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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Level of Foreign Language Anxiety among EFL Students: A comparative study of ALM and CLT

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ABSTRACT

Research into language anxiety has a long history in language learning and teaching, but rarely is it investigated in comparing the difference between students taught in a CLT class and an ALM class. For this reason, this study looked into learners' anxiety in ALM and CLT language classes. For the purpose of the study, 24 male English intermediate students were selected, 12 for CLT classroom and 12 for ALM. The researcher used The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Using an independent t-test, the results indicated that there was a significant difference between these two groups of learners in language anxiety. The result of this study confirms the superiority of CLT approach in excluding the emotional barriers, anxiety in particular. There are both practical and pedagogical implications to be taken into consideration by English instructors, for instance, to control the level of anxiety, in their classrooms by applying the findings of this study.

KEYWORDS

CLT, ALM, method, anxiety, language, affective factors, students.

ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

In past, teacher and teaching was the only focus of research in the discipline of foreign language teaching & learning. Yet there has been a shift towards learners and learning with the rise of humanistic approach which considered emotions and feelings as certain factors in language learning (Ormeci, 2013). One of the most important factors among affective variables is foreign language anxiety which influences second language learning. Oxford (1999) believes that language anxiety is one of the most important factors influencing foreign language learning.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process (Manawi, et al. 2024).

Further, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) defined language anxiety as "the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning (Orfan & Seraj 2022).

As stated above, affective variables have been brought into consideration since the emergence of communicative language teaching which put emphasis on emotions and feelings. This study is going to examine whether anxiety, one of the affective variables, is lower in CLT compared to a more traditional approach, ALM.

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This study provides information regarding the claim that CLT makes about the importance of lowering anxiety in language classes. In addition, it helps teachers to adopt the most proper teaching method regarding the classroom needs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Few research studies have sought to determine different perceptions and attitudes about language anxiety through comparing ALM and CLT taught in senior English class. Despite the recognized impact of teaching methodologies on foreign language anxiety, there is limited empirical research comparing the effects of ALM and CLT on students' anxiety levels. Existing literature lacks comprehensive studies directly comparing the impact of ALM and CLT on FLA, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about their effectiveness in reducing anxiety. Factors such as personality traits, prior experiences, and cultural backgrounds can influence students' anxiety levels, but how these interact with teaching methodologies is not well understood.

1.2 Objective of the Study

This study develops practical recommendations for educators to reduce foreign language anxiety based on findings from the comparison and identifies key factors within Audio-Lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching that contribute to students' anxiety levels.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This research aims to contribute valuable insights into effective language teaching strategies that prioritize learner well-being and facilitate language acquisition. Understanding the relationship between teaching methodologies and foreign language anxiety is crucial for improving language education practices. By identifying which methods are more effective in minimizing anxiety, educators can create more supportive learning environments that enhance student engagement, confidence, and overall success in acquiring a foreign language.

1.4 Research question

Is there a difference between the level of foreign language anxiety in ALM and CLT approaches?

1.5 Research Hypothesis

The learners in a CLT class have a lower level of anxiety compared to those of AL

2. Literature Review

Tallon (2009) Points out many factors determining the outcome of a learning process, including affective aspects, social context, meta-cognitive differences, learning style, personality characteristics, and cognitive abilities. He indicated that one of the most important affective variables in learning a second language is foreign language anxiety. The influence of anxiety on language learning has been pervasively reported in speech communication, educational psychology, and social psychology. By providing a reliable and valid measure to ascertain students' level of anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) tried to isolate foreign language anxiety from the other forms of anxiety. Language anxiety is the feeling of apprehension and tension specifically in second-language contexts, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994).

It was not until 1973 that "Anxiety" in second language learning attracted the attention of scholars. Considering the studies of Horwitz et al (1986), MacIntyre & Gardner (1989) and Muchnick & Wolfe (1982) in which they compared anxiety as one of the affective factors along with "the self-knowledge", "self-esteem" and "self-confidence" they believed that anxiety in foreign language learning has been more prominent than in other courses.

According to Crookall and Oxford (1991), serious language anxiety can greatly harm students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and eventually hinder proficiency in language acquisition. Researchers have consistently reported a negative correlation between virtually every aspect of educational achievement and a wide range of anxiety measures. (Covington & Omelich, 1987). In contrast, some other scholars (Seraj & Mujadidi, 2023). They stated that affective variables in general and particularly anxiety do not hamper the learning process of a language learner. They believe that this phenomenon will subside as the learner proceeds the course of learning.

