

Investigating the Level of Anxiety and Coping Strategies among Kurdish EFL learners Speaking Skill

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Abstract:

Anxiety is an uneasy emotion that a person has in any situation. A prevalent issue when speaking a foreign language, especially to learners, is foreign language anxiety. The study's goal was to determine if the EFL learners experience anxiety and what is the level of English language anxiety among undergraduate students who were studying in different universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. Besides this study aimed to find out coping mechanisms employed by EFL (English as a foreign language) Kurdish learners to deal with their anxiety. This research followed a mixed method both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative data were collected by using a foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) questionnaire, and qualitative data were collected by interview. Data analysis revealed that students had a moderate level of anxiety. The participants expressed their own coping strategies to deal with their speaking skill anxiety which were divided into two themes Self-produced coping as initiated by the students and Coping methods provided by teachers as learned by students.

Key words: Anxiety, English as a foreign language anxiety, coping strategies, EFL Kurdish learner.

الملخص:

الارتباك هو شعور مزعجة يشعر بها الشخص في أي موقف. هنالك مشكلة شائعة عند التحدث بلغة أجنبية، خاصة للمتعلمين، وهي الارتباك من اللغة الأجنبية. إن هدف الدراسة هو تحديد مستوى الارتباك عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب المرحلة الجامعية الذين يدرسون في أقسام اللغة الإنجليزية و الترجمة في جامعات مختلفة في إقليم كردستان العراق، و معرفة آليات التكيف التي يستخدمها المتعلمون الأكراد في اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية للتغلب على الارتباكهم. اتبع هذا البحث منهجاً مختلطاً كمياً ونوعياً. تم جمع البيانات الكمية باستخدام استبيان (FLCAS)، وتم جمع البيانات النوعية عن طريق المقابلة. كشف تحليل البيانات أن الارتباك كان موجوداً بينهم. فيما يتعلق بآليات المواجهة. و قد عبر المشاركون عن بعض استراتيجيات التأقلم للتعامل مع الارتباكهم في ما يخص مهارة التحدث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الارتباك، الارتباك اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، آليات التكيف، متعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

پوخته:

دلەراوکی هەستیکی ناارامە کە مەزۆف لە هەر بارودۆخێکدا هەیە. پرسێکی باو لە کاتی قسەکردن بە زمانێکی بیانی، بە تایبەت بۆ فێرخوازان، دلەراوکی زمانی بیانییە. ئامانجی توێژینەوه کە دیاریکردنی ناستی دلەراوکی زمانی ئینگلیزی بوو لە نێوان خوێندکارانی بەکۆڕیۆس کە لە زانکۆ جیاوازی مکانی هەریەکە کوردستانی عێراق دیمانخوێند، هەروەها ئهم توێژینەوه ئامانجی دۆزینەوهی میکانیزمەکانی رووبەر و بوونەوه بوو کە لە لایەن فێرخوازانێ کورد بەکار دەهێنرێت بۆ زالبوون بەسەر دلەراوکیاندا. بۆ ئەنجام دانی ئهم توێژینەوهی شیوازیکی تێکەڵاوی پەڕمو کرا بە هەردوو شیوهی چەندایەتی و چۆنایەتی. زانیارییه چەندایەتییهکان بە بەکار هێنانی پرسیارنامە (FLCAS) کۆکرانەوه، و زانیارییه چۆنایەتییهکان بە چاوپێکەوتن کۆکرانەوه. شیکاری داتاكان

دەریخست که دڵەراوکی له نێوانیاندا هه‌بووه. سه‌بارەت به‌ میکانیزمه‌کانی پروه‌پرووبوونه‌وه به‌شداربووان هه‌ندیک ستراتیژی پروه‌پرووبوونه‌وه‌یان ده‌ری بۆ پروه‌پرووبوونه‌وه‌ی دڵەراوکی لێهاتوویی قسه‌کردن‌یان.

کلیله و شه‌: دڵەراوکی، دڵەراوکی ئینگلیزی وه‌ک زمانی بیانی، ستراتیژییه‌کانی پروه‌پرووبوونه‌وه‌ی دڵەراوکی، فێرخواری کورد.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, English language has become one of the most required languages around the world, because it is considered to be the world's lingua franca language in many countries. Also, it is recognized as a language of economic expansion, academic pursuits, globalization and technology.

In the past times, teachers used to teach English as a foreign language by using Grammar–Translation methods or Audio-Lingual methods. Using these two methods lasted for a very long time, and within this period different methods of teaching English were invented (Savaşçı, 2014). Currently, these two methods are considered traditional methods. Thus, teachers shifted these methods to communicative methods. This change was because of today's world demand for communication skills. Therefore, a lack of knowledge about English language can create a sense of anxiety. This is due to the fact that if an individual's desire to convey their thoughts to others they must master a language that they use in that process.

