



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#3927-3955

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21300143>

Affective Experiences in Second Language Learning: An Ecological Perspective on Anxiety and Performance in ESL Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language anxiety is widely recognized as one of the most influential affective factors shaping second language learning. While previous research has primarily examined anxiety as an individual psychological construct, recent ecological perspectives emphasize that learners' emotional experiences develop through continuous interactions with teachers, peers, and classroom environments. This study investigates the affective experiences of university ESL learners from an ecological perspective, with particular emphasis on the influence of foreign language anxiety on classroom participation and academic performance.

A mixed-methods research design was employed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of learners' affective experiences. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seventeen university ESL learners and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework with the support of NVivo software. Quantitative data were gathered from 432 respondents using an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Descriptive statistics, graphical analysis, Spearman's rank-order correlation, and Chi-square tests were used to analyse the quantitative data.

The findings revealed that learners experienced moderate levels of foreign language anxiety, particularly during speaking activities, oral presentations, and situations involving fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation. The quantitative results further demonstrated that anxiety adversely influenced learners' concentration, classroom engagement, and perceived academic performance. Teacher support emerged as the most influential ecological factor, with significant relationships observed between teacher support and the major dimensions of foreign language anxiety. The qualitative findings complemented these results by illustrating how learners' emotional experiences were shaped by classroom interaction, peer relationships, teacher feedback, and the broader learning environment.

The study concludes that foreign language anxiety is a multidimensional and context-dependent phenomenon that cannot be understood solely through individual psychological characteristics. Instead, learners' affective experiences emerge through dynamic interactions between personal, social, and instructional factors. These findings contribute to the ecological understanding of second language learning and highlight the importance of creating supportive classroom environments that foster learners' confidence, participation, and academic success.

Keywords: *Affective Experiences, Foreign Language Anxiety, Ecological Perspective, Second Language Learning, Classroom Participation, Teacher Support, And Academic Performance.*

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Language learning is not solely a cognitive process; it is also profoundly shaped by learners' emotional experiences. Among the various affective factors that influence second language acquisition, foreign language anxiety has consistently been identified as one of the most significant barriers to successful language learning. Learners often experience nervousness, fear of making mistakes, communication apprehension, and concerns about negative evaluation while using a second language. These emotional experiences influence learners' willingness to communicate, classroom participation, confidence, and overall academic performance. Consequently, understanding the role of affective experiences has become increasingly important within the field of second language acquisition (SLA), particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms.

Early research on foreign language anxiety primarily conceptualized anxiety as an individual psychological characteristic that negatively affected language performance. However, more recent developments in second language research argue that learners' emotions cannot be fully understood by examining individual factors alone. Instead, emotions emerge through continuous interactions between learners and their social, instructional, and physical environments. This ecological perspective views language learning as a dynamic process in which teachers, peers, classroom practices, institutional culture, and learning contexts collectively shape learners' affective experiences. Consequently, anxiety should not be regarded merely as an internal emotional state but as a socially situated phenomenon that develops through learners' ongoing engagement with their learning environment.

University ESL classrooms provide a particularly relevant context for investigating these affective experiences. Students are frequently required to participate in discussions, deliver oral presentations, respond to teachers' questions, and complete assessments in English. Such communicative demands often expose learners to situations in which they fear making mistakes or being negatively evaluated by teachers and classmates. While some learners perceive these experiences as opportunities for language development, others experience considerable emotional distress that limits classroom participation and negatively influences academic achievement. The extent to which classroom ecology, including teacher support, peer interaction, and the learning environment, contributes to these emotional experiences remains an important area of investigation.

Although a substantial body of literature has examined foreign language anxiety, relatively fewer studies have explored learners' affective experiences through an ecological perspective that integrates both individual emotions and contextual influences. Furthermore, many previous investigations have relied exclusively on either quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews, limiting a comprehensive understanding of learners' emotional experiences. The present study addresses this gap by employing a mixed-methods research design to investigate foreign language anxiety among university ESL learners. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with seventeen participants and analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework with the support of NVivo software. Quantitative data were collected from 432 university students using an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), enabling the study to examine both the prevalence of anxiety and its relationship with ecological classroom factors.

By integrating qualitative and quantitative findings, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of how foreign language anxiety is experienced, interpreted, and shaped within university ESL classrooms. More specifically, it examines the influence of anxiety on learners'

classroom participation and academic performance while exploring the role of teacher support, peer interaction, and classroom environment in shaping affective experiences. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of ecological research in second language acquisition and provide practical insights for teachers, curriculum designers, and educational institutions seeking to create emotionally supportive language learning environments that foster learners' confidence, participation, and academic success.

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To investigate the level and nature of foreign language anxiety among ESL learners in university classrooms.
2. To examine the influence of foreign language anxiety on learners' classroom participation and academic performance.
3. To explore how ecological factors, including teacher support, peer interaction, and classroom environment, shape ESL learners' affective experiences and anxiety.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the affective experiences and levels of foreign language anxiety among ESL learners in university classrooms?
2. How does foreign language anxiety influence learners' classroom participation and academic performance?
3. How do teacher support, peer interaction, and classroom environment influence ESL learners' affective experiences and anxiety from an ecological perspective?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The present study contributes to the contemporary emerging research on affective experiences in second language acquisition. The study investigates the emotional experiences of language learners through an ecological perspective. Although, language anxiety has been extensively investigated in research, however the emotional experiences of language learners and its relation with ecological factors relatively needs to be explored in Pakistan. There is a fewer attention has paid over the dynamic interaction of language learners with society, culture, and classroom related factors. In this study, the selection of ecological view has increased the level of understanding of learners' anxiety at psychological level, personal level, and also broadening the understanding of ecological factors of classrooms of ESL learners. The learning environment has deeply examined through these environmental factors such as classroom climate, peer interaction, teacher support and behavior, and contextual experiences.

The study is particularly significant for theoretical and practical reasons. Theoretically, this study enhances the existing knowledge of language anxiety through elaborating factors in ecological theory with respect to the two variables such as language anxiety and learners' performance. The findings suggested that emotional experiences of language learner are not only psychological states, however it is collectively composed with ecological systems. Therefore, the study provides comprehensive understanding of affective experiences of English learners. It provides further support to continue research in applied linguistics and language acquisition research.

Practically, the study may become a guide for the educators, curriculum developers, English language teachers, educational departments, and researchers because they can identify the cause of language anxiety through analysis of ecological factors in classroom environment. The relationship between language anxiety and learners' performance provides a deep, valuable insights for teachers to create learner-centered classroom, adopt supportive pedagogical

strategies, and inclusive classroom environment. The outcomes of this study guide to the academic planner for including learning fun-based activities for creating anxiety free environment, supportive pedagogical practices, and positive classroom interaction between peers. Moreover, the curriculum developers may consider the language anxiety a disastrous factor or obstacle between affective learning. Therefore, they may design some activities which reduce the language anxiety in class and make the learning a fun practice. It may enhance the learners' confidence and participation in ESL classrooms.

Furthermore, in this study, the mixed-method research design has implemented which contribute methodologically for further researches in future. Because the employment of mixed-method study approach collected the qualitative and quantitative data through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings at each point provides an in-depth comprehensive understanding of affective emotional experiences of language learners and their performance in ESL classrooms. Additionally, the use of Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis and the use of adapted questionnaire by (FLCAS), enhance the credibility, validity, and trustworthiness of the research findings.

Consequently, this study provides multiple factors for future research for investigating affective variables in second language learning. The research may utilize the findings of this research in further educational settings, in additional ecological factors, and at different population through observing the change in learner's emotional experiences. In this way, this study contributes to the continued development of language anxiety among language learners through affective experiences in ecological settings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Research

In the past times, it has been widely acceptable that research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) solely connected with cognitive abilities of language learning such as linguistic competence, memory, and learning strategies. The cognitive development of learners was at central place to be discussed; however, the emotional variables were considered as secondary items for research. They predominantly observed emotional factors only at the marginal place of language learning outcomes. However, the contemporary developments in SLA and educational psychology creates a central position for understanding and analyzing the affective experiences of language learning. Initially the emotional development and its outcomes were at peripheral position; however, the emergence of Positive Psychology and "affective turn" in SLA shift the role of emotions at the central place. Dewaele and Li (2020) stated that emotions research in SLA went through from three different phases. Firstly, the language learning experience was based on cognitive abilities of learners instead of focusing on emotions. Secondly, they analyzed the importance of anxiety, primarily focused on Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). Thirdly, in contemporary research, they primarily focus on the complexity and multidimensionality of learner's emotional experiences during learning.

After the emergence of Positive Psychology, it is understood that emotions will be evaluated as dynamic, socially and culturally dependent variables, and context-dependent. Instead of analysis one single state of emotions, the researchers simultaneously view multiple emotional experiences of foreign language learners. Dewaele and Li (2020) states that emotions are discussed as "fuel" of language learning because they depend on emotional strength for motivation, persistence, and overall success of learning language. This perspective shifts the old concepts that emotions were observed as an obstacle for learning language, however, they consider emotional mechanism as an important one in which learners reflect, respond, and

The contemporary researches support the dynamic understanding of affective experiences of learning language. Dong, Liu, and Yang (2022) analyzed the relationship between motivation, expectancy-value motivation, self-rated language proficiency, Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE), and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) among Chinese students of the high school. They investigated the co-existence of both emotions as the positive and negative emotions. They elucidated that the language learners simultaneously experience from high to lower emotional states from enjoyment to anxiety. These two emotions co-exist at the same time, instead of exclusive states. Moreover, they associated the enjoyment as positive emotion with motivational and proficiency level. However, the negative emotions associated with demotivation in the form of anxiety and stress while learning language. The finding of these researchers challenged the simplest assumptions that the language learners experience either positive or negative emotion each time, however it provides them nuanced understand of the emotional complexity in language learning contexts.

