

# Reconceptualized Theoretical Framework of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

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## ABSTRACT

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a critical affective factor that directly influences students' achievement across all levels of education. This conceptual review re-examines and analyses five major psychological theories that explain the development and impact of FLA on language acquisition: Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, Eysenck and Calvo's (1992) Processing Efficiency Theory, Lazarus's (1984) Transactional Appraisal Theory, and Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. Despite their different perspectives, these theories share a common emphasis on the emotional dimension of language learning, asserting that negative emotions such as anxiety and stress hinder performance and learning outcomes. Krashen highlights emotion as a "filter" that blocks language input, while Horwitz et al. describe anxiety as a classroom-specific affective response. Eysenck and Calvo associate anxiety with reduced working memory capacity, whereas Lazarus focuses on the learner's cognitive appraisal and coping mechanisms. Bandura, on the other hand, underscores the importance of self-efficacy in motivating learners and regulating emotional responses. The theories differ in their focus—Horwitz and Krashen emphasize situational and emotional factors, Eysenck and Lazarus stress cognitive processes, and Bandura concentrates on motivational and self-belief systems. Collectively, they represent the affective, cognitive, and motivational dimensions of FLA, offering a comprehensive understanding of how anxiety interacts with learning mechanisms. This study proposes an integrated conceptual framework that synthesizes these theoretical dimensions to better explain and manage FLA. The novelty of this research lies in reconceptualizing FLA through both classical and contemporary lenses, while providing holistic pedagogical insights for modern language education. The synthesis aims to guide future research and teaching practices toward reducing learner anxiety and enhancing language achievement in diverse educational settings.

**Keywords:** foreign language anxiety, affective dimension, language learning theories, conceptual framework, holistic pedagogy

## INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning is a complex process that encompasses not only linguistic aspects but also affective dimensions that critically determine the effectiveness of language acquisition. Affective factors such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety have long been recognized as key elements influencing learners' mastery of a second or foreign language. Among these factors, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has emerged as a dominant issue that significantly hinders student achievement. Within higher education, the demand for students to acquire foreign languages for academic, professional, and social purposes is often compromised by the psychological pressures arising from FLA. The central problem lies in the existence of multiple theories that attempt to explain the origins and mechanisms of FLA, yet understanding remains fragmented and inconclusive. Previous studies demonstrate that each theory emphasizes different aspects some highlighting linguistic, others affective, cognitive, or self-efficacy dimensions. However, there remains ambiguity in reconciling these perspectives into a more integrative framework. This gap raises a crucial question: should these theories be treated as separate explanatory models, or can they be synthesized to provide a more holistic understanding of FLA? In response to this gap, the present study analyses five major theories frequently referenced in FLA research: Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety Theory, Krashen's (1982)

Affective Filter Hypothesis, Eysenck and Calvo's (1992) Processing Efficiency Theory, Lazarus's (1984) Transactional Appraisal Theory, and Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. Specifically, this study seeks to identify the similarities and differences among these theories in terms of their conceptual foundations and pedagogical implications, and to propose a more holistic conceptual framework for understanding FLA and its implications in contemporary foreign language teaching.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) has long been recognized as a critical factor influencing second and foreign language learning, with scholars from linguistics, psychology, and education offering multiple theoretical explanations for its formation and effects. One of the most widely cited perspectives is that of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who conceptualized FLA as a distinct construct comprising communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, thus establishing it as a unique affective barrier within language classrooms. Complementing this, Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis highlighted the mediating role of emotional variables such as motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety, arguing that high anxiety raises an affective filter that blocks input from being effectively processed, while low anxiety lowers the filter and facilitates acquisition. Eysenck and Calvo's (1992) Processing Efficiency Theory expanded the discussion by focusing on the cognitive dimension, suggesting that anxiety consumes attentional resources and reduces working memory efficiency, thereby hindering learners' ability to process linguistic information even when their competence remains intact. In parallel, Lazarus's (1984) Transactional Theory of Stress and Coping emphasized the role of individual appraisal, proposing that anxiety emerges when learners perceive language tasks as threatening and believe their coping resources are insufficient, situating FLA within a broader stress-coping framework that integrates both individual and situational factors. Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory further deepened this understanding by linking learners' confidence in their own abilities to their emotional experiences; those with low self-efficacy are more likely to experience heightened anxiety, avoid communicative tasks, and underperform, whereas those with higher self-efficacy display resilience and reduced vulnerability to FLA. Taken together, these five theoretical perspectives reveal that FLA is shaped by an interplay of affective, cognitive, and appraisal-related dimensions that cannot be adequately explained by any single theory in isolation. Instead, the convergence of these perspectives underscores the necessity for an integrative reconceptualization that synthesizes their insights into a more holistic framework, one that acknowledges the complexity of learners' emotional, cognitive, and self-belief systems in shaping foreign language learning experiences. Teori Horwitz et al. (1986)

Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Theory is an important part of research on how students feel when they are learning a foreign language. Since the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was developed, researchers have been able to measure and identify the level of students anxiety across three main areas: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and examination anxiety. This instrument's widespread adoption in a variety of linguistic and cultural contexts attests to its dependability and reliability. FLCAS is still being used in recent studies to investigate the effects of these issues on social interaction, academic performance, and student participation in the classroom, including online learning and academic writing. These results support the idea that controlling students' emotions is crucial to their success in learning a foreign language.

A study conducted by Al-Maamari (2023) focuses on university students in Oman enrolled in English as a foreign language courses. This study employed the FLCAS to examine three types of anxiety: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and examination anxiety. The findings demonstrate that female students experienced higher levels of anxiety than male students, particularly in terms of oral communication. This study also suggests that students with lower academic achievement backgrounds were more likely to prepare oral communication practice from different levels to build up confidence and avoid stress.

Referring to Kim and Lee (2022), 210 college students in South Korea who were studying English were surveyed using FLCAS. The study focuses on the relationship between anxiety levels and student engagement in face-to-face classroom activities compared to online learning activities. Surprisingly, the data found that students reported reduced levels of anxiety in online classes because they felt less observed and more comfortable expressing themselves through digital media. However, exam anxiety remained high in both

learning modes. The study revealed the flexibility of the FLCAS in recognizing stresses in a variety of current learning scenarios, emphasizing that beneficial, conducive virtual classroom design can assist in reducing language anxiety.

Rahman and Noor (2021) examined the elements that contribute to language anxiety in Arabic language classes among Malaysian pre-university students. The study used the FLCAS adapted to the Arabic language setting and discovered that fear of negative evaluation was the most significant contributor to anxiety, followed by fear regarding performance during oral examinations. Students additionally indicated that teachers' emphasis on grammatical accuracy raised stress. The study suggested that teachers implement a communication-based learning approach and provide constructive feedback to reduce anxiety levels. The study provides important information in expanding the application of Horwitz et al.'s theory to foreign language contexts other than English.

Zhou (2024) conducted a study on young Chinese undergraduate students enrolled in academic English classes. The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of students' anxiety on academic writing skills. The FLCAS instrument was used in conjunction with students' writing analysis and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that students with high FLCAS scores wrote simpler, less structured writing and frequently avoided the use of complex structures. In the interviews, students expressed concerns that their mistakes would be negatively evaluated by lecturers and peers, which made them unsure about expressing their ideas. This study demonstrated that anxiety impacts not only oral communication but also written expression, in line with the original theory of Horwitz et al. 1986.

Ultimately, the results show that Horwitz et al. (1986) theory and FLCAS are still useful in understanding the psychological challenges faced by students in foreign language courses. Findings from numerous contexts, including Oman, Korea, Malaysia and China, consistently show that high levels of anxiety have a negative impact on students' self-confidence, self-expression and academic achievement. As a result, educators must identify the primary sources of students concern and develop a pedagogical strategy that is more inclusive and emotionally supportive, rather than emphasizing language perfection. This effort can reduce the level of student anxiety in the classroom and subsequently increase students' ability to master a foreign language more neutrally and effectively.