In the last few decades, anxiety while speaking the English language appeared among people, especially youth people particularly students. Though, this feeling can be true for other courses like Math, chemistry, physic etc. (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004; Price, 1991), there is a need to take language anxiety seriously. Anxiety is described by psychologists as a psychological construct or state of apprehension, ambiguous fear that is only indirectly associated with an object. (Hilgard & Atkinson, 1971 cited in Khattak, 2011). Anxiety can hinder all kinds of learning processes. However, when it is explicitly related to learning a foreign language, it is called foreign language anxiety.

Foreign language anxiety is defined as negative emotional responses towards learning a foreign language. It can be associated with the fear or lack of self-confidence while communicating in foreign languages. Also, those with language anxiety are always concern about other people's appraisal towards them while speaking in a foreign language. This sort of feeling in psychology is decelerated as a symptom of social phobia or social anxiety disorder too. which, includes fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Anxious learners might not be capable of performing oral tasks easily because of their continuous feeling of apprehension or stress regarding their performance. (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). Dissimilarly, relaxed students perform or improve better since they do not experience anxiety.

Language anxiety is approached in two ways, first anxiety is related to human emotion which is produced due to many factors that are happening around that person (McIntyre, 1995; McIntyre & Gardner, 1989: cited in Tittle, 1997: 11). This one is not related specifically to the language, but the individual has an underlying generalized anxiety. And when it comes to speaking a foreign language like English, the level of anxiety becomes doubled as was mentioned by (Horwitz et al., 1986: 128) language anxiety occurs due to a combination of other forms of anxiety which appears in the form of anxiety towards foreign language speaking. For example, this condition becomes obvious when an

anxious student is asked to give a presentation or talk in front of other students in class or his teachers. The second approach was there is something unique about speaking a foreign language which leads some individuals to feel anxious or stressed. Psychologists classified this sort of anxiety to specific anxiety to differentiate it from another type of anxiety which is called generalized anxiety disorder where students who suffer from it are anxious in all aspects of their lives, not only in a specific situation.

The nature of foreign language anxiety creates extra challenges to language learners as well as many highly qualified instructors. This leads to crucial need for using English language while communicating in a modern language class, that is why it produces students' anxiety. Therefore, in order to have a more modern education system, it is essential to look at foreign language anxiety seriously in the Kurdistan Region and more specifically English speaking anxiety. As it is clear that good communication skills can convey a better message, therefore there is quite a need to find ways for coping with this issue too. This research aims to study the existence of anxiety while speaking English language among different university students, and the way they cope with it. To this end the following research questions are addressed:

- Do EFL Kurdish learners feel anxious while speaking in English, and what is the level of their anxiety?
- How did EFL Kurdish learners cope with their anxiety while speaking in English language?

2. Review of Literature

1. Symptoms and signs of speaking anxiety

Symptoms of anxiety in general are felt and complained of by the subject such as rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, tremor of the hands, dryness of the mouth, blurred vision, frequency of micturition, increased need to empty the bowels, decreased concentration and impaired memory. while signs are usually checked by physicians or observed by others objectively, such as restlessness, pallor of the face, apprehension, shaking of the body, etc (Walker & Colledge, 2013). There are some symptoms that appear among students if they are affected by anxiety- such as freezing and confusion (Ortega, 2014). Signs include raised blood pressure, tremor of the hands, impaired concentration, and avoiding eye contact with the audience (Gibson & Hanna, 1992).

Signs and symptoms that are causing or enhancing anxiety among learners can be classified into two categories: psychological and physiological. Likewise, they are classified into two separate groups which are called Internal and External factors. (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020). Therefore, lots of studies have been conducted to investigate the reasons behind anxiety among students.

Many Etiological factors have been found leading to speaking anxiety among university students including linguistic barrier, psychological, physiological, and cultural factors. Based on (Rajitha & Alamelu, 2020) study, the major causes of creating speaking anxiety are allied with the students themselves. For instance, lack of grammatical knowledge, incorrect pronunciation, fear of standing on the stage, coyness and low self-esteem. Also (Peirce, 1995) stated that lack of linguistic knowledge led to low self-confidence, and created sense of anxiety among learners.

In a similar vein, (Kayaoğlu & Sağlamel, 2013) studied students' perception regarding the main factors which led to speaking anxiety. They found that students who have less vocabulary knowledge, poor command of grammatical rules, fear of failure, were the main sources for developing language anxiety. However, the students in this study blamed the insufficient role of their teachers which led to developing anxiety. Also according to (Labicane, 2021) who examined the students' performance across the four micro-skills (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling). The results showed that students experienced the highest level of anxiety which impaired their speaking skills due to making grammatical errors and poor vocabulary. Moreover, the sensation of self-conscious while speaking in English among others was another factor.

The psychological factor is considered as the additional cause of language anxiety too because there is a significant connection between personality traits and second language (L2) learning. For instance, zealous students are usually happier to connect with others without any fear, in contrast, introverted students are always worried and stressed due to those negative beliefs they develop inside themselves (Minghe & Yuan, 2013). Therefore, all these negative beliefs build up until they change to anxiety and interfere with their learning. In another word, anxious students may experience cognitive deficits, for example, misapprehension of information or memory blocking.