In recent studies, it has been widely highlighted the coexistence of multiple emotions in Positive Psychology. The researchers observe multidimensional emotions as boredom, sadness, anxiety, enjoyment, and motivation simultaneously while learning a foreign language. Zhou and Liu (2026), examined the positive emotions as enjoyment and negative emotions as boredom and anxiety in foreign language learning classrooms. The results of their studies explicitly addressed that the negative emotions as anxiety badly affect the examinations of the students, and boredom leads towards disengagement and poor self-efficacy, however the positive emotions associated with the positive perception of learning. Furthermore, the research indicates that emotional experiences are not only shaped by the classroom activities and environment, however, it is based on the social, cultural, and psychological influences. For example, communication norms in a society, examination and evaluation based academic activities, and face-saving concerns.

Furthermore, the researches indicates that the cognitive process is also affected by the emotional influence. The emotional state of a person affects the memory, problem-solving skill, attention span, decision power, and enjoyment processing throughout the life. The positive emotional state positively effects on the learners' behavior, repertoire, cognitive process, thought actions, and enhance their exploratory nature towards language. In contrast, the negative emotional state badly effects the cognitive abilities of language learning and decrease the attention span. The relationship between cognition and emotional state directly influences the performance of learner, because it is not merely psychological factor to understand the relation between cognition and emotional states. The Broaden-and-Build Theory described the presence of positive and negative emotional states and their influence over the performance of learner.

In Affective SLA research, the recognition and emotional experiences are deeply connected with the learning environment. In ancient studies, the emotional state was being discussed as the cognition and psychological state of mind instead of discussing it with reference of learning experience. However, in recent work, the researchers focus on the development of emotional state of the learner for effective results. Peng's (2012) elucidated research on willing to communicate and its ecological perspective in Chinese EFL classrooms; he described that the emotional learning experience of a student depends on various factors such as motivation, classroom climate, social and cultural factors, cognitive factors, and the linguistic competence of students etc. The study highlights that the emotional development of a student's cannot be measure without considering the ecological factors serious in which he/she occurs. Emotional

learning experience distracts through the classroom dynamics, individual psychological characteristics, different structures of institutes and expectations from society and its culture. Kasbi and Elahi Shirvan (2017) experimented on speaking anxiety that how students felt bad while communicating in English language, highlighted their emotional experiences while interacting in various multiple ecological systems. The author utilized Bronfenbrenner's ecosystem model for knowing the learner's belief and interest, linguistic and cognitive factors, classroom ecological systems, and broader socio-cultural influence over learners. The findings suggested the results that emotional experience of learner is not subjective, however we need to depend on context information for complete understanding of the world. It cannot be limited to just subjective psychological characteristics. This ecological perspective reflects the understanding of anxiety because they tried to understand the human's emotional perspective that how it fluctuates from each state to another when they communicate between different learners and environment.

The ecological understanding of linguistic experiences deeply associates with the contemporary theories of dynamics systems in SLA. According to this perspective, emotions are not static in nature, however these are dynamic. These keep on changing and evolving on the basis of different time, context and culture. Learners face anxiety at various levels because of different factors such as on the basis of different nature of difficult and complex tasks, teachers' strict behavior, peer relationship, and institutional experiences. It varies in nature from one level to another. It shows that the emotional fluctuations are dynamic in nature instead of fixed position. Therefore, the researchers require different methodologies for deeper understanding of languages to decode the individual perception and contextual influence. They suggested to use mixed-method approaches for investigating learners subjective experience through qualitative method and examine the emotional experience quantitatively.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework can truly depict the development of emotional and psychological state of English learner on the basis of ecological factors. The learning outcomes depend on the emotional state of the learner. However, it must be examined through a proper theoretical framework. In recent researches, it is widely expressed that emotions are not merely the psychological state, it must be observed under the strict, complex system which is based on the social, cultural, cognitive, and motivational factors. Therefore, these are the theoretical frameworks which contribute to navigate the language learning including Broaden-and-Build Theory, Control-Value Theory, Social Cognitive Theory, and Ecological Theory.

Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory is about the projection of positive emotions in educational environment. It mainly focuses on the positive affect on learning that positive emotions increase learners' cognitive and psychological states for learning and memorizing things for longer period of time. In contrast to negative emotions which evokes defensive mechanisms in learners' mind, narrow down their attention span towards learning, however; positive emotions motivate and encourage them to learn in creativity, exploration of new things, showcase a confident, and resilient attitude towards obstacles while learning. Therefore, in learning, learners' attention depends on their level of interest, curiosity, and joy. They participate actively when they are happy. This theory explains the role of positive psychology while learning English language. Trebits (2025) argues that positive emotions must broaden the cognitive flexibility of the learners, psychological sustainability for performing actions and interacting with environment while language learning. The research shows that the positive emotions are not only make the classroom pleasant, however; it is also an essential factor to contribute the language learning success.

The second major contribution theories of theoretical framework are Pekrun's Control-Value Theory of Achievement Emotions. This theory investigated two appraisals for English language learners such as: perceived value and perceived control. Perceived control means that the learners' belief that they complete task for academic purposes and get results. However, the perceived value means that how much benefit, they will get to learn those tasks. Positive emotions are higher when they have high control and high value of perceived tasks. However, negative emotions arise when the learners start doubting themselves and their learning activities. They could not implement their academic tasks in their real time situations. In contemporary world, it is widely examined that those learners who consider themselves competent enough to learn language and view language as a valuable skill, they enjoy language learning more and have low level of anxiety. In contrast, those students who has less perceive control, they are more stressed and frustrated. Consequently, it is observed that those who are happy while learning language, they passionately engage with others and achieve high eloquence. However, the negative emotions may reduce participation and reduce learning outcomes too.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory provides different insights for understanding of language learning. It revolves around the self-efficacy because it is all about the individual's belief about their learning abilities that what they learn, they can successfully perform those tasks. Self-efficacy is based on individual's motivation, persistence, effort, control, and emotional reactions. Those learners who belief that they can perform task successfully, they come across confidence and motivation, however those who afraid of learning language, their low self-efficacy becomes the cause of anxiety and avoidance behavior. Empirical studies support the relationship between self-efficacy and language learning. Woodrow (2022) examined the writing anxiety because of low self-efficacy because they were afraid of writing, however with positive self-efficacy, the university students can easily write in English. Similarly, Zhou, Wang, and Wang (2022) elucidated the learning engagement and use of regulated learning strategies. The results clarified that the self-belief of the learners' shape their emotional state and academic performance excellence. It emphasizes the importance of learners' confidence and perceived competence.

As the psychological theories explains the importance of cognition and mental capabilities of learners, similarly, ecological studies explain the interaction between learners and their environments. The researcher argues that the ecological studies depend on the chain of continuous interaction between peers, classroom practice, sociocultural contexts, and teacher guidance. According to this view, the affective experience of learners is not only internal, or not completely external, however it is a mixture of internal and external learning which depends on the relationship between learners and the environment. Peng's (2012) demonstrated the ecological study of the language learners and their emotional experiences depend on the multiple factors which are interconnected at various educational institutes and its environment. Moreover, Kasbi and Elahi Shirvan (2017) highlight that anxiety emerges among language learners because of their personal, social, and cultural factors such as language competence, classroom dynamics, teacher attitude, and broader social and cultural reasons. Ecological study is highly relevant with the present study because this is aligned because they acknowledge that anxiety and performance of learners cannot be measured without examining classroom interaction and environment. Emotional experiences of the learners depend on the composition of classroom interaction, peer and teacher relationship, assessment practice, and communicative practices, classroom climate, and teacher support. Consequently, ecological

theory is a comprehensive framework for measuring anxiety through collecting data about emotional, cognitive, psychological, social, and cultural aspects of learning.

In Second Language Acquisition (SLA), there are many variables for research but Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has attained significant importance and scholarly attention. In language process, anxiety is most influential factor to study in contemporary world to study language learning and its outcomes. The rapid change in research interest is occurred because the language learners found themselves in a situation of self-consciousness, social and cultural evaluation. Therefore, many participants face anxiety and it affects their learning, confidence, and academic performance.

The ideology of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLCA) was proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), they defined Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) which is later associated with language learning contexts. It is quite different from the general anxiety. It emerges at low proficiency level of communication because the learners do not possess high attributes of language competency. Horwitz highlighted that there are classroom emotional challenges because learners have to pass through from linguistic information and evaluation in academic tasks, and competition between peers. Therefore, anxiety become the essential component of many learners' journey.

The empirical research for Foreign Language Anxiety has substantial presence in contemporary world. A large scale-meta-analysis has reviewed a negative relationship between language learning and anxiety across thousands of English learners. The results shows that the high level of anxiety generally produce lower level of language learning, development and achievement of language performance. These findings proves that anxiety makes the language learning a complex procedure rather than a productive one.

Horwitz et al. (1986), Foreign Language Anxiety consists of three different dimensions: fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. These three major dimensions continuously utilize for measuring anxiety for contemporary anxiety research. It provides a theoretical scale for measurement known as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It remains widely used scale for the anxiety measurements.

Communication apprehension means the learners' fear or nervousness when they communicate in the target language. This contains interaction and communication. In this process, the speaker remains silent during classroom activities, class discussion, become anxious while responding to teachers, and facing difficulty while expression their thoughts instead of using their linguistic knowledge to share the ideas.

The contemporary research provides many evidences that behind the communication apprehension, there must be anxiety while speaking. In Pakistan undergraduate study, the students face communication apprehension because they face anxiety in language learning and practicing. They reported nervousness while delivering presentation, solving exams questions, and participate in communication activities. Students has fear of making mistakes as well. Consequently, it suggests that the speaking skill requires most of the emotional energy.