### **Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Theory**

The Affective Filter Theory introduced by Krashen (1982) in the Second Language Acquisition Model emphasizes those emotions such as anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation function as "filters" that can prevent or allow linguistic input to be processed effectively. If high affective filtering is caused by negative emotions such as stress or anxiety, the received input cannot be converted into good foreign language acquisition. Therefore, a stressful learning environment can reduce the effectiveness of foreign language learning, even when the teaching materials and techniques are excellent. According to the theoretical framework, a number of recent studies have provided strong empirical support for the existence and effects of affective filtering in various foreign language learning contexts. These studies provide in-depth insights into how affective factors influence students' achievement in second language acquisition.

A study by Garcia Uquillas (2021) examined the relationship between language learning anxiety, motivation and self-confidence and speaking English achievement among university students. Garcia reported that anxious students tend to communicate passively, avoid utilizing oral communication and remain silent in class. Although they understood the language input, they failed to convert it into output due to affective filters that prevented spontaneous information processing. The study also suggested that more inclusive teaching techniques and emotional control could reduce affective filtering. These results demonstrate the importance of the classroom environment in supporting effective language acquisition.

In a study by Fernandez Silva (2019), secondary-level EFL students in Spain were exposed to audiovisual materials such as short films, interactive podcasts, and multimedia presentations. The primary goal was to determine whether multimedia approaches could reduce anxiety levels and encourage students involvement in the learning process. The results demonstrate that students's level of anxiety was significantly lower among

students, particularly for those who were previously worried about speaking inadequately. This effect can be directly seen in the improvement in speaking performance, interaction in small groups, and confidence in using new language structures. This study confirms that interesting and enjoyable teaching materials can reduce effective filtering while facilitating the processing of linguistic input in real communication contexts.

In the recent study, Li investigated reading anxiety among EFL students in China, with a focus on the relationship between self-efficacy, emotion management strategies, and reading comprehension of reading texts. Students who were trained in calming techniques, building self-confidence, and setting independent goals showed significant reductions in reading anxiety. This made it easier for them to understand and process academic English texts. The study discovered that when learners were experienced and calm, they proved better able to process reading input efficiently. This is consistent with Krashen's hypothesis that positive emotions reduce effective filtering while increasing language processing efficiency.

These four studies by Wang (2024), Garcia Uquillas (2021), Fernandez Silva (2019), and Li (2025) consistently support Krashen's Affective Filter Theory by showing that emotional factors such as stress, anxiety, self-confidence, and motivation greatly influence the extent to which language acquisition can be processed and used by students. The study findings indicate that an emotionally supportive learning environment, engaging teaching materials and self-confidence-building teaching practices can decrease emotional barriers and improve language acquisition. The implications are clear: language teachers need to emphasize not only the language content but also the emotional state of students so that learning is easier to remember and has a positive impact. Therefore, a holistic and student-oriented pedagogical approach is essential in ensuring the success of foreign language teaching and learning.

### **Information Processing Theory by Eysenck & Calvo (1992)**

The Information Processing Theory introduced by Eysenck and Calvo (1992) explains how anxiety can have a direct impact on an individual's cognitive ability, especially in terms of efficiency and performance. In the context of foreign language learning, this theory argues that anxiety will disrupt the working memory system, which is the part of the brain that functions and stores information temporarily. This disruption makes it difficult for students to concentrate, organize information, and respond to language stimuli effectively in a timely manner. The effect is most noticeable in activities that require high cognitive processing such as listening, writing essays, and speaking spontaneously.

Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (2000) examined this result through their study of university students. They discovered that students with high levels of language anxiety perform severely on tasks requiring deep thinking and intensive concentration, such as writing essays or listening to foreign language recordings. This was related to the students' inability to concentrate and remember important information when they were in a disturbed emotional state. Students who experienced anxiety also showed a tendency to avoid foreign language tasks, which ultimately had a negative impact on their long-term learning.

