# Analysing Communicative Anxiety in French among French Language Students at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Ahmad Amin Ismail[1] & Wan Ikhlas Wan Mohtar[2*]

[1]Department of Foreign Languages, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang, Malaysia
[2]Institute for Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Putra Infoport, 43400 Serdang, Selangor, Malaysia
wanikhlas@upm.edu.my
[*]Corresponding Author:

**Abstract:** Despite much research focusing on communicative anxiety in foreign languages, few studies have attempted to explore communicative anxiety in French, especially among French language students at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). In response to this gap, this study explores the communicative anxiety in the French language in a context where exposure to French is limited and illustrates the strategies of French language students in FBMK to reduce communicative anxiety in French. 30 undergraduate students who are studying French Language at FBMK were subjected to a background questionnaire and a questionnaire to measure communicative anxiety. Varimax rotated factor analysis projected students' anxiety scale through mean score accordingly with test anxiety coming as the highest total mean of 3.31. The findings also show that 26.7% of the participants avoid eye contact with the interlocutor to cope with communicative anxiety. The finding confirms the relationship between anxiety and year of study and provides students with strategies to cope with communicative anxiety.

## Introduction

Studies have indicated that anxiety is widespread across nearly all academic fields. While there appear to be some similarities between the causes and effects of anxiety, each discipline's form of worry and the anxiety experienced by students are somewhat distinct from one another. Among these particular anxiety experienced by students is foreign language anxiety (FLA). Numerous students experience heightened levels of anxiety and unease in their foreign language classes compared to other subjects (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989), with speaking situations being a primary source of this anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Indeed, foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been recognized as a significant barrier to the learning and proficient use of foreign languages (Dewaele et al., 2008; Williams & Andrade, 2008).

Although it is rather frequent, language anxiety is generally an undesirable feeling since it can have a detrimental effect on the process of learning a language. It is an issue which can be studied to concentrate our efforts on examining the variables that influence anxiety in order to help teachers not only to prevent it, but to respond to it appropriately, and help students enjoy learning a foreign language (Taly & Paramasivam, 2020). While research has been conducted on communicative anxiety in a Spanish university context (Santos et al, 2017; Arnaiz & Guillén, 2012) little attention has been given to communicative anxiety in French, especially among undergraduate French language students in the southeast Asia context.

Using a new data set on foreign language learning, we take on a new approach to the study of French language students in FBMK, UPM and look at the factors of their communicative anxiety and how they cope with it. We introduce the idea of foreign language anxiety (FLA) as a framework for understanding the factors contributing to communicative anxiety in the French language and how students reduce it.

Numerous studies suggest that foreign language anxiety is not just a theoretical concept investigated by scholars, but a genuine experience for numerous students (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Coryell & Clark, 2009; Kostić-Bobanović, 2009; Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Tallon, 2009; Von Wörde, 2003). Although the effects of anxiety on learning a foreign language have been studied since the 1970s (Scovel, 1978; Tobias, 1979), a general theory about anxiety in foreign language classrooms did not emerge until the 1980s, when Horwitz, the primary researcher in this field, presented it (Horwitz, 1995, 2000, 2001; Horwitz et al., 1986). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension are the three possible causes of foreign language anxiety, which is a distinct syndrome.

The majority of research on anxiety in foreign language learning has primarily focused on either Spanish (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Ewald, 2007; Horwitz et al., 1986; Marcos-Llinás & Juan-Garau, 2009) or Japanese (Aida, 1994; Kitano, 2001; Yashima, 2002). Studies involving English as a foreign language have been conducted in Japan (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004), Korea (Thompson & Lee, 2013), Chile (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002), and Venezuela (Rodriguez & Abreu, 2003). Only one study was conducted in Spain within a university setting (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2004).

This research aims to address two concerns in the current study. The first concern is to investigate the relationship between language anxiety and the year of study and explore the extent to which they determine and/or influence the level of anxiety in the learners. The year of study is important because the researchers expect to find differences in the level of anxiety between learners from different years. The second concern is how the students reduce their communicative anxiety in French.