Adding to this, (Liu and Jackson, 2008) who studied the reason behind development of speaking anxiety among ESL undergraduate students. They discovered that the major reason was being afraid of being evaluated. Also, students' negative attitude towards English lessons was another reason.

Alongside the learners-related factors, there are some external sources that contributes to language anxiety, i.e., lack of teacher support and insensitive personality of teachers and dearth of personal attention by teachers (Siyli & Kafes, 2015). Similarly, (Subasi, 2010) studied the causes of verbal anxiety among students. The result was teachers' teaching methods were key bases of increasing students' speaking anxiety.

2. Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is a feeling of fear, anxiety, burden, apprehension and nervousness experienced in learning or using foreign languages (Böttger & Költzsch, 2020). Likewise, (Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003) defined it as situation-specific anxiety that happens due to formal learning of a foreign language, particularly if the learner has low self-appraisal of their communicative abilities.

According to Horwitz et al (1986) who stated that a sense of anxiety affects the communication plans that students employed in the language class. In the same way, (Yoshida, 2010) specified that many students repeatedly attend foreign language lessons with anxiety. Students who suffer from anxiety were unwilling to participate in speaking activities because of their fear of making mistakes while speaking and other students will evaluate them negatively.

Foreign language anxiety in a boarder scope, has been classified into three aspects which are trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation- specific anxiety (Speilberger et al., 1983). Trait anxiety in general is defined as feeling anxious across many situations. It forms part of one's personality, which describes the unique ways in which individuals think, feel, and behave. (Legg, 2019) reviewed some articles and he found out that they regarded trait anxiety as genetically based. Whereas, state anxiety

is temporary and it is a direct reaction to threatening situations and it is not permanent in this case it is a direct reaction to the stress of speaking a foreign language and this appears when the learner is removed from that situation (Kurniadi, 2019). Situation-specific anxiety is triggered by a particular type of situation or event, such as publicly speaking (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Foreign language anxiety goes with Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. Krashen (1985) stated that those kinds of learners who are highly motivated enter a learning context with a low level of anxiety; conversely, those Students who experience high levels of anxiety often perform poorly using the language cited by (Tan, 2013).

2.3 Strategies to Cope with anxiety

Coping was considered one of the tools to prevent and overcome burnout, stress, and anxiety (Küçüköğlu, 2014). It was described by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) as cited in (Kelso et al., 2005) as the way individuals manage environmental demands in their lives. A similar definition was offered by (Montero-Marin et al., 2014), who stated that life environmental demands are managed both cognitively and behaviorally by people and this represents the process of coping.

Many researches were conducted about helping students on how to control their anxiety inside classroom. For instance, (Hembre, 1988) identified three approaches that can act as a remedy to cope with anxiety. The first approach was cognitive approach which indicates that thinking disturbances are the main sources that caused anxiety in the classrooms. This approach proposes that anxiety can be coped with by rational emotive therapy (emotive therapy is an action-oriented form of therapy that helps people learn to manage their emotions and thoughts) and cognitive restructuring (Cognitive restructuring is *a technique that has been successfully used to help people change the way they think*). Second approach was affective approach which tries to diminish the negative rapport between the classroom and anxiety. In order to accomplish this goal, there is a need for regular desensitization (which is the process of gradual exposure of the person to the stressful situation, so that he or she will be able to face that situation) and biofeedback training (which is another method of overcoming anxiety by exposing the person to the stressful situation and using a machine to check his or her pulse rate or blood pressure and teaching the person to control these symptoms). Third approach is Behavioral approach, this approach believes that, the root of anxiety is lack of certain academic skills. Hence, training in study skills is presumed to be able to cope with anxiety.

Tanveer (2007) found out that classroom atmospheres, interesting class activities, avoidance of idealized forms of pronunciation can decrease anxiety. Additionally, (Price, 1999) stated that if all the students are familiar or friends with each other, smaller classroom size, positive reinforcement, the sociable role of the instructor can decrease stressful circumstances among students. Further, (He, 2017) researched effective coping strategies implemented by students' responses. He found a high level of foreign language anxiety in students' responses. And they believed that teachers' personal characteristics and behaviors are essential to help them cope with anxiety for example, creating humorous atmosphere for their students will help them to reduce their anxiety and stimulate their desire to speak in English language. Another suggestion from this research was that teachers have to be more patient with students while speaking activities in the classroom; thus, it will help students not feel stressed.

Likewise, (Nagahashi, 2007) studied the existence of anxiety in universities and how students coped with this issue. Similarly, the results showed high level of anxiety among the students who were in low motivation and the process of their acquisition was low. So the finding was cooperative learning strategies should be implemented by instructors to reduce their anxiety. Each learner will be asked to write his own coping strategies while dealing with the stress of learning a foreign language.