Furthermore, Peng's ecological investigation is based on an ideology that learners' decision to participate in classroom communication is deeply enrooted with the emotional factors. Students usually hesitate while speaking because they afraid of making mistakes and fear of being evaluated by the examiner. The research demonstrates that communication apprehension reduces the opportunities of communication and interaction for the learners to develop and practice language.

Moreover, they have fear of negatively evaluated by the teachers in academic exams, because they are afraid of being unfavorably judged by teachers, peers, and other peoples in

surrounding. They could not perform outstandingly in formal assessment because of this emotional instability. Because of fear of evaluation, the learner becomes overly protected for making mistakes, reduced opportunities to speak and interact, and increased self-consciousness. The empirical data shows that the evaluation becomes the major factor for causing anxiety among the learners. Dong, Liu, and Yang (2022) examined in their research that because of fear of evaluation, Chinese students always low self-rated language proficiency. Those students who overly worried for their grades, negative evaluation, and negative judgments are reported as lower confidence and weaker perceptions of language competence. Woodrow's (2011) examined the level of anxiety while preparing assessments instead of focusing on the preparation, they mainly invest their emotional energies on thinking negative evaluation. Students relate English language learning with employment opportunities, academic advancement, and professional outcomes. However, they can pay attention over learning and practicing. The excessively high demands expectations increase anxiety among the language learners.

Writing, reading, and listening skill of language learning are less explored. However, writing anxiety is known as most investigating area for research in language learning. Woodrow (2011) examined that student become anxious while formally writing in exams and found that they face anxiety because they have low level of self-efficacy in language competence. Zhou, Wang, and Wang (2022), found that the students' performance badly affect because of anxiety. They are unable to perform and participate while writing in English language. Furthermore, reading and listening are less explored area in language learning research. However, there are some researches where it has explored that students' attention reduced while they confront with unknown vocabulary, rapid speech, or different accents. Therefore, these complexities reduce their language comprehension processing.

Overall, the literature consistently demonstrates that Foreign Language Anxiety is a multidimensional construct that significantly influences language learning experiences and outcomes. Its effects extend beyond emotional discomfort to include cognitive processing, motivation, classroom participation, willingness to communicate, and academic performance. Given its pervasive influence, understanding language anxiety remains essential for developing more supportive and effective ESL learning environments. The present study therefore investigates anxiety not as an isolated psychological variable but as an affective experience shaped by interactions between learners and their classroom ecology.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In this study, mixed-methods research design has been employed for examining the affective experience of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, with a deep analysis of relationship between the learners' language performance and language anxiety from an ecological perspective. For the understanding of complex educational phenomena, the mixed-methods approach was selected. Because it combines the qualitative and quantitative data for providing a comprehensive study about this particular research topic. The qualitative data provides in-depth views of learner's perceptions, observations, and emotional experiences while learning language. However, in quantitative phase, the study witness and evaluate these perceptions and emotional experiences over the larger sample of participants. The integration of both research methods enhances the comprehensiveness, credibility, and validity of the research findings.

The study followed an exploratory sequential mixed methods design in which qualitative data were collected at the start. However, the collection of quantitative data was completed after

the qualitative data. Initially, the semi-structured interviews were conducted to find out the learners' subjective emotional experiences, factors behind emotional instability or anxiety in language learning, and investigate the ecological factors influencing second language learning. There is a reason behind the conduction of semi-structured interviews at the start, because it provides rich insights about the contextual understanding of the participants' experiences. In the quantitative phase, the structured questionnaire-based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It is previously validated tool for measuring the level of language anxiety of language learners. Therefore, the qualitative data of semi-structured interviews were used for analysis, interpretations, and contextualization of the quantitative data of structured questionnaires. Consequently, the utilization of this sequential design collectively frames the qualitative subjective narratives and perspectives of learners with providing quantitative evidences. Therefore, it provides a holistic view of language anxiety and its effect on learner's language performance in ESL classrooms.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of university undergraduate students who were learning English as second language. There was total 17 participants who took part in semi-structured interviews. In quantitative data, there was 300 participants completed the questionnaire. Moreover, in this study, Purposive Sampling was employed in both the quantitative and the qualitative phases. Because, the selection of participants was previously decided on the basis of predetermined criteria. Only English learning students were invited to respond the questionnaire, and for semi-structured interviews because they can explain their learning experiences and perspective on their performance which will address the research objectives. The use of Purposive sampling ensures that the data has been collected relevant to study and reflected the views of the target population.

3.3 Data Collection

Furthermore, two research instruments were used to collect the data. In qualitative phase, data was obtained through semi-structured interviews. In interviews, students can share their personal experiences, perceptions, and positive/negative emotions related to second language learning. The semi-structured interviews mean there were no construction of predetermined questions, however it was based on open-ended questions that explored the learners' classroom experience, teacher supportive behavior, peer interaction, confidence, and anxiety of the students. The open-ended questions provide flexibility in semi-structured interviews to gather the detailed experiences of the participants. The study consisted on follow-up questions where it was necessary for collecting rich and detailed lived data in semi-structured interviews. Moreover, the quantitative data was collected through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It is a widely recognized and previously validated research instrument which was developed to measure the anxiety of second language learners in ESL classrooms. Likert-scale has used in the questionnaire to measure the participants' classroom participation, language anxiety, teacher support, peer engagement, and learners' performance.

In this study, the data was collected in two phases. During the qualitative phase, the data was collected from the seventeen purposively selected participants of undergraduate university English learners. Before conducting interviews, the participants were informed about the objectives of the research and the purpose of the study. The interviews had taken on the basis of informed consent. After taking the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded. It later transcribed verbatim for defending the accuracy in research. In second phase, the structured questionnaires were distributed among purposive participants of language

learning. They were also prior informed about the purpose of the study. They were satisfied with the inclusion criteria of research. After collection of quantitative data, the study draws a comparison across a broader population between the experiences and emotional response of qualitative phase data and quantitative phase data.

3.4 Data Analysis

For the qualitative data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis has been used in the research analysis with the assistance of NVivo software. After importing the interview data into NVivo, the analysis began into six phases such as familiarity with data, organizing data, generating initial codes, search for themes, naming and defining of themes, and production of final report. Although the themes were derived from the interviews data, however the interpretation of the themes also include the ecological perspective on second language learning. This approach addressed the thematic analysis of interviews with the ecological perspectives of second language learner. Therefore, the thematic analysis derived the social, cultural, and contextual factors which influenced the emotional experiences of second language learners. The use of NVivo software enhances the trustworthiness and validity of data analysis.

The questionnaire responses were analyzed using proper statistical procedures and derived outcomes. The responses were gathered into excel sheet and entered into statistical software after coding. Descriptive statistics, including percentages, frequencies, standard deviations, and means, were calculated to summarize participants' responses and find out the overall trends of language anxiety and students' classroom experiences.

After the qualitative and quantitative analyses had been completed separately. During the interpretation stage, the findings from both phases were integrated independently. The qualitative data provides in-depth analysis about the contextual, socio-cultural, and emotional experiences of learners with many ecological factors. Moreover, the quantitative data provides maximum findings for the elaboration and distribution of these experiences into statistical data across a large sample of population. The researcher triangulates the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data at the integration stage. The triangulation of the datasets makes the research more valid and credible. Consequently, the mixed-method approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how language anxiety, ecological factors, and learners emotional experiences.

Ethical principles were at top priority throughout the research. The participants were prior informed about the purpose of the study before conducting interviews and responding to questionnaires. Before the commencement of data collection, an informed consent was obtained by the all participants. The participants were informed about the purpose and objective of the study. The researcher has assured the participants that their identity would remain anonymous, they could withdraw or stop the study at any stage. The questionnaire responses and interviews' transcribed data has been secured for further research purposes.

4. Qualitative Findings

This section presents the thematic analysis of the qualitative findings which derived from the seventeen semi-structured interviews with the undergraduates ESL learners. The qualitative findings later complement the quantitative findings for comprehensive understanding of learners lived experiences and contextual factors behind these affective experiences. For the analysis of qualitative data, the researcher used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Moreover, all transcripts of interviews were inserted into NVivo for systematic data coding and data management. Similar codes later developed into major themes and sub-themes and continuously compared across all seventeen themes. Furthermore, the findings

analysis generated five major themes. Instead of portraying the anxiety as psychological characteristics, the findings highlights that the emotional experience of learners developed through these ecological factors such as interaction with peers, teacher support, classroom environment, and learners' academic performance. The are presented in the

Table 4.1. Five Themes

Five Themes

THEMES	SUBTHEMES
1. EXPERIENCING ENGLISH LANGUAGE ANXIETY IN ESL CLASSROOMS	Speaking anxiety; Presentation anxiety; Fear of making mistakes; Transition into university
2. TEACHER SUPPORT AS AN ECOLOGICAL RESOURCE FOR EMOTIONAL SECURITY	Supportive teacher behaviour; Constructive feedback; Communication-oriented teaching; Emotional guidance
3. PEER RELATIONSHIPS AS A SOURCE OF EMOTIONAL CHALLENGE AND SUPPORT	Fear of peer judgement; Embarrassment; Collaborative learning; Peer encouragement
4. CLASSROOM ECOLOGY AS A CONTEXT FOR AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES	Classroom atmosphere; Opportunities for communication; Interactive learning; Adaptation to classroom environment
5. AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES AS DRIVERS OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE	Classroom participation; Presentation performance; Concentration; Academic growth

4.1. Theme 1: Experiencing English Language Anxiety in ESL Classrooms

The first prominent theme is learners' experience of English language anxiety in ESL classrooms in qualitative data. The participants continuously explained anxiety as a dynamic affective experience which come across while giving presentations, class activities, class spoken activities, and during the production of immediate class responses. The English language learners experience examined that anxiety is not a fixed personality trait, however it became an integral part of English learners' experience. Participants emphasized that anxiety fluctuated during the different level of confidence, affective experiences, and familiarity with communication tasks during class.

