent phenomenon in its nature, but partly related with foreign language anxiety. It is demonstrated to have a significant impact on reading comprehension and to be significantly correlated with certain learner variables such as motivation and performance. Finally, it was

revealed from the findings that personal and textual factors were the major reasons of FLRA experienced by language learners.

### 3. Foreign Language Listening Anxiety (FLLA)

FLA experienced by language learners is widely measured by FLCAS, but it is a strong argument that its constructs are highly associated with speaking skill (Aida, 1994; Young, 1990). For this reason, scholars thought that setting up a relationship between skill specific anxieties, for instance listening or reading, and FLCAS would not be appropriate and sufficient due to growing empirical support regarding the existence of skill-based anxieties (Zhang, 2013). With regard to listening anxiety, Kim (2000) was the first to construct an instrument specifically measuring language learners' anxiety in listening and demonstrated a negative correlation between FLLA and foreign language listening comprehension. Another instrument to measure FLLA was developed and validated by Elkhafaifi (2005) to explore FLLA among students learning Arabic in north American universities and similar to Kim (2000), FLLA was negatively correlated with participants' listening test scores. The construction of these two scales has provided an important opportunity for researchers to study FLLA and there has been a research trend focusing on its relationship with listening performance and strategy use.

In a large scale study, Kimura (2008) retested the dimensionality of FLLAS developed by Kim (2000) and examined whether FLLA level changed according to gender and university major among Japanese EFL learners at university level. The statistical findings indicated that FLLAS had three dimensions labelled as emotionality, worry, and anticipatory fear. It was also found that FLLA level among the participants changed according to their major, whereas gender did not play significant role on the level of it. In another study conducted in Turkish EFL context, Gönen (2009) investigated the relationship between FLLA and foreign language listening strategies among university students. The data were collected through FLLAS and listening comprehension strategy inventory from 60 intermediate

level of learners and the findings revealed that the participants experienced a relatively high level of FLLA and there was a negative correlation between their anxiety and strategy use while listening in the target language. Similarly, Golchi (2012) aimed to explore FLLA among 62 Iranian EFL learners in two private language institutes and its relationship with listening strategy use and listening comprehension. The findings were parallel with Gönen (2009) and FLLA was found to have a negative correlation with both listening strategy use and comprehension and low anxious learners significantly performed better in listening comprehension test. Gender and years of studying English also had a significant impact on learners' FLLA level.

In a seminal study as the first attempt to conceptualize anxiety linking to foreign language listening, Zhang (2013) presented a conceptual model of FLLA and its possible causal relationship with English listening performance by using structural equation modeling. The participants included 300 EFL learners at a university in China and the data collection instruments were FLLAS developed by Elkhafaifi (2005) and two IELTS listening tests were administered with an interval of three and a half months. The statistical analysis were conducted through factor analysis and structural equation modeling in two stages. The following findings from the study put forward the relationship of FLLA with listening performance and highlights how FLLA seems to be a situation specific anxiety type.

“The results suggested that FL listening anxiety, especially when allied to insecurity about one's own FL listening ability, can cause performance to deteriorate, but poor performance at a specific point in time does not necessarily accentuate anxiety because FL anxiety is a situation-specific trait that is gradually formed over time” (p.175).

In a large-scale empirical study with advanced statistical operations, Liu (2016) aimed to explore the relationship between FLLA and foreign language listening strategy use and their predicting impact on test performance of Chinese EFL learners with a special emphasis on their

proficiency level. In the initial stage, the participants included 1160 undergraduate students who completed questionnaires and a listening comprehension test. Among those participants, 227 low and 243 high proficient learners participated in the final analysis. The findings derived from correlational and regression analysis indicated that FLLA was significantly correlated with listening strategy use, learners with low-level proficiency were more anxious in listening and less confident in listening proficiency and FLLA and foreign language listening strategy use were two closely interrelated factors in language learning process.

A quite recent and illuminating study was conducted by Kimura (2017) who constructed a framework to investigate FLLA based on self-presentation theory and the argument that this type of anxiety had its own social concerns. The researcher used a set of anxiety questionnaires including a shortened version of FLLAS with two sub-dimensions as self-focused apprehension and task-focused apprehension, Revised Interaction Anxiousness Scale, and Penn State Worry Questionnaire. The number of participants taking these tests were 1177 Japanese EFL learners and moreover, 17 learners provided oral reports of their thinking processes as verbal protocols. Providing an important understanding of the nature of FLLA, the findings revealed that FLLA was independent from general anxiety, linked to foreign language proficiency and it was composed of two distinct, but related components; self-focused apprehension and task-focused apprehension. Besides, it was found that social anxiety had a significant role on the components of FLLA, especially on self-focused apprehension, leading to the conclusion that “the self-focused side L2 listening anxiety and social anxiety are functionally similar” (p. 156).