A study by Saito, Horwitz and Garza (1999) also supports this theory by focusing on the anxiety aspect of listening activities. They found that students with high anxiety had more difficulty understanding foreign language content presented in audio. This inhibition was associated with internal stress that interfered with students' ability to focus on the information they heard, thus reducing their ability to understand the meaning conveyed. This study shows that anxiety is not only emotional but also interferes with critical cognitive aspects of language learning.

In addition, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) further developed the understanding of the effects of anxiety on information processing in language learning. They emphasized that anxiety can affect various levels of language processing- from the initial stage (input) to the final stage (output) which includes speaking and writing. They explained that students who experience high levels of anxiety not only have impaired attention and working memory but also have problems structuring sentences and choosing appropriate words when speaking. This situation causes students to tend to remain silent or use less fluent language when interacting in a foreign language.



In general, these four studies demonstrate that Information Processing Theory is highly relevant in explaining how anxiety has a profound impact on students' academic achievement in foreign language studies. The theory emphasizes that the perception of anxiety is not merely external but is rooted in complex internal cognitive processes which can ultimately affect student achievement if not managed holistically.

### **Lazarus's Transactional Appraisal Theory (1984)**

Lazarus's (1984) Cognitive Appraisal Theory emphasizes that emotions, including anxiety, arise from the way individuals appraise a situation as either a threat or a challenge. In the context of foreign language learning, students' perceptions of assignments, exams, or classroom interactions will determine their emotional reactions. If the situation is judged to be beyond their abilities or to be a threat to their self-esteem, then anxiety will increase. Conversely, if the situation is judged to be a challenge that can be overcome, students are more likely to show motivation and confidence. This theory explains that emotional responses depend on two appraisals: primary appraisal (what implications the situation has for the student's well-being) and secondary appraisal (does the student have the resources to deal with it). In fact, perception and coping strategies play an important role in determining the level of foreign language anxiety.

A study by Williams and Andrade (2008) supports the basic tenets of this theory. They found that students who viewed language tests as a threat showed significantly higher levels of anxiety than students who viewed the tests as a challenge. Negative perceptions of exams are often associated with previous experiences of failure or a stressful learning environment which ultimately increases the pressure to respond. The results of this study show the importance of teachers' approaches in shaping students' perceptions for example, by explaining the objectives of the assessment and providing emotional support before the test is taken.

Furthermore, Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) conducted a study on foreign language learners from diverse cultural backgrounds and found that students' emotions, such as anxiety and excitement, were strongly influenced by how they interpreted classroom interactions. Students who were encouraged by their teachers, given opportunities to try, and not punished for mistakes were more likely to find the learning experience enjoyable and challenging. In this context, students' cognitive appraisal of the classroom environment played an important role in determining their emotional stability. This study demonstrated that emotional management is not solely dependent on students' personalities but is greatly influenced by how they interpret the surrounding environment.

Another study conducted by Suriati and Subramaniam (2020) on secondary school students in Malaysia showed that students' level of anxiety towards learning Arabic was closely related to their perception of the difficulty of the task and the teacher's attitude. Students who rated the task as too difficult and the teacher as not understanding their needs showed higher levels of anxiety. This study reinforces the claim that students' subjective perception or assessment of the learning situation is a major source of emotional stress in foreign language learning.

Overall, these three studies further confirm the framework of Lazarus' Cognitive Appraisal Theory by showing that the level of student anxiety is not determined by the situation alone but depends on how students evaluate their self-efficacy, task difficulty, and environmental support. Therefore, strategies to address language anxiety need to focus on fostering positive perceptions and providing a learning environment that is supportive and responsive to students' emotional needs.