• Research Method

As stated earlier, this study aims to investigate the existence of English language anxiety, and finding which coping strategies applied by EFL Kurdish learners for facing or coping with their anxiety. To accomplish the purpose of this study, a mixed-methods concurrent triangulation research design was adopted. According to (Creswell, 2003) mixed method research is more effective because it will help to gain a profound understanding of the phenomenon. The questionnaire was used for collecting quantitative data and semi structure interview for collecting qualitative data.

1. Participants

The participants of this study were 106 students who were studying in the department of English language and arts, as well as translation department from different universities namely (Cihan, Human development, Halabja, Sulaimani). They were from both state and private universities, 76.4% of them were female, 23.6% were male, and their age was between (19 - 23) years. Also none of the participants English language was their first language.

2. Data collection instrument

The data collection procedures came about in the fall semester of the 2021-2022 academic year. Before beginning the study, the researcher obtained approval from the Ethical Committee of the Scientific Council of the English department of Cihan university. The researcher distributed the questionnaire (FLCAS) online and collected the questionnaire from the responder online too. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with participants from the departments of English and Translation after having their verbal consent. All participants were told that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw in the middle of the interview.

3. Foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) questionnaire

This questionnaire was designed by (Horwitz, 1986), to measure anxiety of foreign language speaking. The original version of this questionnaire consist of 33 self-report items that uses a Likert scale to assess issues related to communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Al-Saraj, 2014). This questionnaire has been used by many researchers. After a detailed review of the literature, 16 items were decided to be directly related to foreign language speaking anxiety. Further, some changes done like adding or removing some words in some of the items in order to suit the research aim which is English language anxiety. Also, in order to prevent any misunderstanding of the statements, translated versions of the items were administered to the students. The questionnaire was translated to Kurdish by the researcher with the help of two English language instructors with pervious translation experiences. The internal consistency of this questionnaire was found as 0.97, which shows that the instrument has a high reliability coefficient.

4. The Interview questions

The second instrument used in the present study was semi-structural interview. The interview conducted with 18 participants. The reasons behind making interviews was to obtain comprehensive details about Kurdish learners coping mechanisms produced by themselves. Each interview questions were prepared after reviewing several kinds of research about coping with English as a foreign language anxiety. In order to become sure about the reliability of each question, the questions were revised by some expert teachers from English and translation department of cihan university. Each interview took no more than 15-20 minutes.

5. Data analysis

The main purpose of this study was to detect the existence of anxiety while speaking in the English language among EFL Kurdish learners. For analyzing Quantitative data, a questionnaire was used to find and analyze the existence of English language anxiety, which is classified into sixteen main questions. Furthermore, a five-point Likert scale was used for rating the answers of the questions phrase, in which (provides 1 to Strongly Disagree) to the highest weight of the paragraph (provides 5 to Strongly Agree), and between them three other weights are (give 4 to Agree, 3 to Neither Agree nor Disagree, and 2 to Disagree). To analysis the data, firstly the frequency distribution table and the graphical methods were used to display the responses for each question item. Then descriptive statistics was used to calculate the mean and standard deviation by using a statistical software package, SPSS, version 25. Based on the results, the values of the arithmetic averages reached by the study will be solved to interpret the data as follows:

Interval range of the means	Anxiety Levels
1 – 1.79	No anxiety at all
1.80 – 2.59	Mild anxiety
2.60 – 3.30	Moderate anxiety
3.40 – 4.19	Severe anxiety
4.20 – 5	Panic anxiety

For analyzing qualitative data, the interview was conducted with some of the students. Content analysis was used for analyzing each question. First, the transcriptions of interviews were examined carefully to search for the emerging topics of how they coped with anxiety.

4. Results

4.1 Answer for the first question

In order to get more instructive and informative results behind creating a sense of anxiety, the researcher divided the answer to the first question into two parts. First, what were the main causes of anxiety based on (FLCAS) questionnaire items. Second, detecting the overall level of English speaking anxiety. Thus. the overall score is calculated using each respondent's responses to each question item as shown in the above table.

First, the main causes of anxiety were detected based on these items, being afraid of making mistakes, not understanding their teachers while he teaches in English, getting panic when the student doesn't prepare him or herself to speak in English, feeling nervous while speaking with native speakers, belittle himself compared to other students while they speak in English, feeling overwhelmed by the all the rules which the English language content and getting nervous in front of the teacher to speak in English if he or she didn't prepare before. Moreover, in order to make the result of the questionnaire clearer, each item of the questionnaire was explained by the researcher.

Table 1: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Disagree	27	25.7	25.7	47.6
	neither agree nor disagree	25	23.8	23.8	71.4
	strongly agree	15	14.3	14.3	85.7
	strongly disagree	15	14.3	14.3	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The respondents of this item were majority of the participants (25.7%) chose to disagree. This showed that Kurdish EFL learners trusted their ability to speak in English. However, 23.8 of the participants were neither agree nor disagree which showed that they were not sure about their ability when they speak in English language, in other words sometimes they are afraid while speaking. This item showed that majority of the participants have no problem with their speaking skills or they don't get confused while speaking in the English language.