During the interviews, the participants highlight language anxiety as an influential emotional experience during university studies. Although, the level of anxiety is different among individuals, however every participant reported hesitation, low confidence, hesitation, and self-doubt during oral interaction in ESL classroom. Moreover, many participants shared their experience that they are comfortable while reading and writing, however they become anxious while speaking because it requires an immediate production within limited time to organize their thoughts before communicating formally. Therefore, speaking English became closely relevant to low self-confidence, hesitation, self-doubt, and nervousness.

Participant (P7) explained:

"I often feel anxious. I prefer to speak Urdu. I'm not that good at speaking English. Maybe I have anxiety, or maybe it's because English is my second language."

Similarly, Participant (P10) stated:

"I can write English, but I have a lot of difficulty in speaking."

Another participant reflected:

"Whenever I have to speak suddenly, I become nervous because I start thinking whether I will be able to express myself properly." (P5)

These narratives of the participants illustrate that they are quite flexible and comfortable while writing and reading in English language, however they consider spoken communication more difficult and complex. Learners' English anxiety is closely linked with immediate production of language during speaking rather than overall learning and practicing of English language in general. Speaking English demands emotional attention because it requires quick response and processing of language for accurate pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and grammatical accuracy. Moreover, participants narrated that presentation in formal setting become an important source of anxiety in ESL classroom. Because they are afraid of making mistakes in front of teachers and peers. Students shared that presentation demands linguistic accuracy with public visibility which become the cause of forgetfulness of the content even when they had prepared thoroughly.

Participant P11 explained:

"The first time I had to give a presentation, I felt nervous because it was my first experience."

Similarly, Participant P14 reflected:

"During presentations everyone is looking at you, so naturally you become nervous."

Participant P6 also remarked:

"At the beginning of the presentation I was very nervous, but gradually I became relaxed."

The above narratives indicate that presentation anxiety leads to their fear of public speaking. However, presentation is an academic task where students are quite aware of public visibility; it creates nervousness and emotional pressure during communication. Moreover, during the interviews, students were also concerned with their linguistic mistakes such as incorrect sentences, unnecessary pauses, wrong pronunciation, and grammatical mistakes. They were afraid of poor grades which represent their low proficiency in English language.

Participant P2 stated:

"Sometimes it feels like a lot of pressure. Even if I pause for a few seconds, I start thinking about whether I am speaking correctly."

Similarly, Participant P16 commented:

"If my pronunciation is wrong, I feel uncomfortable."

Participant P8 also explained:

"Sometimes I know what I want to say, but anxiety makes it difficult to say it."

The following accounts indicates that participants were cognitively pressurized when they constantly evaluated their mistakes. They could not properly process the language, however they mentally exhausted and anxious while spoken communication. Furthermore, the participants highlighted that English anxiety was evident while transition to university because at school and college, students were not demanded to speak English or formally give presentations. During first semester, they were expected to perform well in academic tasks which create language anxiety because they were not habitual of English medium educational setting. Consequently, the language anxiety revealed from their expected adaptability in unfamiliar educational setting and high-performance expectations.

Participant P15 reflected:

"Previously, I did not have much experience speaking English in school or college."

Similarly, Participant P2 observed:

"Students who come from Urdu-medium backgrounds usually feel pressure in the beginning because everything is new."

Thus, these findings suggest that language anxiety emerges in second language learners mostly during oral communication, class presentation, fear of making mistakes/evaluation, and transition into university setting.

4.2. Theme 2: Teacher Support as an Ecological Resource for Emotional Security

The analysis emphasized teacher support as an integral ecological resource influencing learners' affective experiences in ESL classroom. The participants' narrative indicates that they wanted teachers to pay attention over students' well-being instead of restricting their teaching with just instruction role. Because a supportive teacher can enhance class participation, reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and emotional well-being of English learners. Instead of considering English learning as merely emotional journey, participants involved teachers' presence in affective experiences of language learning. Furthermore, students shared that teachers have capacity to establish the emotional climate of classroom in which students may get threaten or get the opportunity for learning. Thus, teachers have the capacity to alleviate negative thoughts of students and enabled learners to engage with English language confidently.

The following narrative indicates that students want the teachers' interpersonal behavior means they admire the teachers who are kind, respectful, approachable, and patient towards students. These supportive qualities created a comfortable and flexible environment for students in which they express themselves without fear of being judged and embarrassment.

Participant P4 explained:

"The teacher's behavior is very important. If the teacher is rude or confrontational, then the motivation goes away. But if the teacher is good, then you feel like studying and asking questions."

Similarly, Participant P1 stated:

"If the teacher explains to us in a confident way and works with us, then we pay more attention and understand better."

Participant P6 added:

"When teachers guide students patiently from the beginning, students become interested in the class."

These accounts indicates that the supportive interpersonal behavior of teachers influence students to participate in class. It creates emotional security for the students instead just class satisfaction. Teachers who are employed patience and encouragement while teaching; it results their students to speak up during class without fear of being judged and criticism because they begin to view class participation as language learning opportunity.

Furthermore, participants demonstrated that teachers' feedback is another constructing element for positive and negative emotional state of students. Because they want constructive feedback which promotes their supportive learning and accuracy. However, they disliked harsh and overly critical responses because students perceive as discouraging comments and emotionally ungrateful. Consequently, they admire the constructive feedback which help students' progress.

Participant P7 reflected:

"If the teacher is friendly and does not react too much when you make a mistake, you can present more confidently. But if the teacher points out every mistake, then you become confused and anxious."

Similarly, Participant P9 remarked:

"If I feel that the teacher is supportive, I perform well. But if I think the teacher is judgmental, then I cannot perform properly."

These narratives indicates that students interpreted teacher feedback through an emotional lens. Correction is productive when teachers focus not only on mistakes, however they pay

attention on the manner in which teacher responded; it influenced students' confidence and emotional security.

Furthermore, participants described the importance of pedagogical practices means teaching must be student-centered. Lessons must be taught through class activities, peer discussion, question answer sessions, and opportunities for class participation. Therefore, these activities build students' confidence with continuous practicing and secure them from emotional barriers. Because students promote gradual learning experience instead of immediate perfection. It would be an emotional development opportunity as well when students perform and practice in supportive learning contexts.

Participant P2 suggested:

"The teacher should be co-operative. English practice sessions should be conducted, and examples should be given because communication becomes much better."

Participant P13 explained:

"Teacher support reduces stress because teachers organize activities for students, and gradually students improve."

Participant P15 also observed:

"If the teacher changes the teaching method and makes the lesson interesting, students become more active."

Participants elucidate that teacher support is highly influential during transition to university because they understood students' initial difficulties and support them for gradual improvement instead of expecting independent adaptation. This time period is emotionally demanding because they have to adjust in English medium instruction classroom. Therefore, students demand academic guidance and emotional reassurance from supportive teachers.

Participant P15 explained:

"Previously, I did not have much experience speaking English, but the teachers encouraged us to keep practicing."

Similarly, Participant P6 stated:

"When teachers explain the basics carefully, students become engaged instead of feeling lost."

These findings indicate that affective experience is not only revolved around psychological or emotional experience of students, however it is continuously shaped after multiple interaction with environment as a supportive teacher.

4.3. Theme 3: Peer Relationships as a Source of Emotional Challenge and Support

The third theme is about peer relationship on learners affective experiences in ESL classroom. Peer relationship has two contrasting functions such as negative evaluation increases self-consciousness and anxiety; however, the friendly peer relationship enhances active participation and confidence in communication. The interview findings indicates that peer relationship is an important ecological factor to influence emotional experiences in ESL classroom. Moreover, participants repetitively elaborate that peer group shaped our emotional experience during class. In contrast to teachers' supportive behavior, peers can reassure with encouragement or cause anxiety through judgements.

The findings indicate that fear of negative evaluation from peers caused anxiety and pressure. Because they were afraid of making mistakes in front of classmates because they would laugh, mock, and do unnecessary comparisons with the proficient students. Although, students with good linguistic capacity can perform well, but they are afraid of classmates' reaction. It becomes the reason of unwillingness to communicate in English during class. Participants have a social experience while communicating because they were being evaluated by self-conscious, teachers, and peers.

Participant P5 explained:

"If I think that I will speak English and my classmates will judge me, then obviously there is fear."

Similarly, Participant P16 reflected:

"If my pronunciation is wrong, I think everyone will laugh at me."

Participant P2 also remarked:

"Sometimes it feels like pressure because you keep thinking about what other students will think."

The following findings projected that peer evaluation cause embarrassment and discomfort for English learners. They considered their mistakes catch attention of peers which later demonstrate their competence. The learners usually avoid class participation in English language not because they lack in knowledge, however they tried to distract the later situations that might expose language competency. These narratives demonstrate the peer evaluation cause embarrassment and language anxiety.

Participant P13 explained:

"Fear of making mistakes or being judged is one reason students become nervous."

Participant P8 similarly stated:

"Sometimes I know the answer, but I hesitate because I am afraid of saying something wrong."

Moreover, participants narratives also illustrate the positive impact of peer relationship on language learning because the supportive and friendly peers reduce anxiety and enhance confidence. Students shared that friends encouraging words motivates them to practice English despite experiencing anxiety. Emotional support from the classmates builds their confidence and encourage them to continue practicing English communication without fear of being evaluated. Moreover, the collaborative tasks help students to practice English in low-pressure environment. Students constantly admired group activities, pair tasks, and collaborative projects because working alongside classmates made it a group experience; rather than having emotional burden alone.

Participant P3 reflected:

"When I made good friends, they made me stronger and more confident."