### **Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977)**

The Independent Efficacy Theory proposed by Bandura (1977) continues to be an important framework in understanding the psychological dynamics of students when learning a foreign language. A study by Mills, Pajares and Herron (2006) was among the first to show a strong relationship between oral communication proficiency and self-efficacy in French as a foreign language learner. According to study's finding, students who were confident in their speaking abilities showed higher achievement and were more comfortable taking part in oral activities in the classroom. This internal confidence motivated them to try even if they made mistakes, while reducing anxiety and increasing active learning.

A recent study by Li and Zheng (2021) involved university students in China learning English as a foreign language. They found that students with high self-efficacy not only performed better on oral fluency tests but were also more active in group conversations and class presentations. This finding further supports the argument that self-efficacy influences not only academic outcomes but also social interactions in language learning.

Yang and Bai (2023) investigated the role of self-efficacy in academic writing among postgraduate students. Students who believed in their ability to plan, organize ideas, and present arguments in their second language (L2) showed better writing results in terms of organization, clarity, and originality of content. Additionally, this study also found that self-efficacy was closely related to emotional control and time management strategies, making it an important element in the academic success of L2 students.

Moreover, a study by Chen and Zhang (2022) found that self-efficacy also influenced the level of student engagement in online activities during virtual learning sessions. Students who were confident in their ability to independently manage their learning, adapt to technology, and participate in discussion forums were found to perform better in oral and written assessments. This suggests that in the context of modern learning, self-efficacy plays a large adaptive role in the effectiveness of digital pedagogy.

All studies using Bandura's (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory consistently show that an individual's belief in their own abilities plays a significant role in the success of foreign language learning. Whether in speaking skills, academic writing or engaging in digital learning, students with high self-efficacy are found to be more active, more willing to try, and more skilled at dealing with emotional and cognitive challenges. They perform better because this belief encourages deeper engagement and the use of effective learning strategies. In fact, the theory emphasizes that building self-efficacy among students not only improves academic results but also strengthens their ability to adapt to various forms of foreign language learning environments.

## **Similarities And Comparative Analysis Of Theories**

### **Similarities Across Theories**

The five main theories are the Foreign Language Anxiety Theory by Horwitz et al. (1986), the Affective Filtering Theory by Krashen (1982), the Information Processing Theory by Eysenck & Calvo (1992), the Transactional Judgment Theory by Lazarus (1984), and the Self-Efficacy Theory by Bandura (1977). They show a significant similarity namely the importance influencing students' emotions and perceptions in foreign language learning.

All theories believe that negative emotions such as anxiety and stress can inhibit second language acquisition and use, although by different psychological mechanisms. For example, Krashen (1982) emphasizes that the emotional state of a learner acts as a “filter” that determines the amount of language input that can be processed; if anxiety is high, the filter becomes thick and input cannot be absorbed. This is consistent with Horwitz et al. (1986), who comprehend anxiety as a situational phenomenon in the classroom that explains students' willingness to actively participate.

Meanwhile, Eysenck and Calvo (1992) explained anxiety in terms of cognitive impairment of the working memory system, but the overall impression remains the same. A decrease in linguistic performance due to excessive emotional load. Similarly, Lazarus (1984) through Transactional Appraisal Theory emphasizes that stress or anxiety is determined by the learner's cognitive appraisal of a situation and the effectiveness of their coping strategies. According to Bandura (1977), stated that perceptions of self-efficacy influence motivation, behavior and emotional reactions, as well as impacting achievement in language tasks.

Therefore, the major similarity shared by these five theories is that they both recognise the role of emotions in learning and support pedagogical interventions that aim to control emotional stress, strengthen self-efficacy, and create a positive learning atmosphere to enhance the effectiveness of foreign language learning.