Table 2: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	30	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Disagree	24	22.9	22.9	51.4
	neither agree nor disagree	11	10.5	10.5	61.9
	strongly agree	28	26.7	26.7	88.6
	strongly disagree	12	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

This item concentrates on the sense of fear towards the English language, the result showed that (28.6) of the participants which is the highest rate agreed with this statement that they are afraid of making mistakes during the English language lesson. Therefore, it can be identified as one cause of enhancing anxiety because the student may feel that he/she has not enough knowledge about the English language so it prevents he/she from using English with confidence. This problem can be due to lack of knowledge about English language skills. Thus he/she may be afraid of how their peers perceive them in the classroom while speaking in English.

Table 3: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	19	18.1	18.1	18.1
	Disagree	34	32.4	32.4	50.5
	neither agree nor disagree	19	18.1	18.1	68.6
	strongly agree	15	14.3	14.3	82.9
	strongly disagree	18	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Trembling is considered one of the main signs of anxiety. (32.4%) of the student's responses to trembling was disagreed that they have no shaking body problems and they can speak or use all the English language skills calmly; dissimilarly (18.1%) of the participants pointed out that they had suffered from this problem. This rate of responses proves that there is anxiety among a small percentage of participants.

Table 4: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	34	32.4	32.4	32.4
	Disagree	29	27.6	27.6	60.0
	neither agree nor disagree	11	10.5	10.5	70.5
	strongly agree	15	14.3	14.3	84.8
	strongly disagree	16	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The result of this item showed that (32.4) of the participants get frightened when they don't understand their teacher while teaching the English language. This can be due to the fact that the students may be afraid that it will affect their academic achievement. This point brings us to the fact that the participated students were not careless.

Table 5: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	31	29.5	29.5	29.5
	Disagree	30	28.6	28.6	58.1
	neither agree nor disagree	14	13.3	13.3	71.4
	strongly agree	18	17.1	17.1	88.6
	strongly disagree	12	11.4	11.4	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

This item showed that (39.5) participants pointed out that they feel panic while speaking in English if they didn't prepare before. Although, (28.6) of students totally disagreed. This feeling of panic is due to fact that the English language is quite a rich language he/she can't manage all the rules of this language simultaneously.

Table 6: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	41	39.0	39.0	39.0
	Disagree	19	18.1	18.1	57.1
	neither agree nor disagree	22	21.0	21.0	78.1
	strongly agree	18	17.1	17.1	95.2
	strongly disagree	5	4.8	4.8	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

This statement showed us that students suffered from low self-esteem, which is why a high level of anxiety was recorded (39.0). They believed they did not have good background knowledge of the English language. Hence, they feel nervous while speaking with native speakers.

Table 7: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	25	23.8	23.8	23.8
	Disagree	29	27.6	27.6	51.4
	neither agree nor disagree	19	18.1	18.1	69.5
	strongly agree	10	9.5	9.5	79.0
	strongly disagree	22	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

This statement showed that correcting their mistakes did not effect on their anxiety; meanwhile, (23.8) of the students agreed that it impacts them because they think it will affect their scientific level; thus, it increases their anxiety.

Table 8: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	26	24.8	24.8	24.8
	Disagree	31	29.5	29.5	54.3
	neither agree nor disagree	18	17.1	17.1	71.4
	strongly agree	11	10.5	10.5	81.9
	strongly disagree	19	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

The highest response rate for this item was (29.5); they chose disagree, which means they are fine with correcting their mistakes by the teachers, and it does not influence or enhance their anxiety. However, (24.8) of them agreed. Therefore, this item showed that some students are afraid to be criticized by their teacher when speaking English incorrectly.

Table 9: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	21	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Disagree	32	30.5	30.5	50.5
	neither agree nor disagree	15	14.3	14.3	64.8
	strongly agree	19	18.1	18.1	82.9
	strongly disagree	18	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Heart pounding is a psychological phenomenon common among students, especially while speaking in the English languages. Participant's response was (30.5), which is the highest rate among other options, disagreed, while (20.0) of the students agreed, this means that heart pounding does exist among them, but it is not a lot. Thus, the majority of them managed to control their heart pounding.

Table10: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Disagree	21	20.0	20.0	41.9
	neither agree nor disagree	22	21.0	21.0	62.9
	strongly agree	21	20.0	20.0	82.9
	strongly disagree	18	17.1	17.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Another common cause of anxiety is low self-confidence among students. In other words, they do not trust their ability to do well. That is why he/she thinks that other students are better than him/her or that they acquire knowledge better than him/her. The student's responses were (21.9), agreed which was the highest answer, while (20.0) of the students disagreed.