Similarly, Participant P14 explained:

"My friends motivate me to compete and improve. Being with them helps me improve my abilities."

Participant P1 also remarked:

"When we work together in groups, we have support from our group members, and it becomes less stressful."

Participant P14 explained:

"Teachers encourage us to talk with one another and communicate with our classmates."

Similarly, Participant P1 stated:

"Group work makes communication easier because everyone supports each other."

These narratives indicates that language learning is a shared experience rather than an individual performance of emotional experience. The group tasks provide many opportunities of interaction to build confidence and reduce emotional anxiety.

4.4. Theme 4: Classroom Ecology as a Context for Affective Experiences

The fourth theme is about classroom ecology as a context for affective experiences of learning language. Participants constantly insisted that the classroom environment influenced their emotional experiences through its interactional opportunities, physical condition like light and noise, and instructional arrangements. The classroom provides an ecological context

environment which might facilitate or stop English learners' confidence and comfort. Moreover, the participants explained that ecological context of classroom affect their performance whether they are comfortable to participate in class activities or not. Instead of learners' emotional well-being attached to individual linguistic competency or anxiety, however language learning could be affected by the classroom environment where English language is being practiced.

Moreover, the prominent characteristics of this theme is emotional atmosphere of the classroom. Participants described that supportive, calm, and organized classroom is necessary for development and concentration of language learners. Students wanted a carefree and flexible environment where they could learn language instead of solving preoccupied, external distractions.

Participant P8 explained:

"If the classroom environment is peaceful, students can concentrate better. If there is too much noise, it becomes difficult to focus."

Similarly, Participant P9 reflected:

"A comfortable environment helps me perform better because I feel relaxed."

Participant P12 also stated:

"When the classroom environment is good, students participate more confidently."

The narratives suggested that students preferred authentic and genuine content for English communication in ESL classroom. Participants advised to follow student-centered instruction method instead of relying on textbook-based instructions. They valued comfortable, noise-free, disciplined, fully equipped, and illuminated classrooms where students can actively participate, seek guidance, questioning, presentation, and perform classroom tasks.

Participant P2 explained:

"English practice sessions should be conducted because communication becomes much better."

Similarly, Participant P14 remarked:

"We are encouraged to communicate with our classmates during classroom activities."

Participant P3 reflected:

"The more opportunities we get to speak English, the easier it becomes."

The participants further described the organization of classroom which include the classroom structure, sitting arrangement, comfortable chairs, and proper lighting. They emphasized that classroom is a place where students evolved through participation and active learning; however, passive interaction in classroom minimize the affective experience of English learning. Consequently, participants valued productive classroom environment where students exchange meaningful communication rather than simply listening to lectures.

Participant P6 stated:

"When students are involved in classroom discussions, they become more interested in learning."

Similarly, Participant P15 explained:

"Interesting classroom activities encourage students to participate."

Participants considered classrooms as a space where emotional, social, and intellectual experiences were being evolved and changed over the period of time. Initially, classroom, timetable, sitting arrangement, and classroom equipment seem unfamiliar and strange; it became the cause of emotional pressure. However, after some practice within classroom ecological territory, students became comfortable within the learning environment and

emotional burden changed into confidence. Therefore, classroom is an essential ecological component for affective experiences of learners.

Participant P4 reflected:

"Everything felt new at first, but with time I became comfortable in the classroom."

Similarly, Participant P15 remarked:

"After attending classes regularly, the environment no longer felt difficult."

These narratives suggest that learners' emotional experiences evolved alongside their adaptation to the classroom environment. Familiarity with classroom expectations reduced uncertainty and enabled students to participate with greater confidence during English language learning.

4.5. Theme 5: Affective Experiences as Drivers of Academic Engagement and Performance

The final theme is learners' affective experiences deeply influenced their academic performance and engagements in ESL classrooms. Participants repeatedly highlighted various emotions such as motivation, confidence, anxiety, encouragement, and emotional comfort. After emotional experiences, students were enabled to perform classroom activities, completed assignments and presentations, and participated in oral communicative tasks. Instead of relying on individual psychological experience or individual competence, however language learning depends on the various emotions and affective experiences of learners' academic development. Furthermore, participants expressed that their emotional experiences influenced their classroom tasks. Those who experienced anxiety; they remained silent no matter whether they know the topic or not. However, those students who gradually learn and became confident; they confidently respond to the classroom lesson and activities.

Participant P5 explained:

"Sometimes I know the answer, but I do not respond because I start thinking whether I will speak correctly."

Similarly, Participant P16 stated:

"When I become nervous, I prefer to stay quiet instead of speaking."

Participant P3 reflected:

"Now I participate more because I have become more confident."

The narratives clarified one thing that learners' performance did not only depend on their linguistic proficiency; however, it depends on the regulation of emotions and emotional preparedness. Emotional attachment and encouragement motivate them for actively participate; however, anxiety and exhaustion drained their energies and they became least interested and unbothered about learning activities.

Participant P11 explained:

"The first time I had to give a presentation, I felt nervous because it was my first experience."

Similarly, Participant P6 remarked:

"At the beginning of my presentation I became nervous, but after a while I felt relaxed."

Participant P14 also reflected:

"Presentations make students anxious because everyone is watching."

The above findings demonstrated that affective emotional experiences influenced on learners' academic engagements and performance. Because of nervousness and shyness, students were not confident enough to present in front of the classmates. However, after gradual learning and evolving, they felt comfortable while speaking, presenting, or completion of academic tasks in ESL classrooms.

5. Quantitative Findings

5.1 Reliability Analysis

Before conducting the main statistical analysis of quantitative findings, the internal consistency is measured of the adapted Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by using Cronbach's alpha. Reliability analysis is described for the assurance of the adapted questionnaire that all the constructs were consistently measured the language learning anxiety and within ecological dimensions. The overall reliability results are satisfactory. It means that questionnaire was appropriate for the measurement of affective experiences of second language learners. The questionnaire contains excellent reliability which represents high level of internal consistency among the 20 items as shown in the given table (5.1).

Reliability Analysis

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Speaking Anxiety	6	.880	Good
Fear of Making Mistakes	4	.851	Good
Fear of Negative Evaluation	5	.853	Good
Learning Performance Anxiety	2	.728	Acceptable
Overall Questionnaire	20	.914	Excellent

5.2 Research Question One

First question revolves around the affective experiences and level of foreign anxiety among ESL learners. In order to complement the first question, descriptive statistics employed the complete levels of foreign language anxiety. According to table 4.1, the findings indicate the various levels of language anxiety among ESL learners such as Learning Performance obtained a mean score 3.417, Fear of Negative Evaluation (M= 3.259), Speaking Anxiety recorded a mean score (M= 3.218). In contrast, Teacher Support achieved the highest mean score (M= 3.705). The findings indicates that language learners require supportive teacher for their reassurance, active participation, and building up confidence. Moreover, the descriptive statistics is a complete elaboration of foreign language anxiety prevalent among SLA learners; however, the supportive classroom environment also indicates as an essential factor for providing comfortable environment in facilitating language learning.

Table: 5.2.1

Descriptive Statics

Descriptive Statistics

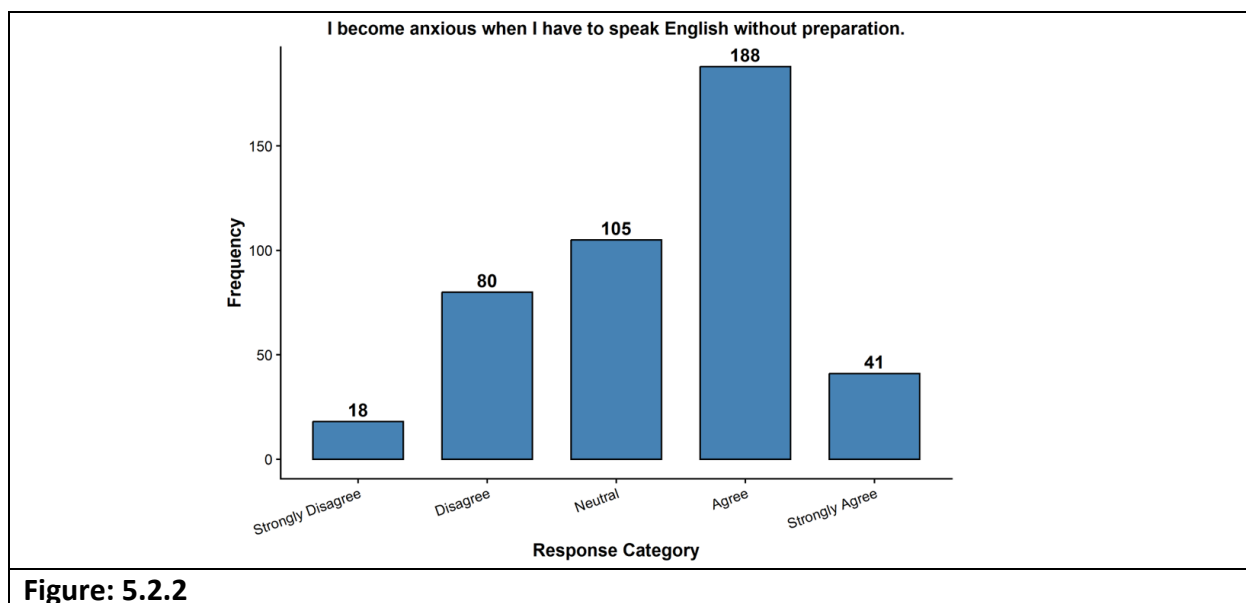
Variable	Min	Q1	Median	Mean	Max
Speaking Anxiety	1.000	2.667	3.333	3.218	5.000
Fear of Negative Evaluation	1.000	2.778	3.333	3.259	5.000
Teacher Support	1.000	3.333	3.833	3.705	5.000
Learning Performance Anxiety	1.000	3.000	3.500	3.417	5.000

