

# Class Presentation Phobia for English as a Foreign Language among Undergraduate Students: A Study of EFL Learners

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## Abstract

Foreign language anxiety (xenoglossophobia) denotes the discomfort, fear, and uneasiness experienced while using or learning a second language, particularly in oral communication. In an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, this study focuses on first-year undergraduate students' anxiety levels during English presentations. It also examines how gender affects this anxiousness. An adapted version of Horwitz et al.'s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was used to collect data from 164 Bachelor of Computer Application students, 78 of whom were female and 86 of whom were male (1986). According to statistical analysis using descriptive methods and t-tests, students had a significant amount of presenting anxiety, with females reporting significantly higher anxiety than males. The findings suggest that addressing gender-related differences in language anxiety could help educators support students in overcoming public speaking challenges, improving both their academic performance and communication skills.

**Keywords:** Foreign language anxiety, Presentation anxiety, EFL learners

## Introduction

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a well-established concept in second language acquisition, influencing learners' attitudes, motivation, and performance (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz et al., 1986). Defined as the apprehension experienced in language learning situations, particularly during oral communication (Horwitz et al., 1986), FLA has been linked to fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). These factors often impede learners' ability to perform well, especially in oral tasks, which require confidence and fluency. Presentation anxiety, a specific form of FLA, emerges when learners are required to speak in front of an audience (Hashwani, 2008). Research has consistently shown that higher anxiety levels correlate with poorer performance in speaking tasks, especially in EFL contexts where opportunities for authentic communication are limited (Hasibuan et al., 2022; Lucas et al., 2011). This is a common challenge for students, leading to reduced academic success and lower language proficiency (Liu, 2006).

Gender differences also play a role in FLA, with studies showing that female learners often experience higher anxiety than males (Park & French, 2013; Razak et al., 2017). This variation has been observed across diverse cultural and educational settings (Nazir et al., 2014).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the association between gender and presentation anxiety in first-year undergraduate EFL students. This study seeks to focus on the impact of gender differences on language acquisition performance by investigating how anxiety shows itself in oral communication tasks, particularly public speaking. The findings will help to gain a greater awareness of how presenting anxiety impacts students' oral proficiency, providing insights that may be used to develop more successful teaching tactics.

Ultimately, the goal is to help educators develop targeted interventions to reduce anxiety and foster more confident, successful language learners.

### Review of literature

The global significance of English has grown exponentially, making proficiency in the language crucial for success in various fields. However, non-native speakers often experience a range of emotional challenges, including anxiety, stress, and nervousness when learning English. As noted by Manjinder K. and Tirath S. (2015), mastering English is vital for academic achievement, social interaction, and career prospects.

Despite its importance, learning English as a second language can trigger significant anxiety, which negatively impacts learners' performance. This phenomenon, known as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), involves experiences of worry and stress in language learning circumstances, particularly in contexts involving listening, speaking, and comprehension (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a type of anxiety that occurs in an educational environment. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) described FLCA as being a set of opinions of oneself, views, and emotions that arise from the distinctive nature when studying a foreign language, often resulting in diminished performance and engagement. Learners experiencing this anxiety tend to struggle with language tasks, reinforcing a negative cycle of fear and poor performance.

Anxiety among English language learners has been explored in different cultural and educational contexts. Anandari C. (2015) observed that Indonesian English language learners often face anxiety due to fear, shyness, and discomfort, which can significantly hinder their progress. However, self-reflection practices have been shown to help students identify their strengths and develop greater confidence in language learning. Similarly, Batiha et al. (2016) examined Jordanian EFL learners and found that issues including lack of preparation, fear of negative evaluation, and shyness contributed to heightened speaking anxiety. This nervousness can have a negative impact on students' motivation to take part in conversations as well as their overall ability to communicate.

Tanielian A. (2017) investigated the association between FLA and English performance in first-year undergraduates at King Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. The study found that greater quantities of FLA were related to lower English execution, indicating that anxiety had a major impact on language learning results. This is consistent with other research findings suggesting that anxiety, particularly in speaking activities, can inhibit learners' ability to present their ideas clearly and confidently.

Recent investigations have also emphasized the function of virtual learning environments in exacerbating anxiety. Hasibuan S. et al. (2022) explored the effects of online learning on public speaking anxiety among EFL university students, noting that unfamiliar topics and lower proficiency levels contributed to heightened anxiety in virtual settings. The study suggested that this anxiety is further influenced by factors such as the students' emotional state, language ability, and fear of criticism, which can make public speaking even more daunting in an online context.