Table 11: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
	Disagree	28	26.7	26.7	48.6
	neither agree nor disagree	20	19.0	19.0	67.6
	strongly agree	18	17.1	17.1	84.8
	strongly disagree	16	15.2	15.2	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Self-conscious is considered as fear or taking care of your words while speaking among other students. The students answer for this question was (26.7) disagreed, which means while speaking in English language they may have fear but at the same time they don't pay attention to their words such as grammatical or pronunciation mistakes while speaking in English. However, (21.9) of the students were agreed that they have fear while speaking that is why they take care of their words when they speak among other students.

Table 12: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	29	27.6	27.6	27.6
	Disagree	24	22.9	22.9	50.5
	neither agree nor disagree	18	17.1	17.1	67.6
	strongly agree	15	14.3	14.3	81.9
	strongly disagree	19	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Sometimes speaking in another language beside your first language creates sense of anxiety. This may be due to lack of knowledge or practice about English language especially when you have to speak in academic context like inside classes. Result of this item was (27.6) agreed with that speaking inside class increases their anxiety level. While, (22.9) disagreed with this item speaking in English language inside the classes was usual for them.

Table 13: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	30	28.6	28.6	28.6
	Disagree	33	31.4	31.4	60.0
	neither agree nor disagree	15	14.3	14.3	74.3
	strongly agree	16	15.2	15.2	89.5
	strongly disagree	11	10.5	10.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Some students may feel nervous when they cannot understand their teacher because they assume their teacher may ask them to participate in class activities or questions in front of other students. They do not have appropriate or convenient answers due to not understanding their teacher's words. (31.1%) of the answers disagreed because they can cope with this kind of situation, while (30.2%) were agreed that it causes anxiety.

Table 14: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	31	29.5	29.5	29.5
	Disagree	19	18.1	18.1	47.6
	neither agree nor disagree	17	16.2	16.2	63.8
	strongly agree	19	18.1	18.1	81.9
	strongly disagree	19	18.1	18.1	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

As is clear, language learning is the function of the brain and the English language is classified under the umbrella of the soft science field, as there is no specific rule to follow like hard science fields such as math; that's why students are afraid that they cannot control it, especially grammar rules (Borg, 2007). That is why most of the time, they are suspicious about their performance. This questionnaire item proved that majority of EFL Kurdish learners had this problem, (30.2%) of the students agreed with this item. This is due to the reason which is English is one of the languages which contains lots of distinctive and intricacies rules that sometimes it will be hard to remember everything, thus it will make students feel overwhelmed and anxious.

Table 15: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	16	15.2	15.2	15.2
	Disagree	28	26.7	26.7	41.9
	neither agree nor disagree	13	12.4	12.4	54.3
	strongly agree	25	23.8	23.8	78.1
	strongly disagree	23	21.9	21.9	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

As we know, some students are very sensitive, and a very small reaction from people around them may affect them. (29.2%) of respondents disagreed that they do not give this much attention, whereas (23.6%) of the students strongly agreed that they do not want to speak English in front of their colleagues because they are afraid to be laughed at by them. Fortunately, this item showed that most participants were fine with the laughing points. However, some fear they cannot express their ideas well enough in English. Therefore, they are troubled about being laughed at them. Hence, it is necessary to advise those students to avoid thinking in their first language when they want to speak in English and try to practice more in the English language.

Table 16: Percentages and frequencies of participants' foreign language speaking anxiety

I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Agree	40	38.1	38.1	38.1
	Disagree	24	22.9	22.9	61.0
	neither agree nor disagree	10	9.5	9.5	70.5
	strongly agree	21	20.0	20.0	90.5
	strongly disagree	10	9.5	9.5	100.0
	Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Occasionally some students used to prepare themselves before answering any questions from their teachers, otherwise they may feel nervous or stressed. The participants reply to this question was (38.7%) of them which is the highest rate among other options, were agreed on that any questions without any preparation will increase their nervousness and become victims of anxiety. And only (22.6%) of them disagreed with this item. Sometimes it is related to the learner themselves because they think they are not gifted enough to speak in other languages and still did not reach the level of proficiency according to the level they are studying at. Thus, in this case, motivating those students is necessary.

Second, in order to determine the level of English language speaking anxiety among participated EFL Kurdish learner, the mean scores in each item were computed through descriptive statistics as its shown in the following table. The overall mean score result was (3.04). As its shown from the first

table above if the interval range of the mean score is between (2.60 – 3.30) its equal to moderate level of anxiety. Therefore, the anxiety level was moderate. This result brings us to this fact that anxiety exists among the participants.

Table17: Descriptive analysis of Participants' overall anxiety Level Scores

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank
I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English.	1	5	2.96	1.278	10
I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes	1	5	3.36	1.388	2
I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class	1	5	2.8	1.319	13
I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	1	5	3.03	1.341	7
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes.	1	5	3.12	1.313	3
I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers.	1	5	3.46	1.118	1
I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	1	5	2.73	1.295	14
I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make	1	5	2.8	1.289	13
I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes.	1	5	2.91	1.388	12
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	1	5	3.08	1.385	5
I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	1	5	2.99	1.341	8
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes.	1	5	2.97	1.348	9
I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.	1	5	3.07	1.281	6
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English	1	5	3.11	1.389	4
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	1	5	2.92	1.504	11
I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	1	5	3.36	1.294	2
Total	1	5	3.04	0.98974	

4.2 Answer for the second research question:

This research question aimed to find out how students coped with their anxiety while speaking in English. For this purpose, the participants were asked to elaborate on this issue in semi-structured interviews. Content analysis of the data from the students' answers regarding coping with anxiety helped us classify the data into the following themes. Each theme was classified into various sub-themes, as shown in the following table.