## Literature Review

### Foreign Language Anxiety

Horwitz et al. (1986) characterized foreign language anxiety (FLA) in their widely recognized paper as "a multifaceted construct encompassing self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and actions associated with classroom language acquisition, stemming from the distinctive nature of language learning."

The research above also claims that no other academic area involves self-concept and self-expression to the same extent as foreign language study. This distinguishes the anxiety associated with learning a foreign language from other academic concerns. It is common to find students who perform well in other subjects agitated when learning a foreign language, though kids who are generally worried may be more likely to have FLA. Thus, there must be a unique facet of language learning that makes certain kids feel anxious (Santos et al., 2017).

Foreign or second language learning presents a unique challenge, as it presents "more potential for students to embarrass themselves, to frustrate their self-expression, and to challenge their self-esteem and sense of identity than almost any other learning activities" (MacIntyre, 1999). As a result, anxiety stemming from foreign or second language learning is distinct from other types of anxiety, even though it may be associated with them.

Chen & Chang (2004) found that test parameters and academic learning history were not predictive factors of foreign language anxiety. This shows that anxiety related to learning a foreign language is a type of situation-specific anxiety that is peculiar to learning a foreign language. These results support the idea of Horwitz et al. (1986) regarding a particular kind of anxiety related to learning a foreign language. An analysis of the development of research on foreign language anxiety prior to and following the release of Horwitz et al.'s hypothesis is required to provide more validation for this finding.

Another study by Sparks & Ganschow (1995) has described Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) as a chicken-and-egg phenomenon, questioning whether language difficulty leads to anxiety or vice

versa. Both perspectives have merit, as anxiety can hinder learning and performance while also being exacerbated by failure. MacIntyre (1995) acknowledged this cyclical relationship, noting that anxiety levels may rise as students experience setbacks. The relationship between language difficulty and anxiety may vary depending on the situation. While Sparks and Ganschow (2007) suggest that anxiety may stem from language difficulties in language learning contexts, it is worth noting that even proficient students experience FLA. Therefore, it is plausible that anxiety acts as both a cause and an effect of language difficulty.

Recent studies about foreign language anxiety and online French classes have been conducted by Tutton & Cohen (2024), García-Castro & O'Reilly (2022) and Côté & Gaffney (2021). These studies have shown that students prefer face to face classes more than online classes, FLA can also influence students' participation during online classes. Another study by Malik et al. (2020) noted that students' anxiety and fear are minimized when educators acknowledge that students' speaking processes with errors and mistakes are accepted.

*Causes for Speaking Anxiety*

Various factors contribute to speaking anxiety, as evidenced by research conducted by different scholars. Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) explored 26 factors affecting foreign language anxiety among 210 university students enrolled in language courses such as French, Spanish, German, and Japanese. They identified seven significant predictors of foreign language anxiety, including age, academic performance, travel history, prior language proficiency, anticipated course grades, perceived academic ability, and self-esteem. These factors collectively explain 40% of the variance in language learning anxiety.

Von Wörde (2003) identified several anxiety-inducing factors, such as speaking in front of others, language comprehension difficulties, fear of negative evaluation, and negative classroom experiences. Miskam and Saidalvi (2018) highlighted communication apprehension and test anxiety as significant contributors to overall anxiety levels among undergraduates. Furthermore, Razali et al. (2023) underlined that students experience anxiety with their assessments. Young (1994) found that teachers' critical attitudes also contribute to speaking anxiety. Other factors, including interpersonal communication (Ohata, 2005), teacher evaluation (Lucas et al., 2011), and classroom competitiveness (Williams and Andrade, 2008), have been recognized as sources of anxiety. Additionally, cultural differences may influence anxiety levels (Taly and Paramasivam, 2020).

Wilang and Vo (2018) discovered that female students tend to experience higher levels of anxiety, particularly in communication apprehension, evaluation anxiety, and overall foreign language anxiety compared to male students. They also found that younger learners generally exhibit more anxiety, especially concerning communication, evaluation, and speaking discomfort in English. This contrasts with Bailey et al.'s (2000) findings in a university setting, where older learners reported higher anxiety levels. Furthermore, students with the highest foreign language anxiety often share characteristics such as lower academic performance, younger age, and female gender, which manifest in observable behaviours like frequent eye contact with the teacher or camera, hand gestures, and self-repetition.