Anxiety is believed to be an intuitive hindrance in language learning but it is a multi-faceted concept (Horwitz, 2010). MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) discuss three different approaches to anxiety: "Trait anxiety", "State anxiety" and "Situation specific anxiety". Trait anxiety is a rather stable personality characteristic, which is resistant to change. A person who suffers from trait anxiety is apt to feel nervous in many different situations (Spielberger, 1983). State anxiety, on the other hand, is a momentary state of feeling nervous that can vary in intensity as well as time (Goldberg, 1993). In other words, students with trait anxiety tend to feel anxious in many situations, while students with state anxiety consider some situations to be anxiety-provoking (Covington, 1992). Situation-specific anxiety is similar to trait anxiety in some ways, but it refers to a feeling of apprehension in a particular context or situation, such as math anxiety, or fear of public speaking and foreign language anxiety is associated with situation-specific anxiety.

Anxiety can be both a cause and an effect of failure in educational contexts. It is comprised of both cognitive and affective components. The affective side includes physiological elements such as racing heartbeat, sweaty palms, and forehead, or upset stomach, the cognitive side involves worry and negative thoughts. (Zeidner, 1995).

3. Methodology

For the purpose of this study, 24 students including 12 from an ALM and 12 from a CLT class were selected through convenient sampling. The samples were from among the students at Faryab University, senior English language class. The participants were male with a mean age of 23. The participants had intermediate level of proficiency in English and this was determined by the placement test that was given to the learners before attending the classes.

In order to measure the level of foreign language anxiety, The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), (Horwitz et al., 1986) was used. This test consists of 33 items whereas only 30 items were selected. Then the level of anxiety in both groups (CLT and ALM) were compared. The items in the questionnaire were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- "Strongly agree" 2- "Agree" 3- "neither agree nor disagree," 4-Disagree to 5- "Strongly Disagree. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was employed because it has been a widely acceptable instrument for ascertaining the level of anxiety in language classrooms. FLCAS is a reliable scale for its consistent results (Horwitz 1986; Aida, 1994; Rodrigues & Abreu, 2003).

3.1 Data Collection

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Questionnaire was administered and all 24 participants had 20 minutes to answer the questions. The instructions on how to answer the questions were given by the researcher. The participants were allowed to use their dictionary in order to check difficult vocabulary items.

3.2 Data Analysis

After collecting the data, independent T-test was run to show the mean of both tests. The independent T-test determined whether there was a statistically significant difference between the means in two unrelated (independent) groups.

4. Results and Discussion

This analysis evaluates the difference in anxiety levels between two groups, ALM and CLT, using descriptive statistics (Table 1) and an independent samples t-test (Table 2). Below is a comprehensive interpretation of the data presented in these tables, including implications of the statistical results.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics between the two groups. ALM group achieved a higher mean (99.17) in comparison with CLT group (76.33)

	Classes	Ν	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	
anxiey	nxiey Alm		99.17	11.519	3.325	
	Clt	12	76.33	9.576	2.764	

Participants in the ALM group reported mean anxiety levels that were significantly higher (99.17) than those in the CLT group (76.33), according to the descriptive statistics. This first discrepancy suggests that the two conditions or treatments—represented by the ALM and CLT groups—may have different effects on anxiety.

The range of anxiety scores within each group is measured by the standard deviation:

Compared to the CLT group (9.576), the ALM group's SD (11.519) is marginally higher.

While the disparities in standard errors (3.325 for ALM vs. 2.764 for CLT) show equal dependability in mean estimations, this shows that the ALM group exhibits more variability in anxiety levels than the CLT group.

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
					Sig.			95% Confidend Interval of the Difference		
	F	Sig.	t	df	`		Std. Error Difference	Lower	Uppe r	
anxiety Equal variances assumed	.211	.650	5.280	22	.000	22.833	4.324	13.865	31.80 1	
Equal variances not assumed			5.280	21.289	.000	22.833	4.324	13.848	31.81 9	

Table 2 shows the results of the independent sample t-test; there is a significant difference between the two groups; namely, CLT and ALM (p < .001, SD = 4.32).

F=0.211, p=0.650 is the result of the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances.

We may interpret the t-test findings under the assumption of equal variances since the p-value is greater than 0.05, indicating that the assumption of equal variances is not broken.

The observed difference in mean anxiety levels between the ALM and CLT groups is assessed for statistical significance using the independent samples t-test.

Degrees of Freedom (df): 22 t-statistic: 5.280 p-value: < 0.001

Average Disparity: 22.8334.324 is the standard error difference (SED), and the 95% CI is [13.865, 31.801].

p-value: A statistically significant difference in mean anxiety levels between the ALM and CLT groups is indicated by the t-test p value (<0.001). This outcome has a less than 0.1% chance of being the result of chance.

The conclusion that the difference between groups is unlikely to occur randomly is further supported by the high t-value (5.280). A significant difference in anxiety levels is indicated by the mean difference between the groups (22.833). Since it excludes zero, the 95% CI (13.865 to 31.801) validates the accuracy of this estimate. This implies that, in these experimental circumstances, the anxiety levels of the ALM group are consistently higher than those of the CLT group.