Table 18: Participants' Perceptions as regards Coping strategies with anxiety

Theme	Sub-theme
Self-produced coping as initiated by the students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Practicing English language outside the classroom – Using Mirror – Self-Recording – Overcoming shyness and stress – Reminding myself why I want to learn English – Staying calm and positive thinking – Control my breathing
Coping methods provided by teachers as learned by students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Role of Teachers

4.2.1 Self-produced coping as initiated by the students:

– Practicing English language outside the classroom

Some of the participants agreed that practicing the English language outside the classroom had a vital role in controlling their anxiety because they can speak more confidently without any fear of making mistakes. They can learn many new vocabularies from each other. In this way, they can get used to speaking in English inside class too which will help them to cope with their English speaking anxiety inside classes too. The following quotes are examples:

“Some of my friends the first language is not Kurdish so we speak in English, I took this as an opportunity to practice and improve my English language speaking skills”

“As we are in the English department so most of the time I and my friends try to speak in English during breaks, and also we message each other in English language”

“I improved my English language skill by speaking in English in most places because I feel when I speak in English I attract more attention. Beside this, I enjoy a lot speaking in English, that's why I keep practicing English inside and outside class too”

– Using Mirror

Using a mirror is regarded as one of the beneficial ways of coping because it will help improve students speaking skills as well as they can pay attention to grimacing facial expressions. Also, many researchers agree that using the mirror talking strategy can improve English speaking skill. Mirror

talking builds learners' confidence while speaking in English language and improve their pronunciation too. One example is that students can watch the shape of their mouth and try to imitate or shape it the same way as he or she observed native speakers. The following quotes are examples:

“Most of the time I choose a topic and I sit in front of the mirror and keep talking. I record myself and this strategy helped me a lot”

“I sit in front of the mirror talking to myself reflecting how I spent my day, what and what new things I learned from today”

– Self-Recording

Many researchers in the field of ELT talked about effectiveness of self-video recording for learning and improving speaking. It can help the students learning easier and they will have gained their confidence by talking in front of the camera. Some of the participated students mentioned using mirror too. The following quotes are examples:

“I recorded myself a lot and then watched it again and give feedback to myself”

“Most of the time especially when I have a literature or novel lesson for the next day I try to record myself and look at myself to correct all my mistakes and in this way, I get more confidence in speaking in front of the class”

“I record myself a lot because I get used more and more to speak English language without any fear everywhere”

– Overcoming shyness and stress

Shyness and stress are two main causes of increasing anxiety among students. Most participants talked about their past experiences and how they suffered from shyness and stress, and they controlled it or coped with it by imagining their audience as inanimate objects. The following quotes are examples.

“Most of the time When I gave presentation or speak in front of my classmates I felt so anxious and stressed. Sometimes I felt my heart pounding and beating more rapidly which made me feel so bad. So I managed to cope with all these awful shyness, stress and anxiety by imagining my classmates and my teacher as a teddy bears with different shape and color”

“Whenever I feel anxious when I speak in English I imagine myself alone whether I am inside class or outside”

– Reminding myself why I want to learn English

One of the participants explained the reasons behind choosing English department and how valuable it is becoming fluent in the English language for her. Also she points out that learning English is important for everyone because it is considering as an international language.

“Yes, I felt anxious a lot but I try to convince myself that English is very important nowadays in all aspects of life after graduation from university”

– Staying calm and thinking positively

Some of the participants mentioned that in some situations they felt very anxious, they tried to cope with this by speaking slowly and staying calm, thinking about different positive things and do not care about what will happen after they finished speaking in English.

“I try to stay calm and stop thinking about what they say after me. I concentrate on making myself calm at the moment”

“I tried to make myself calm by speaking slowly and using my own pronunciations not imitating English speakers accent”

– Control my breathing

One of the quite important points talked about by participants was increasing their heart beat and difficulty breathing while speaking in the English language. The coping method for this problem was thinking that there is no need to worry and everyone is making mistakes. They are not native speakers, therefore. making mistakes is very usual by any person.

“Yes, it happens to me to feel very anxious and even it get to breathing and heart problem, so I coped with it by telling myself I am not native speaker my nationality is not English. Therefore, making mistakes is ok”

“I suffered from anxiety a lot, but I told myself I will continue even if I made mistakes, I am not native speaker. Even my teachers are not native speakers, everyone make mistakes”

4.2.2 Coping methods provided by teachers as learned by students

– Role of Teachers

he participants referred to the main role of teachers to overcome anxiety among them, and this can be done by creating rapport which makes a better student-teacher relationship, employing teacher immediacy, creating an enjoyable and supportive classroom atmosphere, keep motivating students, giving feedback with positive words, not only stating corrective feedback. Thus, applying all these methods can influence students' self-efficacy and decrease anxiety. As a result, better academic performance will be achieved.