Santos et al. (2017) found that university students experience greater communicative anxiety compared to young professionals. Dewaele (2010) observed that individuals in their twenties exhibit the highest levels of communicative anxiety, which tend to decrease with age (Dewaele, 2013; Dewaele et al., 2008). Additionally, their study highlights the connection between communicative anxiety and language certifications, particularly in countries like Spain where such credentials hold significant importance.

## Methodology

*Participants*

This study involves 30 undergraduate students who are studying French Language at FBMK. The data is collected from 10 students from each year of study. 9 of them are males and 21 of them are females. All the students age are around 20 – 25 years old. The mean age of the participants was 22 years (SD = 1.13). The average age at which these participants started learning French was 20.9 years (SD = 1.09). These students are taking Bachelor of Arts in French Language Studies with Honors. Even though the teaching materials are in French, the teaching is mostly conducted in English, some in French and sometimes in Malay to help students understand better.

The majority of the participants (86.7%) listed Malay as their mother tongue, while 13.3% (n = 4) indicated Mandarin as their mother tongue. Following other studies on anxiety (Dewaele et al. 2008; Thompson and Lee, 2013) and adapted from Santos et al., (2017), self-ratings of language proficiency assessment were used. Participants were asked to rate their proficiency in French on a scale from 1 to 10 for listening, speaking, reading and writing. The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**. Competence among first year, second year and third year (N = 30).

|  | First year | | Second year | | Third year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | **Mean** | **SD** | **Mean** | **SD** | **Mean** | **SD** |
| Listening (max=10) | 4.1 | 1.1 | 5 | 1.25 | 5.6 | 1.17 |
| Speaking (max=10) | 4 | 0.82 | 5.5 | 1.65 | 5.3 | 1.34 |
| Reading (max=10) | 7.5 | 0.97 | 8 | 1.25 | 7.7 | 1.42 |
| Writing (max=10) | 6.5 | 0.53 | 6.7 | 1.64 | 5.8 | 1.48 |
| **Total (max=40)** | **22.1** | **2.38** | **25.2** | **3.94** | **24.6** | **3.98** |

*Data Collection*

There are 2 instruments used to collect the data: i) Background Questionnaire and ii) Anxiety Questionnaire. The background items were designed to obtain demographic and linguistic data of the participants. This questionnaire included the self-ratings of proficiency in French. The background questionnaire is in English. As for the anxiety questionnaire, the FLCAS questionnaire was downloaded from the internet. This questionnaire was adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986) and was adjusted for a French context. The FLCAS questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) is one of the most widely used scales to assess foreign language anxiety in the fields of second language acquisition, psychology and education. The FLCAS consists of 33 statements, aiming to assess communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation associated with language anxiety. Horwitz et al.'s theory (1986) of foreign language anxiety has been widely accepted with subsequent research acknowledging the uniqueness of foreign language anxiety and providing evidence that the FLCAS is a reliable tool. Communicative anxiety can develop over time. In this context, the participants were in contact with the French language for many years. Therefore, three items are related to their previous experience as learners of French.

The anxiety questionnaire used consists of 33 closed items. Participants were asked to rate statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) 'strongly disagree' to (5) 'strongly agree'. Internal consistency for this scale was measured and a Cronbach's α of 0.64 was obtained. This score matches the requirements to make the questionnaire valid (DeVellis, 1991). The anxiety questionnaire was in English.

## Findings and Discussions

*Dimension of Foreign Language Anxiety*

The first research question aims at analysing the factors of the anxiety questionnaire. To answer this research question, a Varimax rotated exploratory factor analysis using SPSS was carried out to explore for underlying dimensions of language anxiety. The result was a three factor solution with 33 items.