Anxiety in language learning has far-reaching consequences, not only for academic achievement but also for the learners' capability to function in practical communication circumstances. According to Gregerson and Horwitz (2002) and Kitano (2001), learner-specific, social, and external variables all have a major impact on the relationship between anxiety and academic achievement. Addressing these anxieties, especially in speaking and presentation tasks, is essential for improving learners' language skills and confidence, ultimately enhancing their educational and professional opportunities.

In many college settings, oral presentations are frequently assigned by professors to enhance students' English-speaking proficiency. Proficiency in the English language is vital not only for securing job opportunities but also for obtaining scholarships, gaining admission to overseas programs, and ensuring effective communication. Factors such as the fear of being judged, limited English proficiency, and insufficient practice contribute significantly to language anxiety. This research, therefore, focuses on BCA students from Vivekanand College, affiliated with Veer Narmad South Gujarat University, to examine these issues.

While the study provides valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Future research should take into account a broader range of factors and utilize larger sample sizes to draw more generalizable conclusions. Moreover, conducting interviews and collecting additional data through diverse methods would ensure more comprehensive and accurate results.

### **The objective of the research:**

RO1: To assess the amount of foreign language presentation anxiety among first-year graduate students.

RO2: To investigate the impact of gender on foreign language presentation anxiety (FLPA).

RO3: Language anxiety levels differ between boys and girls.

### **Hypothesis**

HO<sub>1</sub>: The average level of foreign language presentation anxiety among respondents is 3.

HO<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant association between gender and FLPA.

HO<sub>3</sub>: There are no substantial differences between males and females.

### **Methodology**

#### **Sample**

This study applied a quantitative descriptive method and presented data descriptively. The research was directed from March to May 2024 and involved EFL students at Vivekanand College enrolled in first-year BCA to measure Foreign Language Presentation Anxiety (FLPA). A questionnaire was distributed among 275 first-year graduate students, but only 164 were completed and thus considered for analysis. Out of these 164 students, 47.6% of the sample ( $n=78$ ) were female and 52.4% ( $n=86$ ) were male.

**Table – 1 Response Rates**

Frequency	No. of responses	Valid Percentage
Female	78	47.6
Male	86	52.4
<b>Total</b>	164	

### **Instruments**

To evaluate the level of anxiety of Bachelor of Computer Application students when presenting in a foreign

language, the scholar used Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The Likert scale used in the FLCAS has five points: 1 for strongly agreeing, 2 for agreeing, 3 for neither agreeing nor disagreeing, 4 for disagreeing, and 5 for strongly disagreeing. However, the researcher updated and constructed a mini-version of the FLCAS with 15 components.

**Data collection procedures**

The response form was distributed to participants at Vivekanand College. To make sure the participants had no trouble filling out the questionnaire, all of the questions were explained to them before it was distributed. Each respondent was given only one questionnaire. The questionnaire inquired about the respondent's gender, grade level, and concern about learning a foreign language. Due to financial, resource, and time limitations that made it impossible to send the questionnaire to a large number of respondents, a convenient sampling procedure was adopted.

**Data analysis process**

To find out how nervous EFL candidates were about speaking a foreign language during their presentations, the questionnaire data was processed using statistical coding techniques. The analysis also explored to determine whether there was a substantial connection between foreign language-presenting anxiety and uncorrelated factors like gender. For this objective, the statistical program IBM SPSS version 25 was employed. In order to ascertain the foreign language anxiety levels of EFL learners and to gather demographic data from the personal details portion of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviation were used. During their presentations, male and female English language learners' mean scores for foreign language anxiety were compared using a one-sample t-test, an independent samples t-test, and descriptive analysis.

**Results**

Cronbach's alpha is commonly used to measure the reliability of Likert scales. A set of test items or scales' internal consistency is assessed using this measure. According to Cronbach (1951), higher alpha values indicate greater internal consistency. The coefficient alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with values between 0.80 and 0.95 considered very good, 0.60 to 0.70 fair, and below 0.60 poor. In Table 2, the test results yielded a value of 0.884, indicating that the questionnaire is reliable.

**Table 2: Reliability Test**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
0.885	0.884	15

The average FLPA level of respondents is 1.712 as shown in Table 3. This is lesser than the assumed and satisfactory level of 3. The p-value achieved is 0.000 which is less than 0.05. Thus, H<sub>01</sub> is rejected (Table 4).