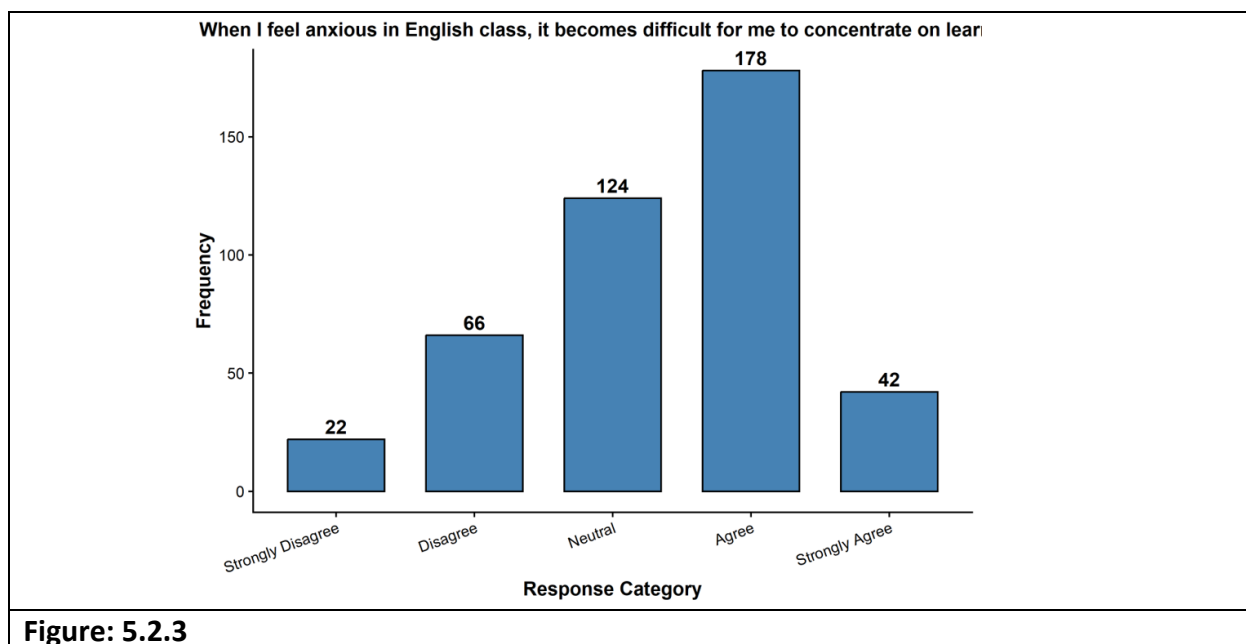
The quantitative data findings elaborated learners' anxiety through the projection of frequency distribution in the specific situation of language learning.

Figure 5.2.2-5.2.3 indicates the learners' responses about communication apprehension items. There was no observation data of isolated classrooms. In contrast, all six items illustrate constantly same pattern of results which shows the emotional discomfort of learners related to speaking English. Majority of the respondents has selected Agree or Strongly Agree, clearly showing the results that the ESL learners became nervous, hesitant, self-conscious, and low-confident while speaking English in classrooms.

The findings indicates that there is no difference between language anxiety levels in both spontaneous response and planned situations. Students' responses show that they became nervous while interacting in the classroom on daily basis. Moreover, they shared that without preparation, anxiety level and pressure would be higher while speaking and interacting in English. Teachers asked unexpected questions during class, it would be emerged as a source of tension and anxiety among students. Oral presentation required complete preparation; however, respondents completely acknowledge that while presenting, they forgot the material and reduced their confidence. Moreover, the forgetfulness indicates that speaking in English is not affecting their confidence, however it also affected their cognitive abilities to remember the content while presenting. Consequently, they remained silent to avoid such situations which is clearly evident in quantitative phase data.

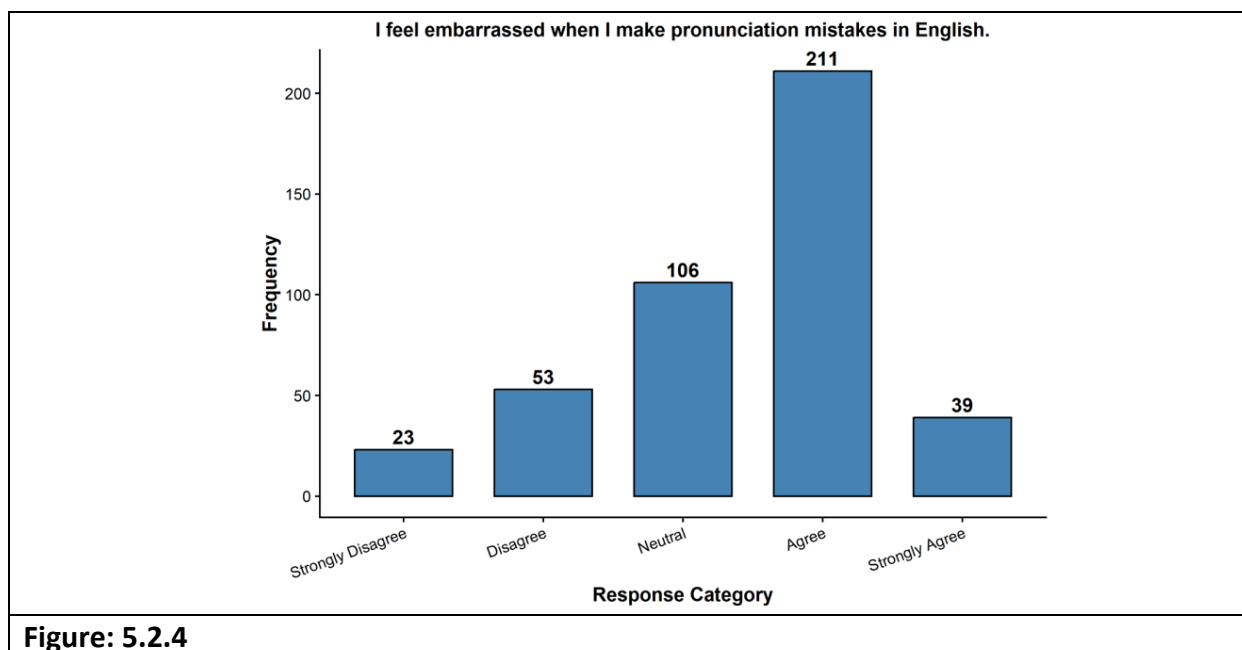
Figure 5.2.2-5.2.3



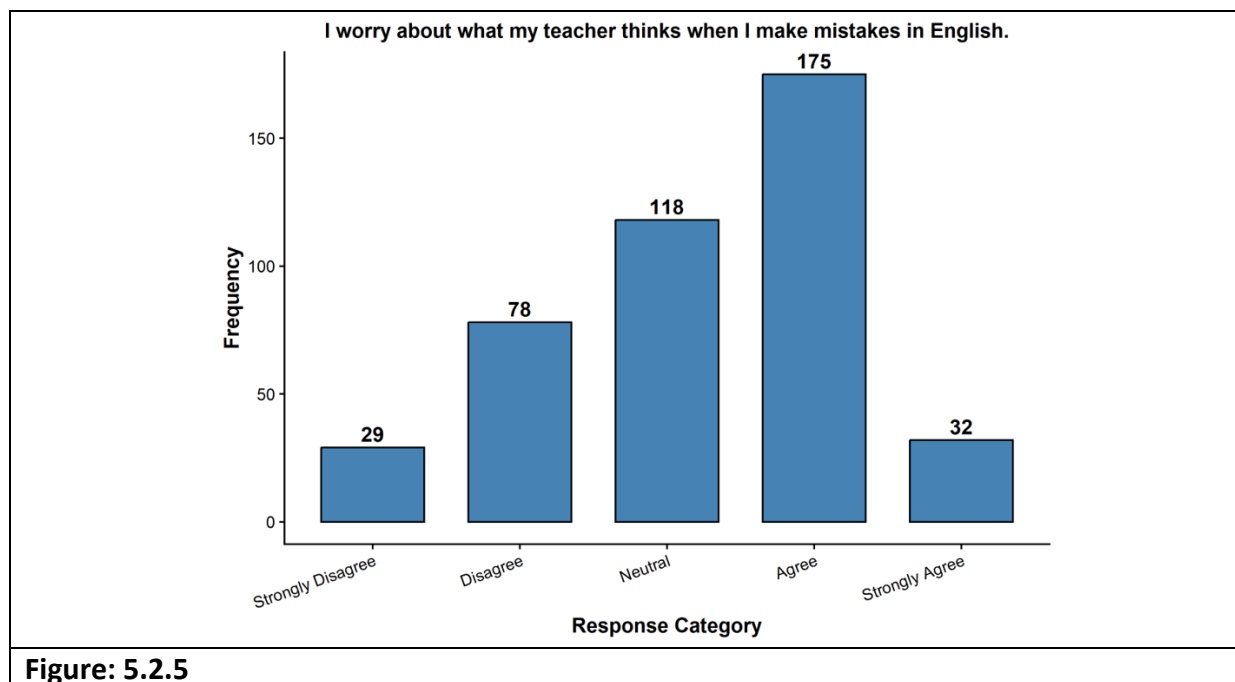


The constant frequency of responses of six items indicates the language anxiety among SLA learners. Language anxiety is not consisted only within classroom activities; however, it occurs in multiple ecological aspects. From an ecological perspective, anxiety cannot consider as a psychological trait, however it must be understood and examined in class interaction activities such as public speaking fear, presentation, teacher questioning, and peer evaluation. Therefore, English learners require emotional strength for communication instead of just containing linguistic competence.