The first factor was 'Fear of negative evaluation' and indicated participants' fear of being negatively judged by others, their avoidance of circumstances requiring evaluation, and their belief that others would judge them negatively. This factor accounted for 17.13% of the total variance and included twelve items (1–12). The second factor, labelled as 'Test Anxiety', which indicated participants' worry of making mistakes, accounted for 10.89% of the total variance and compromised ten items (13–22). The third factor 'Communication Apprehension', which indicated the participants' apprehension when speaking French, accounted for 10.15% of the total variance and included to eleven items (23–33). The loading results are summarised in Table 2 (adapted from Santos et al, 2017).

**Table 2**. Varimax rotated loadings for factor analysis of the Anxiety Scale (N = 30)

| Item | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | $h^2$ |
|------|----------|----------|----------|-------|
| **Factor 1: Fear of negative evaluation** | | | | |
| 1. I get nervous when the French language lecturer asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance. | **0.76** | | | **0.65** |
| 2. I always feel that the other students speak the French language better than I do. | **0.72** | | | **0.53** |
| 3. I am afraid that my French language lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make. | **0.65** | | | **0.46** |
| 4. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in French class. | **0.58** | | | **0.41** |
| 5. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the French language. | **0.54** | | | **0.34** |
| 6. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of French language. | **0.53** | | 0.31 | **0.47** |
| 7. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the French language in front of other students. | **0.48** | | | **0.25** |
| 8. During French class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. | **0.46** | | | **0.22** |
| 9. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in French class. | **0.41** | 0.37 | | **0.30** |
| 10. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my French class. | **0.40** | | 0.35 | **0.30** |
| 11. I am usually at ease during tests in my French class. | **0.37** | | | **0.18** |
| 12. When I'm on my way to French class, I feel very sure and relaxed. | **0.26** | | | **0.12** |
| **Factor 2: Test anxiety** | | | | |
| 13. I worry about the consequences of failing my French language class. | | **0.76** | | **0.64** |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **14.** French class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind. | | **0.71** | | **0.55** |
| **15.** In French class, I can get so nervous, I forget things I know. | | **0.71** | | **0.55** |
| **16.** I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak French language. | | **0.69** | | **0.49** |
| **17.** French class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind. | | **0.64** | | **0.46** |
| **18.** I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in French class. | 0.38 | **0.58** | | **0.48** |
| **19.** The more I study for a French test, the more confused I get. | 0.44 | **0.51** | | **0.51** |
| **20.** I keep thinking that the other students are better at French language than I am. | 0.45 | **0.49** | | **0.47** |
| **21.** I get upset when I don't understand what the lecturer is correcting. | | **0.39** | 0.35 | **0.27** |
| **22.** I don't understand why some people get so upset over French language classes. | | **0.30** | | **0.12** |
| **Factor 3: Communication Apprehension** | | | | |
| **23.** I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak French language. | 0.33 | | **0.72** | **0.62** |
| **24.** I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for French class. | | | **0.68** | **0.47** |
| **25.** I often feel like not going to my French class. | 0.36 | | **0.65** | **0.55** |
| **26.** I feel confident when I speak in French language class. | | | **0.62** | **0.47** |
| **27.** Even if I am well prepared for French class, I feel anxious about it. | | 0.37 | **0.53** | **0.41** |
| **28.** I get nervous when I don't understand every word the French language lecturer says. | | 0.33 | **0.44** | **0.36** |
| **29.** It wouldn't bother me at all to take more French language classes. | | | **0.42** | **0.21** |
| **30.** I would not be nervous speaking the French language with native speakers. | 0.31 | | **0.40** | **0.27** |
| **31.** I get nervous when I don't understand every word the French language lecturer says. | | | **0.35** | **0.16** |
| **32.** I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French language class. | | | **0.34** | **0.15** |
| **33.** I don't worry about making mistakes in French class. | | | **0.32** | **0.18** |

## The Relationship between Communicative Anxiety and Year of Study

Table 3,4 and 5 (adapted from Santos et al., 2017) show the anxiety types of the participants. The type of anxiety is determined by measuring the mean score of the result taken from the FLCAS. The mean score of fear of negative evaluation was from items number 3, 4, 6, 8, 13, 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 32 and 33. Meanwhile, the mean score of test anxiety was obtained by measuring items number 7, 9, 10, 11,

12, 15, 21, 25, 26 and 30. Lastly, the result of communication apprehension was obtained by assessing the mean score of items number 1, 2, 5, 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 27, 29 and 31.