In FLLA research, studies embracing qualitative data collection elements are scarce compared to studies with a quantitative design and they generally aimed to discover the potential sources of FLLA and put forward similar themes related with this focus. For instance, Chang (2008) found out that low level of confidence in comprehending spoken English, worrying about test

difficulty and taking listening course as a must were the major sources of the participant EFL learners' FLLA. Similarly, Serraj (2015) carried out semi-structured interviews with 15 Iranian EFL learners studying at a language school in Iran and revealed that factors influencing FLLA were divided into three categories. These were individual factors (lack of practice, using inappropriate strategies), input factors (lack of time to process, nature of speech, lack of visual support, level of difficulty), and environmental factors (instructors, peers, and class environment). Finally, in a recent qualitative case study, Otair and Aziz (2017) concluded that low proficiency level, nature of listening comprehension and the classroom atmosphere were the main causes of FLLA experienced by learners.

Considering the dominancy of quantitative studies mentioned above and in the literature, it can be concluded that FLLA is a straightforward construct to measure through several instruments and its negative relationship with foreign language listening comprehension and listening strategy use is well-defined. Besides, it can also be seen that FLLA is mostly associated with language proficiency rather than general anxiety due to the data driven from low-proficient learners indicating higher levels of anxiety. Not only the quantitative studies, but also the one with qualitative tools highlights the complex nature of listening comprehension and FLLA accordingly, and demonstrate personal and environmental factors as the primary sources of FLLA.

#### 4. Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (FLWA)

Due to its inherent nature just like speaking, writing in a foreign language is also associated with anxiety (Cheng, 2002; Choi, 2013). Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (FLWA) is defined as "a general avoidance of writing and of situations perceived by the individuals to potentially require some amount of writing accompanied by the potential for evaluation of that writing" (Hassan, 2001, p. 4). An earlier comprehensive study was conducted by Cheng (2002), adapting several anxiety scales, to investigate the factors associated with FLWA among Chinese EFL learners. The findings derived from this

indicated an urgent need for the investigation of FLWA. Besides, the development and validation of Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) by Cheng (2004) in which FLWA was conceptualized as a three-dimensional construct-somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance, behaviour also increased the attention towards the investigation of FLWA as a separate construct. These two studies, in fact, have been quite influential on researchers' attempt to examine FLWA level of learners, its sources, and relationship with other factors, especially in the last decade.

In a qualitative study, Lin and Ho (2009) aimed to explore the major factors behind Taiwanese EFL learners' FLWA in an advanced writing course at university context. The participants included 16 students and the data were collected through face-to-face interviews. The findings showed that time restriction, teacher evaluation, writing subjects, and being required to write in a specific format were the major factors causing FLWA among the participants. In a quantitative study, on the other hand, Gkonou (2011) examined the relationship between speaking anxiety and FLWA through a number of statistical operations. The findings revealed that whereas English language classroom context was a source for speaking anxiety, FLWA was mainly associated with attitudes towards writing in the target language, self-derogation while writing in English and fear of negative evaluation by the teacher or peers.

Shang (2013) investigated the relationship between FLWA and several learner variables, such as writing competence, self-efficacy, gender, and years of writing experience in the target language. The participants of the study included 146 university students majoring in English at a private university in Taiwan and the data were collected through questionnaires and written compositions. The findings showed that students felt nervous when they were asked to write in English and their apprehension mainly resulted from fear of making mistakes, having low confidence in writing, and fear of negative evaluation. It was also revealed that students expressing lower level of FLWA reported higher self-efficacy and achievement in writing. In a similar mix-

method study, Rezaei and Jafari (2014) examined the level, types, and causes of FLWA among Iranian EFL learners. Data collection instruments included questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. According to the findings, participants reported a high level of FLWA, cognitive anxiety being its main type. Besides, lack of linguistic knowledge, fear of negative evaluation by the teacher, and low level of self-confidence were found as the major reasons of this high-level anxiety.