The second group is concerned with language anxiety which originates with the fear of making mistakes. It is related to linguistic accuracy. Most respondents agreed that they failed in speaking English because fear of making mistakes. They assumed that they should not speak because they might be embarrassed because of grammatical and pronunciation mistakes. Moreover, they could not express ideas accurately because they had fear of being judged on the basis of these language mistakes. Figures (5.2.4) -(5.2.5) collectively indicates the fear of making mistakes.



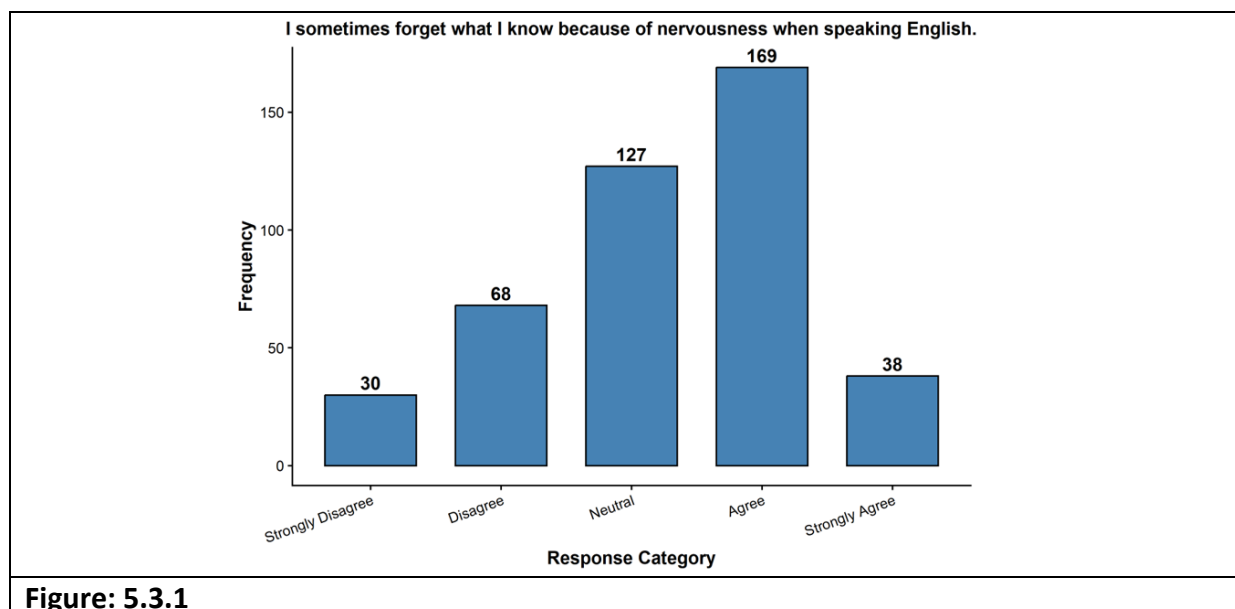
These findings indicate that the participants consider these mistakes as socially meaningful instead of considering its academic value. Because language is a continuous process of learning and development. Mistakes must be considered as the part of learning; however, the participants relate with embarrassment, self-consciousness about mistakes, and nervousness in front of teachers and peers. Therefore, these kinds of perceptions negatively discourage students to participate in classroom activities. Furthermore, the participants' anxiety related with the negative evaluation of teachers and peers during classroom activities. They considered that they possessed poor linguistic competence. So, they remained silent because of their discomfort in language practicing.



The descriptive statistics shows that the mean score of 3.259 is calculated with fear of negative evaluation means learners' evaluation does not depend only on linguistic competence, however it consisted on social and contextual relationship such as peer and teachers' evaluation.

5.3. Research Question Two

The second research question investigates the extent to which foreign language anxiety affects the classroom engagement and academic performance. The statistical findings of questionnaire directly addressed that language anxiety badly affected the learners' academic functioning as they had to perform well in presentations, classroom tasks, and assessments. Similarly, many participants shared that language anxiety became social failure for them because they could not perform successfully in daily routine tasks. The descriptive statistics show that Learning Performance Anxiety recorded a mean score 3.417, which indicates that participants collectively gathered that language anxiety had influenced on academic performances. Moreover, the mean score suggested that it was not only linguistic competence now, however it also affected their cognitive processing like memory, attention span, concentration, and ability of production.



To examine these relationships further, Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis was conducted. The results revealed statistically significant positive relationships between Teacher Support and Speaking Anxiety ($p = .324$, $p < .001$), Teacher Support and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($p = .427$, $p < .001$), and Teacher Support and Learning Performance Anxiety ($p = .493$, $p < .001$). These statistically significant relationships indicate that learners' emotional experiences are closely associated with classroom interactions involving teachers.

Table 5.3.2

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Analysis

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Analysis

Variables	Spearman's ρ	p-value	Decision
Teacher Support vs. Speaking Anxiety	0.324	< 0.001	Significant

Teacher Support vs. Fear of Negative Evaluation	0.427	< 0.001	Significant
Teacher Support vs. Learning Performance Anxiety	0.493	< 0.001	Significant

Interpretation: All correlations were positive and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

The strongest correlation was observed between Teacher Support and Learning Performance Anxiety ($p = .493$), suggesting that teacher-related classroom experiences have a particularly important relationship with learners' perceptions of their academic performance. Likewise, the significant association between Teacher Support and Fear of Negative Evaluation indicates that supportive instructional practices may influence how learners interpret classroom evaluation and feedback. These findings reinforce the argument that foreign language anxiety develops through continuous interaction between learners and their classroom environment rather than originating solely from individual psychological characteristics.

The Chi-square analysis provides additional support for these findings. Significant associations were identified between Teacher Support and Speaking Anxiety ($\chi^2 = 41.178$, $p < .001$), Teacher Support and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($\chi^2 = 64.112$, $p < .001$), and Teacher Support and Learning Performance Anxiety ($\chi^2 = 72.843$, $p < .001$). These results demonstrate that learners' perceptions of teacher support are significantly associated with each of the principal dimensions of foreign language anxiety. The consistency of the Chi-square findings with the correlation analysis strengthens the reliability of the quantitative results and suggests that classroom interactions involving teachers constitute an important component of learners' emotional experiences.

Table 5.3.3

Chi-square Analysis of Teacher Support and Anxiety Variables

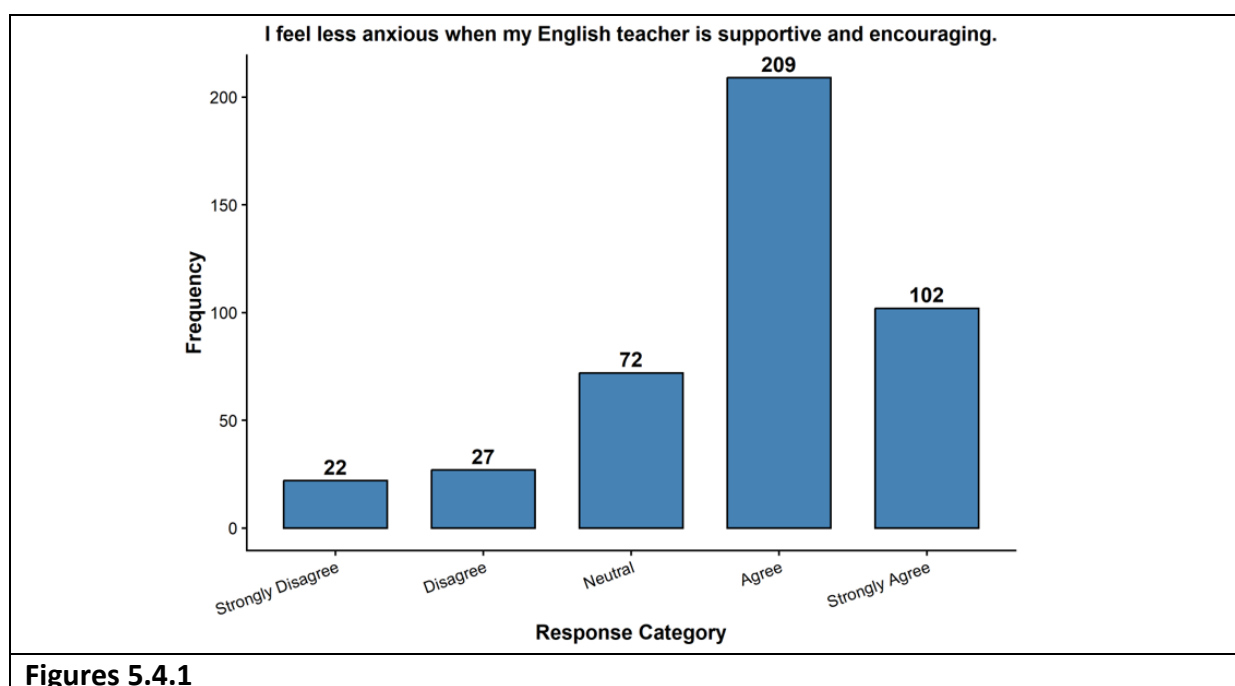
Chi-Square Test of Association

Variables	Chi-square (χ^2)	df	p-value	Decision
Teacher Support × Speaking Anxiety	41.178	4	< 0.001	Significant
Teacher Support × Fear of Negative Evaluation	64.112	4	< 0.001	Significant
Teacher Support × Learning Performance Anxiety	72.843	4	< 0.001	Significant