“I usually feel very anxious while presenting presentation, but whenever I wanted to stop and quite, my teacher said stop making yourself nervous, assume that you are telling a story to your friends. Thus, when I heard this from my teacher it really reduced my nervousness”

“I think of teachers put themselves in the shoes of students while teaching and create enjoyable class atmosphere this will decrease our anxiety”

“It happened to me to feel very anxious and stopped speaking, and suddenly my teacher overlap then when he realized I become better he asked me to continue, so I continued my presentation without any fear”

“Whenever I speak in English in front of the class I feel very anxious I am afraid that I will make lots of mistake, most of the time when I gave a presentation or spoke my teacher said keep going

making mistakes is fine we all learn from our own mistakes and at the same time he corrects all my mistakes in a very polite way so it dipped down my anxiety”

- Some recommendation suggested by the participants such as: providing training course

The participants recommended that the university administration can raise the professional and academic capability of the students by providing training courses so that they develop more skills in facing difficult tasks not only how to face English language anxiety. Some of those students consequently recommended counseling and training by psychologists to teach university students coping methods. The following quotes are examples:

“University administration can help students by providing some training course regarding how to deal with these kinds of psychological issues not only while speaking in English”

“I think it’s better for the university presidency to bring some educational experts to teach us how to control or cope with our English speaking anxiety or show us some tips how to overcome it when it suddenly happens to us”

“Nowadays, everything changed these changes include teaching methods too, unfortunately, some teachers still use old traditional methods of teaching English which is not help us to improve our speaking skills. Therefore, some of us feel anxious while speaking in English and this is because our teacher didn’t update himself. so it’s better for the university presidency to provide some recent teaching method courses for our teachers especially recent methods for improving our speaking skills in English”

5. Discussion

This study aimed to determine whether Kurdish EFL learners from departments of English language and English translation feel anxious while speaking in English. The questionnaire result showed that anxiety exists at a moderate level.

There are some studies similar to the current study conducted by (Ibrahim & Hamad, 2021; Ahmed, 2016) about investigating anxiety among EFL Kurdish learners in Kurdistan universities in both studies almost all the participants suffered from moderate level of anxiety while speaking in the English language. However, the level of anxiety varied from learner to learner. It was discovered that the primary reasons for anxiety were fear of making mistakes, fear of receiving poor feedback, and dread of speaking in front of others. In both studies the results were similar to the current study. This similarity is perhaps associated with the students background knowledge about English language. However, there is an efficient curriculum for teaching English in schools where students studied before going to universities. Yet, students can't communicate or speak in English language. This problem may be due to the fact that the main focus is on teaching grammar and less attention is paid to communicating in English in the preparatory schools. Another point is that teachers complain about the English language curriculums that is not suitable for school in Kurdistan because of shortage of time as all the four skills are not taught appropriately during the academic year. Beside there are a lot of technical and logistic problems at the schools. Therefore, students don't get enough chance to improve their speaking skill. This will create gaps inside the students minds, and they do not believe

in their ability to speak in English confidently. Hence, they face many obstacles at university because of poor background knowledge of English language speaking skills. Some students get anxious because they cannot master improving their English communication skills and following university lectures simultaneously. That is why most of the time, they are afraid to be negatively evaluated by their classmates and teachers while speaking in the English language.

he second research question is how the participants coped with these tense situations or how they reduced anxiety. At first, they all stated that they felt anxious while speaking in English due to negative evaluations by the people around them. Each participant mentioned coping methods to control their anxiety and improve their English speaking skills. Such as practicing the English language outside the classroom, using a mirror, self-recording, overcoming shyness and stress, reminding myself why I want to learn English, staying calm and positive thinking, and controlling my breathing were the main themes recognized from their interviews.

Similar to this study, a study was conducted (Yasuda & Nabei, 2018) to determine which strategies EFL learners use to break down their anxiety. The result was that the students employed preparation and positive thinking. Likewise, (Pabro-Maquidato, 2021) found that students coped with anxiety by reading English-language books for fun and education was a tactic that the participants used, putting their thoughts into writing, trying to overcome their shyness by practicing speaking in English and demand on constructive feedback from the students.

6. Conclusion

speaking anxiety is one of the common phenomena that can affect students' second language learning, and it harms students learning capacity. It will build up throughout an individual lifetime. Throughout this study, it has been evident that Kurdish learners struggle with moderate level of anxiety while speaking in the English language. Further, despite learners struggling with anxiety, some of them were capable of finding coping mechanisms to deal as appeared from their interviews. The emerging topics were listed as self-produced coping as initiated by the students and coping methods provided by teachers as learned by students.

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