**Table 1:** Similarities Across Theories of Foreign Language Anxiety

Theory	Shared Similarity	Pedagogical Implication
Horwitz et al. (1986)	Views anxiety as a situational phenomenon affecting willingness to participate in classroom activities	Highlights the need to create supportive classroom environments that reduce fear of negative evaluation
Krashen (1982)	Emphasizes emotional states as an “affective filter” influencing how much input can be processed	Encourages teachers to lower learners’ anxiety through motivation and confidence-building strategies
Eysenck & Calvo (1992)	Explains anxiety as a cognitive burden that impairs working memory and reduces language performance	Suggests instructional approaches that minimize stress and cognitive overload
Lazarus (1984)	Frames anxiety as a result of subjective appraisal of threats and available coping resources	Stresses the importance of equipping students with coping skills and positive appraisal strategies
Bandura (1977)	Connects self-efficacy beliefs to emotional regulation, motivation, and task achievement	Advocates strengthening learners’ self-efficacy to enhance confidence and resilience in language learning

## Differences Across Theories

### Theory by Horwitz et al. (1986)

The Horwitz et al. (1986) theory emphasizes that anxiety in learning a foreign language is a type of isolated anxiety, different from general anxiety. The main focus of this theory is the ambience of the language learning room, particularly from three aspects: communication anxiety, fear of negative assessment, and anxiety related to examinations. The primary strength of this theory is practical application and the wide usage in empirical research, particularly through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FCLAS). However, this theory does not emphasize the students’ inner cognitive aspect such as information processing or self- confidence.

As an example, students who fear to speak in an Arabic class due to scared of being laugh at will result in communication anxiety according to Horwitz et al. this is supported by the research findings by Zhou (2021) who found that students who learn English language as foreign language in China showed high level of communication anxiety when asked to speak spontaneously in front of their friends. The research also showed that students who have high anxiety have the tendency to avoid the situation to communicate verbally, therefore, affect their opportunity to enhance their speaking skill.

Besides that, a study by Ibrahim and Mahamod (2022) which was done among form six students in Malaysia found that the fear towards negative assessment is among the main factors that contributes to the high level of anxiety among Arabic students. Students who fear of being criticized or openly commented in classroom are prone to experience emotional stress and display low performance in their speaking and writing tasks. This study validated the true dimension of Horwitz theory in the context of learning second language in Malaysia.

Both researches support the Horwitz et al. theoretical framework by emphasizing the importance of supportive classroom ambience, social acceptance, and the empathetical approach in teaching in order to reduce students’ anxiety in foreign language classroom.

### Krashen’s Theory of Affective Filter (1982)

Krashen’s Theory of Affective Filter (1982) focuses on the roles of emotion in restricting linguistic inputs from being processed effectively. This theory states that even though the language input prepared by teachers are of quality, negative emotions namely anxiety, demotivation or low self-esteem may act as a “filter” that prevents

students from absorbing and processing the language information. In other words, when this affective filter/restriction is low then the students will feel calm, motivated and confident that the language input will be received and processed optimally in second language acquisition.

The strength of this theory is the emphasis on the role of emotion in language acquisition process, making it very relevant in learning environment design that is supportive and low stress. Even so, its main weakness is the difficulty to prove the concept of “affective filter” empirically, given it being an abstract construct and not directly measurable.

For example, a student who mastered basic grammar structure in Arabic but fails to concentrate or comprehend the contents of the syllabus due to stress or anxiety during the learning session, shows the function of the emotional filter as explained by Krashen. The findings of Wang & Liu (2023) among middle school students in Taiwan found that students who show a high level of anxiety in verbal activity experiences difficulty in processing language input information, even though they possess good language skills. This research supports Krashen’s theory by proving the affective factor such as emotional stress may prevent the acquisition of input effectively.

In another research made by Mohamad & Rahman (2022) involving students from higher education institution in Malaysia has found that the pleasant vibe of the classroom, positive teacher-student interactions, and the emphasis on collaborative learning succeeded in lowering the students’ “affective filter.”

### **Information Processing Theory by Eysenck and Calvo (1992)**

Information Processing Theory by Eysenck and Calvo (1992) focuses on how anxiety may affect students’ performance owing to the disruption of working memory function. This theory explains that anxiety not only affects emotion but also increases cognitive load by causing the students to feed negative thoughts or their own anxiety. This reduces the cognitive source that is supposedly used to solve tasks associated with learning namely writing, comprehending texts, or structuring sentences in foreign languages.