**Table 3**. Fear of Negative Evaluation

| Item | Statements | Mean score | | |
|:---:|:---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 3rd Year |
| 3 | I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in French class. | 3.5 | 2.1 | 2.9 |
| 4 | It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the French language. | 3.4 | 2.6 | 3.4 |
| 6 | During French class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. | 3.6 | 2.6 | 3.3 |
| 8 | I am usually at ease during tests in my French class. | 2.7 | 2.6 | 3.1 |
| 13 | It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my French class. | 3.3 | 1.9 | 2.5 |
| 19 | I am afraid that my French language lecturer is ready to correct every mistake I make. | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.7 |
| 20 | I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in French class. | 2.8 | 3.3 | 3.2 |
| 23 | I always feel that the other students speak the French language better than I do. | 3.3 | 3.4 | 4.1 |
| 24 | I feel very self-conscious about speaking the French language in front of other students. | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.1 |
| 28 | When I'm on my way to French class, I feel very sure and relaxed. | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| 32 | I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of French language. | 2.1 | 2.4 | 2.4 |
| 33 | I get nervous when the French language lecturer asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance. | 3.9 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | **Total mean score** | **3.12** | **2.76** | **3.13** |

As shown in Table 3, the third year students have the highest fear of negative evaluation which is 3.13 while second year and first year students have a mean score of 2.76 and 3.12, respectively.

**Table 4**. Test Anxiety

| Item | Statements | Mean score | | |
|:---:|:---|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| | | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 3rd Year |
| 7 | I keep thinking that the other students are better at French language than I am. | 3.5 | 3.2 | 4.2 |
| 9 | I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in French class. | 3 | 3.6 | 3.3 |
| 10 | I worry about the consequences of failing my French language class. | 4.4 | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| 11 | I don't understand why some people get so upset over French language classes. | 2.8 | 3.9 | 3.1 |
| 12 | In French class, I can get so nervous, I forget things I know. | 2.6 | 3 | 3.3 |
| 15 | I get upset when I don't understand what the lecturer is correcting. | 2.7 | 3.7 | 3.2 |
| 21 | The more I study for a French test, the more confused I get. | 2.3 | 2.1 | 2.4 |

| 25 | French class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind. | 2.3 | 3.4 | 3.3 |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|
| 26 | I feel more tense and nervous in my French class than in my other classes. | 2.7 | 2.5 | 3.1 |
| 30 | I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak French language. | 2.8 | 3.2 | 3 |
| | **Total mean score** | 2.91 | 3.25 | 3.31 |

The above table presents the mean score of test anxiety of the respondents. The third year students have the highest test anxiety which is 3.31 while third year and first year students have a mean score of 3.25 and 2.91, respectively.

**Table 5**. Communication Apprehension

| Item | Statements | Mean Score | | |
|------|------------|------------|---|---|
| | | 1st Year | 2nd Year | 3rd Year |
| 1 | I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French language class. | 3.1 | 2.9 | 3.2 |
| 2 | I don't worry about making mistakes in French class. | 2.3 | 3.7 | 3.4 |
| 5 | It wouldn't bother me at all to take more French language classes. | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| 14 | I would not be nervous speaking the French language with native speakers. | 3.1 | 2.5 | 1.9 |
| 16 | Even if I am well prepared for French class, I feel anxious about it. | 2.9 | 3.2 | 3.1 |
| 17 | I often feel like not going to my French class. | 1.9 | 2.2 | 2.2 |
| 18 | I feel confident when I speak in French language class. | 2.4 | 3.6 | 3 |
| 22 | I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for French class. | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.6 |
| 27 | I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class. | 3 | 3.1 | 2.9 |
| 29 | I get nervous when I don't understand every word the French language lecturer says. | 1.8 | 3.1 | 3.6 |
| 31 | I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak French language. | 3.4 | 2.6 | 2.7 |
| | **Total mean score** | **2.72** | **3.05** | **3.01** |

Table 5 presents the scores of test anxiety, the second year students have the highest communication apprehension which is 3.05 while third year and first year students have a mean score of 3.01 and 2.72, respectively.