When compared to the CLT group, participants in the ALM group showed noticeably higher levels of anxiety.

The narrow confidence interval and the tiny standard error of the difference (4.324) confirm the robustness and consistency of the mean difference (22.833). Compared to the CLT condition, the ALM therapy or condition may cause more tension or anxiety.

On the other hand, the ALM group might have encountered a more demanding or unsettling setting.

These findings imply that the CLT condition may be more successful in lowering anxiety for researchers or practitioners.

Future research ought to examine the fundamental processes that underlie these variations, such as participant demographics, the type of interventions used, or environmental influences.

Anxiety levels in the ALM and CLT groups differ significantly, according to the statistical analysis, with the ALM group showing more anxiety. These results highlight how crucial it is to customize interventions in order to effectively control anxiety and urge more study to identify the variables influencing these variations.

This study's main goal was to determine whether students' anxiety levels in two different language-learning environments—the Audiolingual Method (ALM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)—differ significantly. Participants provided information on their anxiety levels in each situation via questionnaires, enabling a useful comparison. Students in the ALM environment reported considerably higher levels of anxiety than those in the CLT setting, according to the data, which showed a significant difference in anxiety levels.

The findings provide credence to the idea that the two teaching strategies have distinct effects on students' emotional states. The ALM group's mean anxiety level (99.17) was significantly higher than the CLT group's (76.33). According to statistical analysis, this difference was extremely significant (p < .001), highlighting the fact that the observed discrepancy was not the result of chance but rather represented a fundamental difference between the two teaching philosophies.

The intrinsic qualities of the teaching approaches provide one explanation for these results. With its emphasis on teacher-centered training, rote memorization, and repetition, the Audiolingual Method (ALM) may impose a strict and performance-oriented environment. By placing a strong emphasis on accuracy and reducing chances for individual or creative expression, such circumstances might increase anxiety. Conversely, the method of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) uses student-centered and humanistic strategies, fostering a more relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

These findings have important ramifications for curriculum designers and language instructors. Teachers can create environments that prioritize emotional well-being by using a heightened awareness of the relationship between teaching approach and student anxiety. According to the findings, using CLT strategies may lessen students' anxiety, which could improve their engagement and general learning results. The CLT approach supports the ideas of a humanistic education that recognizes students' feelings and uniqueness by placing a strong emphasis on communication and interpersonal interaction.

The observed variances could be caused by a number of variables. Because CLT is student-centered, learners can actively engage in language tasks, which fosters a sense of competence and independence. Additionally, CLT places a strong emphasis on using language in everyday situations, which may appeal to learners' innate incentives and lessen the anxiety that comes with contrived drills or error correction.

On the other hand, the ALM environment may inadvertently foster a high-stakes climate where mistakes are penalized, deterring risk-taking and heightening anxiety about receiving a poor grade. For language learners, who might already be nervous about speaking in a foreign language, such circumstances are especially difficult.

5. Conclusion

The study at hand investigated the matter of anxiety level difference between two distinctive language learning methods: CLT vs. ALM. The results show that there has been a significant difference between the aforementioned groups in the case of the anxiety level difference, in that the ALM group showed a higher level of anxiety.

It is recommended that a qualitative research is conducted on the difference of anxiety level between the two learning groups to substantiate the results achieved in this article. There are also other affective factors such as motivation and attitude in both environments that could be good subjects for further research.

Although the results offer insightful information, a number of limitations should be noted. Because the study relies on self-reported data, subjective bias may be introduced because students' judgments of anxiety may be impacted by external events or personal characteristics. Furthermore, the results' generalizability is constrained by the very small sample size (N=24). These results could be confirmed by larger, more varied studies that also examine other factors like student characteristics or cultural impacts.

Mixed-method designs may potentially be used in future research to provide qualitative insights to quantitative data. Interviews or classroom observations, for example, may provide insight into the particular dynamics of ALM and CLT environments that fuel fear. Longitudinal studies may also show how anxiety levels change over time in response to various instructional strategies.

This study emphasizes how teaching strategies have a big influence on how anxious students are in language learning settings. The findings unequivocally show that, in contrast to Communicative Language Teaching, the Audiolingual Method is linked to increased anxiety. Teachers can establish more encouraging and stimulating learning environments by emphasizing student-centered and humanistic methods, which will eventually promote students' emotional health in addition to their language skills. These results highlight the significance of reconsidering conventional approaches and adopting teaching approaches that put an emphasis on both clear communication and student comfort.

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Appendix 1

Sample Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

11. . I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

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

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

17. I often feel like not going to my language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

21. The more I study for a language test, the more con-fused I get.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree

30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.

Strongly agree/ Agree/Neither agree nor disagree/ Disagree/ Strongly disagree