The strength of this theory is that it is based on a firm cognitive psychological frame, one that explains in detail the mechanisms on how academic performance may be affected in stressful situations. However, the downside is that it is not developed specifically in the context of foreign language learning, thus needing adjustments or adaptations so that its use may be more relevant to the research of second language acquisition. For example, a student undergoing an essay writing training in French cannot focus because of the fear of making mistakes and receiving low marks. This situation shows the disruption in working memory function, adhering to the theory’s description.

Research conducted by Owens & Hadwin (2021) found that students learning French as a foreign language shows a high level of anxiety while performing a written task, experiencing a significant nosedive in performance score. Cognitive analysis shows that they utilize more mental capacity and less focus in the writing itself. This research supports the claim of Eysenck & Calvo’s theory that states the performance is affected due to the cognitive source is “borrowed” by the process of anxiety.

In Malaysian context, research conducted by Ismail & Wahab (2023) that studies university students in advanced Arabic course showed that anxiety towards performance has retarded their ability to process complex texts. This research utilized a neuropsychological approach by measuring the cognitive workload and found that students who scored high in anxiety in surveys also displayed low performance in comprehension tasks. This further reinforces the role of limited cognitive function in explaining the effects of anxiety towards academic performance, in line with the theory of Eysenck & Calvo.



## **Lazarus' Transactional Appraisal Theory (1984)**

Lazarus' Transactional Appraisal Theory (1984) emphasizes that anxiety or emotional stress is not solely dependent on the situation, but rather on individual subjective assessment on the matter itself. This process occurs on two main levels:

- i. Primary Appraisal: individual assessment of whether or not the situation threatens wellbeing.
- ii. Secondary Appraisal: individual assessment of whether or not they have a resource, strategy or adequate support to handle the situation.

Based on this theory, anxiety arises when a student assesses a task, namely oral presentation in foreign language class, as a threat to their self-esteem and at the same time deems themselves not having the ability or resource to handle it. This creates an emotional stress response that can affect learning achievement.

The strength of this theory is that it offers a deep understanding in students' perception and coping mechanism, allowing teachers to determine how the student thinks and reacts to learning challenges. However, the weakness of this theory is its lack of direct translation to curricular design or pedagogical approaches, especially in the context of language teaching in higher education institutions.

For example, if a student assesses a language development activity such as group discussions as a high risk for their self-image, yet at the same time feeling unprepared or not confident in their abilities, then the anxiety level skyrockets – agreeing with Lazarus' Transactional Appraisal Theory.

Research conducted by Lee & Song (2022) found that Korean students who learn English as a second language showed a lot of anxiety in oral activities when they label the task as a threat to their self-esteem, especially if they had no preparation or sufficient training. Students who had a low perception of control displayed weak emotional coping responses and poorer academic performance.

Aside from that, research made by Hashim & Zulkifli (2023) among university students in Malaysia found that the perception towards the support of teachers and coping strategies play an important role in determining the level of foreign language anxiety. Students who assessed their teachers as support and gave guidance show a reduction in academic stress albeit being handed challenging tasks. This aligns with the Secondary Appraisal in Lazarus' theory that emphasizes the importance of internal and external resources in handling challenges.

## **Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory 1977**

Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977) highlights the significance of individual belief in their own abilities in influencing thoughts, emotions and behaviors. In the context of foreign language learning, students who possess high self-efficacy are prone to see the learning challenges as opportunities to grow, and not necessarily as a threat. Indirectly, this reduces anxiety, increases motivation, and leads to better achievements.

This theory is so influential because it serves as a nexus between inner motivation and self-control strategy, including diligence, emotional control, and approach to tasks. The main strength lies in its ability to differentiate individuals in handling stress and learning challenges. Be that as it may, this theory's drawback is that it tends to neglect external factors such as social support, peer interactions, or classroom environments, which are also factors that affect the anxiety level and efficacy of students.