Based on the result, it is evident that the year of study has a significant effect on all types of anxiety: fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety among French language students in FBMK.

*Coping Strategies for Communicative Anxiety*

The second research question involves finding the strategies of French language students in FBMK to reduce communicative anxiety in French. Based on Table 6, the study found that 8 of the students avoided eye contact to reduce their communicative anxiety in French, while positive thinking and practicing with friends came close with 7 and 5 students respectively. Other coping strategies reported are doing vlogs, practicing in front of the mirror, watching movies, listening to French songs and reading dictionary.

29

**Table 6**. Coping strategies for communicative anxiety

| Strategies that students use to reduce communicative anxiety in French class | No of Students | % |
|---|---|---|
| Avoiding eye contact | 8 | 26.7 |
| Positive thinking | 7 | 23.3 |
| Practice with friends | 5 | 16.7 |
| Do videos or vlogs of talking about daily life in French | 1 | 3.3 |
| Be confident | 1 | 3.3 |
| Practice when I have time before class | 1 | 3.3 |
| Keep learning basics French grammar, frequently listen to French songs to familiarise like being in native environment. | 1 | 3.3 |
| Reading as many French texts as I can to familiarise myself with the pronunciation | 1 | 3.3 |
| Watching movies, listening to French songs and try to sing | 1 | 3.3 |
| Reading dictionary | 1 | 3.3 |
| Practicing in front of mirror | 1 | 3.3 |
| Practicing by yourself a thousand times | 1 | 3.3 |
| Just be myself and never let the negative energy flow | 1 | 3.3 |
| **Total** | **30** | **100** |

This study explores the communicative anxiety in the French language in a context where exposure to French is limited and to illustrate the strategies of French language students in FBMK to reduce communicative anxiety in French.

The results show that there are significant differences in communicative anxiety between participants who have different years of study in French. One of the most interesting results of the current research study is that the students in their senior year have more anxiety than both of their junior classes. This might be because language at higher levels requires the students to develop more sophisticated and authentic communication skills. As a result of this increased complexity, students might feel less at ease speaking French both inside and outside of the classroom and may become more nervous. This finding is the same as past findings in the studies by Marcos-Llinás and Juan-Garau (2009) and Ewald (2007) for the Spanish classroom and also Kitano´s (2001) for the Japanese classroom.

However, we need to raise the question – why does the students think that avoiding eye contact can help them cope with anxiety? From the researcher's observation and the data taken, we can propose that avoiding eye contact is a reaction from the participants (caused by shyness and lack of confidence) when they think they are being judged by their peers or their surroundings while speaking French. According to Ding et al. (2024), FLCA showed significant negative correlations with overall presentation performance, particularly in participants' vocal delivery, enthusiasm, and eye contact. Therefore, avoiding eye contact is not a strategy to lower or eliminate anxiety in the foreign language classroom but a method used by the participants to cope with anxiety. Furthermore, eye contact is an important element to have better learning outcomes (Mohammad & Kamran, 2023). Nonverbal cues, such as gestures and eye contact are very important in learner engagement when speaking a second language (Aubrey & Philpott, 2023). Therefore, foreign language students must address their shyness and lack of confidence to overcome anxiety in speaking in foreign language classes.

Some limitations might be related to collecting our data and interpreting our results. One of the limitations of this study is that it only focuses on French language students in UPM and may not be representative of other French language learners around the world.

It is recommended that future research should examine how teaching can be organized to help students address their shyness and lack of confidence in speaking French. The relationship between teaching and shyness and lack of confidence needs to be explored further because this can help students have better experience learning French.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between language anxiety and the year of study and explore the extent to which they determine and/or influence the level of anxiety in the learners and how the students reduce their communicative anxiety in French. This study was conducted by asking 30 French language undergraduate students through questionnaires.