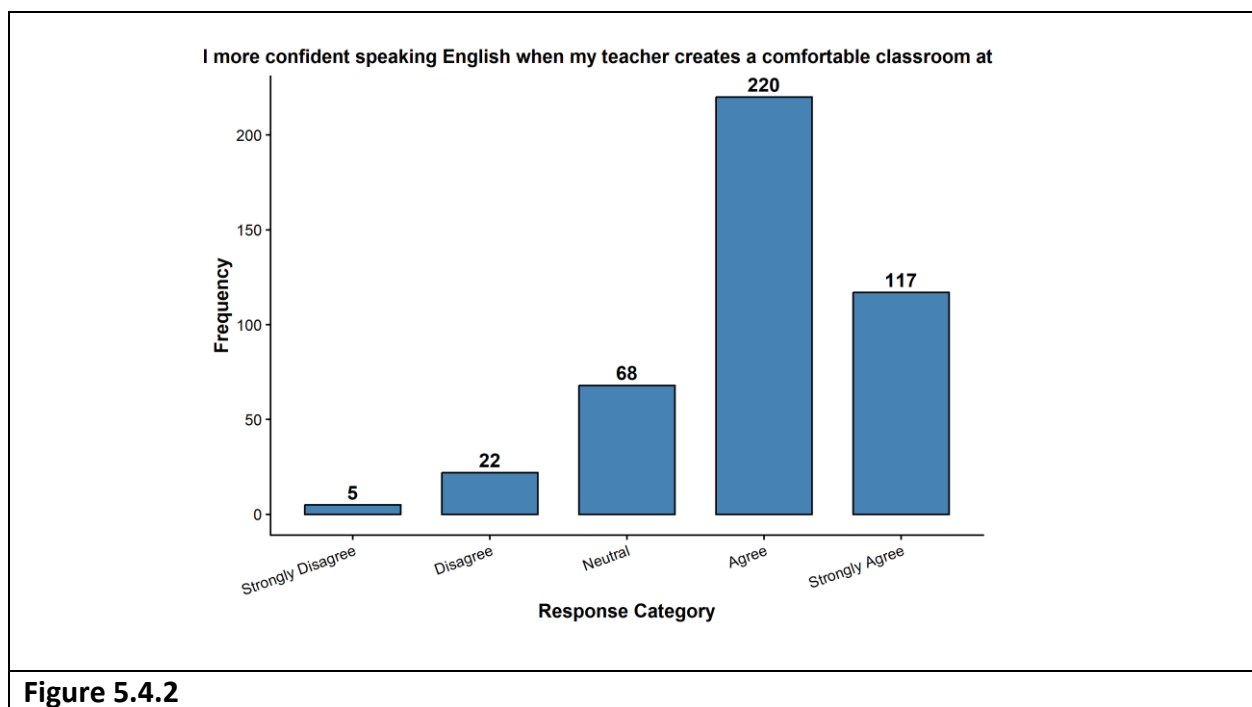
Interpretation: Significant associations were found between teacher support and all anxiety-related variables ($p < 0.001$).

5. 4. Research Question Three

The third research question is about ecological factors that shaped the affective experiences of SLA learners. After the consistent findings of ecological factors, it is significantly examined that learners' emotions are not only based on psychological state of individual, however it depends on social, cultural, and contextual factors. The statistical data showed that teacher support is highly influential for reducing anxiety among students. Teacher support contains highest mean score ($M = 3.705$). It indicates that students improved with supportive and lenient style of teaching. The graphical representation in Figure 5.4.1 illustrates that students agreed with supportive behavior of teacher which increased their confidence of speaking English. However, they disliked the often pointing out the mistakes during class became the source of anxiety and nervousness. Supportive teacher encourages the students to participate in class tasks instead of stopping them through corrections.



From an ecological perspective, it is demonstrated in graphical representation that learners' emotional experiences depend on the context of the classroom. It is shaped with composition of supportive teacher, constructive criticism, peer encouragement and positive response, and comfortable classroom environment. In contrast, learners' emotional experience negatively changed when there would be unnecessary criticism, repeated public corrections, peers negative evaluation, and discomfort classroom environment intensifies the learners' language anxiety. Moreover, learners' emotions also negatively affected by peer evaluation. They assumed that classmates would laugh at their speech or mistakes. They did not want to appear inferior in front of their classmates intellectually. In statistical study, peer relationship also becomes the essential part of classroom's ecology. Consequently, the ecological perspective is social makeup of supportive teacher, peer relationship and comfortable classroom environment. These factors were combined to emotionally affecting participants' anxiety.



The inferential analyses provide further evidence for the importance of ecological factors. Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis identified statistically significant positive relationships between Teacher Support and Speaking Anxiety ($p = .324$, $p < .001$), Teacher Support and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($p = .427$, $p < .001$), and Teacher Support and Learning Performance Anxiety ($p = .493$, $p < .001$). Although these statistical relationships are different for all variables, but teacher support and Learning performance Anxiety are portrayed strongest relationship. Therefore, classroom experiences involve teachers' engagement, classroom activities, students' perception about academic performance and evaluation.

The Chi-square analysis further supports these findings by demonstrating statistically significant associations between Teacher Support and each anxiety-related construct. Significant relationships were observed between Teacher Support and Speaking Anxiety ($\chi^2 = 41.178$, $p < .001$), Teacher Support and Fear of Negative Evaluation ($\chi^2 = 64.112$, $p < .001$), and Teacher Support and Learning Performance Anxiety ($\chi^2 = 72.843$, $p < .001$). The consistency of these findings across both inferential analyses strengthens the conclusion that teacher-related classroom experiences are closely associated with learners' affective responses. Rather than existing independently of the learning environment, foreign language anxiety appears to develop through continuous interaction with the social and instructional context of the classroom.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the affective experiences of university ESL learners from an ecological perspective, with particular emphasis on foreign language anxiety and its influence on classroom participation and academic performance. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study combined qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of learners' emotional experiences. Semi-structured interviews with seventeen participants were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis using NVivo software, while quantitative data collected from 432 respondents through an adapted Foreign

Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) provided statistical evidence regarding the prevalence of anxiety and the influence of ecological classroom factors.

The findings indicate that foreign language anxiety remains a significant affective challenge for ESL learners, particularly during speaking activities, oral presentations, and situations involving fear of making mistakes or negative evaluation. At the same time, supportive teachers, positive peer interactions, and an encouraging classroom environment were found to play an important role in reducing anxiety and enhancing learners' confidence and engagement. These findings support the ecological perspective by demonstrating that learners' emotions are shaped through continuous interaction between individual characteristics and contextual classroom factors. Overall, the study highlights the importance of creating emotionally supportive learning environments that encourage communication, reduce anxiety, and promote successful second language learning. It also provides valuable insights for language teachers, curriculum developers, and researchers interested in fostering positive affective experiences in ESL classrooms.

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8. Appendices

Theme	Subtheme	Participants Supporting the Theme	Representative Quotations	Verbatim
Theme 1: Experiencing	Speaking anxiety	P2, P5, P7, P10, P16	"I often feel anxious. I prefer to speak Urdu..." (P7); "I can write	

English Language Anxiety in ESL Classrooms			English, but I have a lot of difficulty in speaking." (P10); "Sometimes I know the answer, but I don't answer because I start thinking whether I will say it correctly." (P5)
	Presentation anxiety	P6, P11, P14, P15	"The first time I had to give a presentation, I felt nervous..." (P11); "At the beginning of the presentation I was very nervous..." (P6)
	Fear of making mistakes	P2, P8, P13, P16	"Even if I pause for a few seconds, I start thinking whether I am speaking correctly." (P2); "If my pronunciation is wrong, I feel uncomfortable." (P16)
	Transition into university	P2, P4, P15	"Students who come from Urdu-medium backgrounds usually feel pressure..." (P2); "Everything was new exposure." (P4)
Theme 2: Teacher Support as an Ecological Resource for Emotional Security	Supportive teacher behaviour	P1, P4, P6, P15	"The teacher's behavior is very important..." (P4); "If the teacher explains to us in a confident way..." (P1)
	Constructive feedback	P7, P9	"If the teacher is friendly and does not react too much..." (P7); "If I feel the teacher is supportive, I perform well." (P9)
	Communication-oriented teaching	P2, P6, P13, P15	"English practice sessions should be conducted..." (P2); "Teachers organise activities..." (P13)
	Emotional guidance	P6, P15	"Teachers explain the basics carefully..." (P6); "Teachers encouraged us to keep practising." (P15)
Theme 3: Peer Relationships as a Source of Emotional Challenge and Support	Fear of peer judgement	P2, P5, P13, P16	"My classmates will judge me..." (P5); "Everyone will laugh at me." (P16)
	Embarrassment	P8, P13	"I hesitate because I am afraid of saying something wrong." (P8)
	Collaborative learning	P1, P14	"Group work makes communication easier..." (P1); "We communicate with classmates..." (P14)

	Peer encouragement	P3, P14	"My friends made me stronger..." (P3); "My friends motivate me..." (P14)
Theme 4: Classroom Ecology as a Context for Affective Experiences	Classroom atmosphere	P8, P9, P12	"If the classroom environment is peaceful..." (P8); "A comfortable environment helps me..." (P9)
	Opportunities for communication	P2, P3, P14	"The more opportunities we get to speak English..." (P3); "English practice sessions..." (P2)
	Interactive learning	P6, P15	"Students become interested during discussions." (P6)
	Adaptation to classroom environment	P4, P15	"Everything felt new at first..." (P4); "After attending classes regularly..." (P15)
Theme 5: Affective Experiences as Drivers of Academic Engagement and Performance	Classroom participation	P3, P5, P16	"Sometimes I know the answer, but I do not respond..." (P5); "Now I participate more..." (P3)
	Presentation performance	P6, P11, P14	"Presentations make students anxious..." (P14); "I felt nervous because it was my first presentation." (P11)
	Concentration	P7, P9	"When I become anxious, I cannot think properly." (P7); "Anxiety affects my concentration." (P9)
	Academic growth	P1, P3, P4, P15	"Now I enjoy participating..." (P1); "Time by time we improved..." (P3); "The more students practise English, the more confident they become." (P15)