In a study conducted in a relatively different group of participants, Yan and Wang (2012) aimed to examine the existence and impact of FLWA in a translation class. The participants were 50 Chinese to English translation students at a university in Hong-Kong and the data derived from that group of learners revealed that language anxiety influenced translation learning and FLWA had a significant negative impact on learners' translation performance. It was also indicated that a number of factors including general writing anxiety and the fear of being evaluated provoked FLWA and predicted students' success in translation classes. In another study conducted in Turkish EFL context, Ekmekçi (2018) examined whether pre-service teachers experienced FLWA. The data were collected from 126 prospective teachers and the findings indicated that the participants experienced FLWA and the level of it was moderate. The qualitative findings of the study also put forward that FLWA among prospective mainly resulted from having difficulty in the choice of appropriate vocabulary, unfamiliar writing topics, and fear of making mistakes.

In a recent study, following the framework of nested ecosystem model, Saghafi, Adel, and Zareian (2017) reported on the individual, contextual, and procedural factors affecting FLWA among four Iranian EFL learners. Multiple forms of data collection instruments, including questionnaires, observations, reflective journals, task-motometers, and stimulated recalls were used to collect data and qualitative content analysis was used during the analysis process. Indicating a conceptual framework based on four ecosystems for the construction of FLWA, the findings revealed that FLWA in EFL classrooms was constructed through the influence of a number of interacting individual and environmental factors also

leading to variation on the level of it. It was also found that linguistic, cognitive, affective, and cultural factors better explained learners' FLWA level. It was also concluded that FLWA had a multi-systemic nature that is highly influenced by the classroom setting and the other settings students get in touch with.

As a conclusion, it can be said that, FLWA, just like the other skill-based anxieties, is also a well-defined construct with the instrumentation used in research studies and the demonstrated existence in foreign language learning process. All the studies mentioned so far reported a certain level of FLWA experienced by different groups of learners and the major causes of this anxiety were found to be mainly related with the fear of negative evaluation by others and lack of linguistic or vocabulary knowledge in the target language.

## 5. Research Trends and Future Perspectives on L2 Anxiety Research

Since its demonstration as a distinct phenomenon by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), foreign language anxiety has probably received the most attention among other SLA topics and studies examining the level of anxiety experienced by foreign language learners have mushroomed since then. However, not only the ones reviewed in this study, but also many others in SLA literature have begun to provide repetitive findings. It seems that SLA literature in anxiety research has saturated of descriptive studies simply exploring learners' anxiety level, measuring the differences between certain variables, such as gender, age, etc., or indicating simple correlations between skill-based anxieties and other variables. For this reason, one cannot deny that an urgent change in the research trend in foreign language anxiety research is needed.

Considering the demonstration of skill-based L2 anxieties in the last two decades, one perspective that should be embraced is the research based on advanced statistics and quantitative data. Studies using advanced statistical methods such as structural equation modelling or multiple regression models to present the inter and intra-relationships among anxieties and their relationships with



other variables will help both researchers and practitioners to better understand the complex and unique nature of anxieties. There have been certain attempts to highlight the nature of the relationship between skill-based anxieties. For instance, Pae (2012) aimed to explore the intra-relationship of skill-based L2 anxieties and their relationship with general foreign language anxiety. A series of Chi-square tests and multiple regression analysis revealed that all skill-based anxieties were distinguishable from each other and each of them had a unique contribution to general foreign language anxiety. A similar study was recently conducted by Cheng (2017) to present a compact measurement of skill-based anxieties based on a tripartite model and at the end of the study, multidimensional brief measurements for L2 anxieties were put forward. Yet, it is evident that there is a paucity of research embracing this highly statistical perspective and studies with such multidimensional models are urgently needed in SLA literature for a deeper understanding of L2 anxieties and their relationship.

Another research perspective that should be followed by the researchers in further studies should be a hermeneutic interpretive perspective, which mainly focuses on the meaning the participants attach to the phenomena under investigation. Instead of the collection of qualitative data through simple semi-structured interviews or open-ended questions, which have been already used numerous, other qualitative data collection instruments, such as diary keeping, reflective journals, stimulated recalls, or thinking-aloud protocols combined with a longitudinal perspective should be favoured in order to present the deep understanding and interpretation of L2 anxieties by learners. Based on an ecological perspective, Saghafi, Adel, and Zareian's (2017) study is a good example of how foreign language anxiety should be focused as an interpretive research matter and further studies similar to this should highly be encouraged to identify the parameters and factors related with all skill-based anxieties.

Finally, what anxiety research in SLA literature lacks is the meta-analysis and meta-synthesis studies conducted not

only on general FLA, but also on skill-based ones. Meta-analysis and meta-synthesis studies might provide an overall picture of how FLA is perceived by different participant groups, the factors leading learners to feel anxious in different language learning skills and how these factors could be examined as research matters. Taking the great number of studies conducted on FLA in general and skill-based anxieties into consideration, it is certain that such studies will provide a clear picture of language anxiety, how it is perceived in different context and what the research foci should be in further studies.