As a conclusion, the year of study has a significant impact on communicative anxiety in French. The complexity and the level of mastery expected as the study year progresses heighten the anxiety and fear in students to speak French. Therefore, the level of anxiety is higher among year 3 students compared to year 1 students. Time also plays a major role as contact learning time for students with the language is shortened year by year. The strategies used to cope with communicative anxiety in French are avoiding eye contact, positive thinking, practicing with friends, doing vlogs, practicing in front of the mirror, watching movies, listening to French songs and reading dictionary.

## Co-Author Contribution

The authors confirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Author 1 completed the fieldwork, wrote the introduction, the research methodology the conclusion and recommendations for future research, analysed, interpreted the results statistically, and prepared the literature review. Author 2 discussed the findings, organized the framework and reviewed the paper.

## References

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

Arnaiz, P., & Guillén, F. (2012). Foreign language anxiety in a Spanish university setting: Interpersonal differences. *Revista de Psicodidáctica*, 17(1),5-26.

Aubrey, S., & Philpott, A. (2023). Second language task engagement in face-to-face and synchronous video-based computer-mediated communication modes: Performances and perceptions. *System*, *115*, 103069.

Bailey, P., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Daley, C. E. (2000). Correlates of anxiety at three stages of the foreign language learning process. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *19*(4), 474-490.

Campbell, C. M., & Ortiz, J. (1991). Helping students overcome foreign language anxiety: A foreign language anxiety workshop. *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications*, *1*(1), 153-168.

Casado, M. A., & Dereshiwsky, M. I. (2001). Foreign language anxiety of university students. *College Student Journal*, *35*(4), 539-552.

Casado, A., & Dereshiwsky, I. (2004). Effect of educational strategies on anxiety in the second language classroom: An exploratory comparative study between U.S. and Spanish first semester university students. College Student Journal, 38(1), 23-35.

Chen, T. Y., & Chang, G. B. (2004). The relationship between foreign language anxiety and learning difficulties. *Foreign language annals*, *37*(2), 279-289.

Coryell, J. E., & Clark, M. C. (2009). One right way, intercultural participation, and language learning anxiety: A qualitative analysis of adult online heritage and nonheritage language learners. *Foreign language annals*, *42*(3), 483-504.

Côté, S., & Gaffney, C. (2021). The effect of synchronous computer-mediated communication on beginner L2 learners' foreign language anxiety and participation. *The Language Learning Journal*, *49*(1), 105-116.

DeVellis, R. F. 1991. *Scale Development Theory and Applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Dewaele, J. M. (2002). Psychological and sociodemographic correlates of communicative anxiety in L2 and L3 production. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, *6*(1), 23-38.

Dewaele, J. M. (2010). Multilingualism and affordances: Variation in self-perceived communicative competence and communicative anxiety in French L1, L2, L3 and L4. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*, 48(2-3), 105-129.

Dewaele, J. M. (2013). The link between foreign language classroom anxiety and psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism among adult bi-and multilinguals. *The Modern Language Journal*, *97*(3), 670-684.

Dewaele, J. M., Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2008). Effects of trait emotional intelligence and sociobiographical variables on communicative anxiety and foreign language anxiety among adult multilinguals: A review and empirical investigation. *Language learning*, *58*(4), 911-960.

Ding, X., Chen, M., &amp; Xu, Q. (2024). Anxiety and enjoyment in oral presentations: a mixed-method study into Chinese EFL learners' oral presentation performance. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching*. https://doi.org/10.1515/iral-2023-0161

Ewald, J. D. (2007). Foreign language learning anxiety in upper-level classes: Involving students as researchers. *Foreign Language Annals*, *40*(1), 122-142.

García-Castro, V., & O'Reilly, J. (2022). Foreign language anxiety and online engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic: A comparison between EMI and FMI university students. *English Teaching & Learning*, *46*(3), 273-291.

Gregersen, T., & Horwitz, E. K. (2002). Language learning and perfectionism: Anxious and non-anxious language learners' reactions to their own oral performance. *The Modern Language Journal*, *86*(4), 562-570.

Horwitz, E. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, *21*, 112-126.

Horwitz, E. K. (1995). Student affective reactions and the teaching and learning of foreign languages. *International Journal of Educational Research*, *23*(7), 573-579.