**Table 3: Minimum, maximum and mean scores in the FLPA**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>FLPA</b>	164	1	2.93	1.712	0.522
<b>Valid N</b>	164				

(listwise)					
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**Table – 4 One-Sample t-test of FLPA**

	t	df	Two-sided p	Mean difference	95% confidence interval of the difference	
					lower	Upper
<b>FLPA</b>	-31.609	163	0.000	-1.288	-1.368	-1.207

The outcomes of this study showed that EFL students were highly anxious about presenting themselves in English. Students expressed their agreement by scoring lower than 3 points on a 5-point Likert scale for subscales numbered 2 (X= 2.66, S.D= 1.17), 3(X= 2.71, S.D= 1.04), 4(X= 2.35, S.D= 1.04), 5(X= 2.58, S.D= 1.17), 7(X= 2.32, S.D= 1.08), 8(X= 2.65, S.D= 1.09), 9(X= 2.79, S.D= 1.04), 10(X= 2.74, S.D= 1.18), 11(X= 2.32, S.D= 1.08), 12(X= 2.79, S.D= 1.04), 13(X= 2.54, S.D= 1.09), 14(X= 2.41, S.D= 0.96), 15(X= 2.60, S.D= 1.09). EFL learners stated neither agreement nor disagreement concerning subscales numbered 1(X= 3.08, S.D= 1.16), and 6(X= 3.04, S.D= 1.15). The mean and standard deviations for the scales related to the anxiety levels of English language learners when presenting in a foreign language are shown in Table 6. So, H0<sub>2</sub> is rejected (Table 5).

**Table 5: EFL learners’ levels of foreign language presentation anxiety**

		Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Q1</b>	I tremble when I know I will be called for a presentation in language class.	3.08	1.16
<b>Q2</b>	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English language presentations than I am.	2.66	1.17
<b>Q3</b>	I worry about the consequences of failing my English language presentation.	2.71	1.04
<b>Q4</b>	During the presentation, I can get so nervous even I forget things I know.	2.35	1.04
<b>Q5</b>	Even if I am well prepared for an English language presentation, I feel anxious about it.	2.58	1.17
<b>Q6</b>	I often feel like I don't want to attend a presentation.	3.04	1.15
<b>Q7</b>	I can feel my heart beating when I am going to be called for a presentation.	2.32	1.08
<b>Q8</b>	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students.	2.65	1.09
<b>Q9</b>	I feel more tense and nervous during presentations in English than in my other.	2.79	1.04
<b>Q10</b>	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I present myself in the English language.	2.74	1.18
<b>Q11</b>	The more I study for the presentation in English, the more confused I get.	2.32	1.08
<b>Q12</b>	I get nervous and confused when I am presenting in English during class.	2.79	1.04
<b>Q13</b>	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions that I haven't prepared in advance.	2.54	1.09
<b>Q14</b>	I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in my English language class.	2.41	0.96
<b>Q15</b>	I start to panic when I speak without preparation in my English language class.	2.60	1.09

The t-test results showed a significant difference in gender during the presentation. Numerous researchers used to present the findings of their studies with girls. When students with high levels of anxiety were divided into groups, a large number of girls were found to be extremely nervous when speaking in English. This major effect is consistent with earlier research demonstrating that girls are more likely than boys to experience anxiety (Padilla et al., 1988; Bernstein, Garfinkel, & Hoberman, 1989; Plancherel & Bolognini, 1995; Gierl & Rogers, 1996). It is countered by the fact that men experience less anxiety than women (Williams, 1996). Based on the responses of the focus group and the probability that anxiety during presentations is associated with peer interaction and performance, two sources of evidence suggest that higher levels of English Language Presentation Anxiety (ELPA) may be linked to changing social relationships during teenage years. In the EFL classroom, girls tend to have close interpersonal relationships with teachers (Bracken & Crain, 1994), which could help to improve the high levels of anxiety associated with academic achievement tension. Table 6 shows the outcome of the test. Among the surveyed individuals, female respondents were more anxious ( $X = 1.57$ ,  $SD = 0.47$ ) than male students ( $X = 1.84$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) Thus,  $H_03$  is rejected (Table 6).

**Table – 6 Descriptive Analysis of Gender**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Male</b>	86	1.00	2.93	1.84	0.53
<b>Female</b>	78	1.00	2.80	1.57	0.47
<b>Total</b>	164				

### Conclusion

This study found significant presenting anxiety among first-year undergraduate students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situations, with female students experiencing higher levels of anxiety than their male counterparts. These results highlight the critical need for instructional approaches that reduce fear and boost confidence while communicating orally.

Targeted activities, such as providing a supportive classroom climate and encouraging peer collaboration, can assist address these issues, especially among female students. Educators can build a more inclusive and effective learning environment by identifying and addressing presentation anxiety, thereby boosting students' language competency and academic success. Future research ought to investigate additional elements that influence anxiety and evaluate the effectiveness of various teaching styles, which will help to develop more effective EFL programs.

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