## Conclusion

One of the most important domains in language learning is closely related with how learners feel during the process and it is an undeniable fact that foreign language anxiety and its skill-based correlates, which have been closely associated with learners' negative feelings, have been the focus of numerous studies. For about three decades starting from its validation as a distinct construct, researchers in the field of SLA have paid dramatic attention on the investigation of FLA and numerous studies have been conducted so far. Within this rich literature, this study reports a brief overview of the studies conducted on skill-based L2 anxieties to present a general understanding of how these constructs were focused as research matters, the methodological perspectives and the findings derived from them. Although, it does not present a systematic review of the studies, the current paper presents a general picture of the studies from various contexts to highlight the main points. Besides, suggestions for further research and what kind of perspectives should be followed for a better understanding of this phenomena are also discussed. It is believed that the studies that will be conducted based on the research perspectives provided by this review will contribute to the understanding of scholars and practitioners regarding L2 skill-based anxieties in the future.

## References

- [1]. Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's construct of foreign language anxiety: The case of students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(2), 155-168.

- [2]. Akkakoson, S. (2016). Reflections from teachers and students on speaking anxiety in an EFL classroom. *Journal of Language and Cultural Education*, 4(3), 46-70.
- [3]. Al-Shboul, M. M., Ahmad, I. S., Nordin, M. S., & Rahman, Z. A. (2013). Foreign language reading anxiety in a Jordanian EFL context: A qualitative study. *English Language Teaching*, 6(6), 38-56.
- [4]. Bektaş-Çetinkaya, Y. (2011). Foreign language reading anxiety: A Turkish case. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 1(2), 44-56.
- [5]. Chang, A. C. S. (2008). Listening Strategies of L2 Learners with varied Test Tasks. *TESL Canada Journal*, 25(2), 1-26.
- [6]. Cheng, Y. S. (2002). Factors associated with foreign language writing anxiety. *Foreign Language Annals*, 35(6), 647-656.
- [7]. Cheng, Y. S. (2004). A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(4), 313-335.
- [8]. Cheng, Y. S. (2017). Development and preliminary validation of four brief measures of L2 language-skill-specific anxiety. *System*, 68, 15-25.
- [9]. Choi, S. (2013). Language anxiety in second language writing: Is it really a stumbling block? *Second Language Studies*, 31(2), 1-42.
- [10]. Chow, B. W. Y., Chiu, H. T., & Wong, S. W. L. (2017). Anxiety in reading and listening English as a foreign language in Chinese undergraduate students. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(6), 719-738.
- [11]. Ekmekçi, E. (2018). Exploring Turkish EFL students' writing anxiety. *The Reading Matrix: An International Online Journal*, 18(1), 158-175.
- [12]. Elkhafaihi, H. (2005). Listening comprehension and anxiety in the Arabic language classroom. *Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), 206-220.
- [13]. Genç, G. (2016). Can ambiguity tolerance, success in reading, and gender predict the foreign language reading anxiety? *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 12(2), 135-151.
- [14]. Gkonou, C. (2011). Anxiety over EFL speaking and writing: A view from language classrooms. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(2), 267-281.
- [15]. Gkonou, C. (2014). The sociolinguistic parameters of L2 speaking anxiety. In Pawlak, M., Bielak, J. & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, A. (Eds.), *Classroom-oriented Research: Achievements and Challenges* (pp. 15-32). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- [16]. Golchi, M. M. (2012). Listening anxiety and its relationship with listening strategy use and listening comprehension among Iranian IELTS learners. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 2(4), 115-128.
- [17]. Gönen, M. (2009). The relationship between FL listening anxiety and FL listening strategies: The case of Turkish EFL learners. *Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> WSEAS/IASME International Conference on Educational Technologies* (pp. 44-49).
- [18]. Hassan, B. A. (2001). The relationship of writing apprehension and self-esteem to the writing quality and quantity of EFL University students. *Mansoura Faculty of Education Journal*. Retrieved on September 19, 2015 from: <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED459671.pdf>
- [19]. Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132.
- [20]. Huang, H. (2004). *The relationship between learning motivation and speaking anxiety among EFL non-English major freshmen in Taiwan* (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Chaoyang University of Technology).
- [21]. Kim, J. H. (2000). *Foreign language listening anxiety: A study of Korean students learning English* (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Texas).
- [22]. Kimura, H. (2008). Foreign language listening anxiety: Its dimensionality and group differences. *JALT Journal*, 30(2), 173-196.
- [23]. Kimura, H. (2017). Foreign language listening anxiety: A self-presentational view. *International Journal of Listening*, 31(3), 142-162.
- [24]. Koch, A. S., & Terrell T. D. (1991). Affective reactions of foreign language students to natural approach

activities and teaching procedures. In Horwitz, E. K. & Young, D. J., *Language Anxiety* (pp. 109-125). London: Prentice Hall International Limited. 109-125.