Horwitz, E. K. (2000). Horwitz comments: It ain't over'til it's over: On foreign language anxiety, first language deficits, and the confounding of variables. *Modern Language Journal*, 256-259.

Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign language classroom anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, *70*(2), 125-132.

Kitano, K. (2001). Anxiety in the college Japanese language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, *85*(4), 549-566.

Kostić-Bobanović, M. (2009). Foreign language anxiety of university students. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, *22*(3), 47-55.

Liu, M., & Jackson, J. (2008). An exploration of Chinese EFL learners' unwillingness to communicate and foreign language anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, *92*(1), 71-86.

Lucas, R. I., Miraflores, E., & Go, D. (2011). English language learning anxiety among foreign language learners in the Philippines. *Philippine ESL Journal*, *7*(94-119).

MacIntyre, P. D. (1995). How does anxiety affect second language learning? A reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, *79*(1), 90-99.

MacIntyre, P. D. (1999). Language anxiety: A review of the research for language teachers. In D. J. Young (Ed.), Affect in foreign language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere. Boston: McGraw-Hill. pp. 24-45

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and second-language learning: Toward a theoretical clarification. *Language learning*, *39*(2), 251-275.

MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1994). The subtle effects of language anxiety on cognitive processing in the second language. *Language learning*, *44*(2), 283-305.

Marcos-Llinás, M., & Garau, M. J. (2009). Effects of language anxiety on three proficiency-level courses of Spanish as a foreign language. *Foreign language annals*, *42*(1), 94-111.

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

Miskam, N. N., &amp; Saidalvi, A. (2018). Investigating English language speaking anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate learners. Asian Social Science, 15(1), 1-7

Mohammad, R. F., & Kamran, M. (2023). Examining the efficacy of online learning in nurturing students' learning: an analysis of students' experiences. *Asian Association of Open Universities Journal*, *18*(3), 218-232.

Ohata, K. (2005). Potential sources of anxiety for Japanese learners of English: Preliminary case interviews with five Japanese college students in the US. TESL-EJ, 9(3), 1-21.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (1999). Factors associated with foreign language anxiety. *Applied psycholinguistics*, *20*(2), 217-239.

Razali, F. A., Dasman, A., Dzulkifli, N., Mohamed, M., & Mohammed, N. (2023). Students' Anxiety Level in Learning Calculus 1 during the COVID-19 Endemic. *Gading Journal for Social Sciences,* 26(2), 64-74.

Rodríguez, M. X., & Abreu, O. (2003). The stability of general foreign language classroom anxiety across English and French. *The Modern Language Journal*, *87*(3), 365-374.

Santos, A., Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Communicative anxiety in English as a third language. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *20*(7), 823-836.

Scovel, T. (1978). The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. *Language learning*, *28*(1), 129-142.

Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (2007). Is the foreign language classroom anxiety scale measuring anxiety or language skills?. *Foreign language annals*, *40*(2), 260-287.

Tallon, M. (2009). Foreign language anxiety and heritage students of Spanish: A quantitative study. *Foreign Language Annals*, *42*(1), 112-137.

Taly, B. C., & Paramasivam, S. (2020). Speaking anxiety among postgraduate international students in the academic context of a university in Malaysia. *International Journal of Linguistics*, *12*(1), 198.

Thompson, A. S., & Lee, J. (2013). Anxiety and EFL: Does multilingualism matter? *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *16*(6), 730-749.

Tobias, S. (1979). Anxiety research in educational psychology. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *71*(5), 573.

Tutton, M., &amp; Cohen, D. L. (2024). Foreign language anxiety and self-disclosure in online university French classes. *Language Teaching Research*, 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688231221392

Von Worde, R. (2003). Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety. *Inquiry,* 8(1), 1-15.

Wilang, J. D., &; Vo, T. D. (2018). The complexity of speaking anxiety in a graduate EFL classroom. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 15(3), 682-699.

Williams, K. E., & Andrade, M. R. (2008). Foreign language learning anxiety in Japanese EFL university classes: Causes, coping, and locus of control. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *5*(2), 181-191.

Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Journal*, *86*(1), 54-66.