[25]. Lin, G. H. C., & Ho, M. M. S. (2009). An exploration into foreign language writing anxiety from Taiwanese university students' perspectives. *Proceedings of NCUE Fourth Annual Conference on Language, Teaching, Literature, Linguistics, Translations and Interpretation* (pp. 307-318).

[26]. Liu, M. (2016). Interrelations between foreign language listening anxiety and strategy use and their predicting effects on test performance of high- and low-proficient chinese university EFL learners. *Asia-Pacific Educational Research*, 25(4), 647-655.

[27]. Matsuda, S., & Gobel, P. (2004). Anxiety and predictors of performance in the foreign language classroom. *System*, 32(1), 21-36.

[28]. Mukminin, A., Masbirorotni, M., Noprival, N., Sutarno, S., Arif, N., & Maimunah, M. (2015). EFL Speaking Anxiety among Senior High School Students and Policy Recommendations. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 9(3), 217-225.

[29]. Otair, I. & Aziz, N. H. A. (2017). Exploring the causes of listening comprehension anxiety from EFL Saudi learners' perspectives: A pilot study. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 8(4), 79-84.

[30]. Öztürk, G., & Gürbüz, N. (2014). Speaking anxiety among Turkish EFL learners: The case at a state university. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 10(1), 1-17.

[31]. Pae, T. I. (2012). Skill-based L2 anxieties revisited: Their intra-relations and the interrelations with general foreign language anxiety. *Applied Linguistics*, 34(2), 232-252.

[32]. Price, M. L. (1991). The subjective Experience of foreign language anxiety: Interviews with highly anxious students. In E. K. Horwitz, & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

[33]. Rezaei, M., & Jafari, M. (2014). Investigating the Levels, Types, and Causes of Writing anxiety among Iranian EFL Students: A mixed method design. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 1545-1554.

[34]. Saghafi, K., Adel, S. M. R., & Zareian, G. (2017). An ecological study of foreign language writing anxiety in English as a foreign language classroom. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 46(5), 424-440.

[35]. Saito, Y., Garza, T. J., & Horwitz, E. K. (1999). Foreign language reading anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 202-218.

[36]. Serraj, S. (2015). Listening anxiety in Iranian EFL learners. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 5(6), 1-8.

[37]. Shang H. F. (2013). Factors associated with English as a foreign language university students writing anxiety. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 1(1), 1-12.

[38]. Subaşı, G. (2014). Foreign language reading anxiety: Does it really exist? *Educational Research and Reviews*, 9(24), 1360-1371.

[39]. Yan, J. X., & Wang, H. (2012). Second language writing anxiety and translation. *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*, 6(2), 171-194.

[40]. Ying, H. H. (1993). *The Effects of Anxiety on English Learning of the Senior High School Students in Taiwan* (Unpublished Master Thesis, National Taiwan Normal University).

[41]. Young, D. J. (1990). An investigation of students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. *Foreign Language Annals*, 23(6), 539-553.

[42]. Woodrow, L. (2006). Anxiety and speaking English as a second language. *RELC Journal*, 37(3), 308-328.

[43]. Wu, H. J. (2011). Anxiety and reading comprehension performance in English as a foreign language. *Asian EFL Journal*, 13(2), 273-307.

[44]. Zhang, L. J. (2000). Uncovering Chinese ESL students' reading anxiety in a study abroad context. *Asian Pacific Journal of Language in Education*, 3(2), 31-52.

[45]. Zhang, X. (2013). Foreign language listening anxiety and listening performance: Conceptualizations and causal relationships. *System*, 41(1), 164-177.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Dr. Gökhan Öztürk is a Faculty Member in the Department of Foreign Language Education at Anadolu University, Turkey. He holds a Ph.D in English Language Teaching. He taught English for about ten years at different levels and he is currently teaching pre-service EFL teachers. His research interests are Second Language Teacher Education, Language Teacher Cognition, Oral Corrective Feedback, and Affective Factors in Language Learning*