For instance, a student, confident in their ability to understand dialogues in Japanese despite the usage of challenging grammars will face the issue more calmly and stay motivated, as compared to one who lacks confidence and is soon to give up on account of not believing in their own abilities.

Research made by Rahimi & Abedini (2022) that studies English language students in Iran found that there were several negative relations that were significant between the self-efficacy level and foreign language anxiety. Students who showed higher self-efficacy are inclined to join discussions made in the class, be indifferent to stress, and exhibit better performance in oral learning.

Norazlina & Shahrulnizam (2023) in research regarding Arab language learners in a Malaysian public university has reported that students who have had working experience and received lecturer's support showed an elevated self-efficacy and lower anxiety. This research also suggested that a training program based on the increment of confidence may reduce the students' anxiety in learning a second language. It is easier to understand the differences in theories of foreign language learning anxiety as shown in the table 2.

**Table 2:** Differences in Theoretical Perspectives

Theory	Focus	Strengths	Limitations
Horwitz et al. (1986)	Language classroom context	Practical and widely used	Does not explain internal cognitive aspects
Krashen (1982)	Emotional filter on language input	Explaining the importance of emotions in SLA	Difficult to test empirically
Eysenck & Calvo (1992)	Working memory impairment	Detailed cognitive psychology explanation	Not focusing on foreign language context
Lazarus (1984)	Subjective assessment of situation	Emphasises the role of perception and coping	Less directly applicable in the classroom
Bandura (1977)	Students self-efficacy	Focus on motivation and self-control	Ignore external factors such as social interactions

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study integrates five major theories to reconceptualize Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) in a holistic manner. Each theory contributes a unique lens: Horwitz et al. (1986) emphasize FLA as a distinct classroom-based construct involving communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation; Krashen (1982) highlights the affective filter, where emotions regulate the amount of input that can be processed; Eysenck and Calvo (1992) stress the role of working memory impairment caused by anxiety; Lazarus (1984) focuses on cognitive appraisal and coping strategies in determining stress responses; while Bandura (1977) underscores the role of self-efficacy beliefs in shaping motivation, resilience, and emotional regulation.

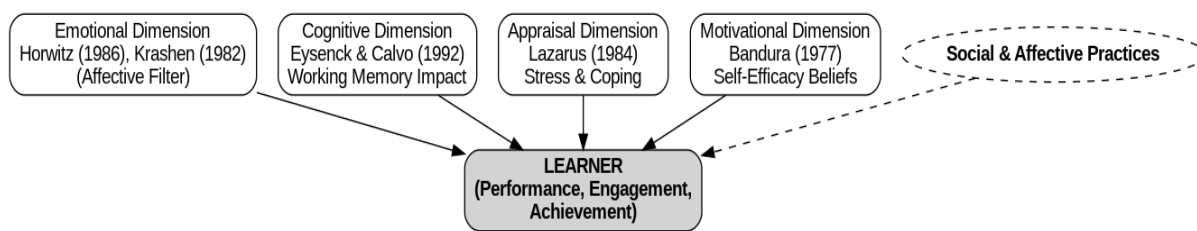
When synthesized, these theories reveal that FLA is not a singular or isolated phenomenon, but a multidimensional construct shaped by emotional, cognitive, appraisal-based, and motivational factors. The framework positions the learner at the center of interaction, where affective states (Horwitz, Krashen), cognitive processing (Eysenck & Calvo), individual appraisal (Lazarus), and self-beliefs (Bandura) intersect. Collectively, these perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation of how emotional stress, perception, and self-efficacy influence language learning outcomes. This integrative framework not only advances theoretical understanding of FLA but also supports pedagogical interventions that aim to reduce stress, enhance coping mechanisms, and strengthen learners' confidence in foreign language classrooms.

The theoretical framework of this study is based on a multidisciplinary model that combines five main theories in explaining language anxiety. This model places the student as the centre of interaction between emotional aspects (Krashen, Horwitz), cognitive aspects (Eysenck), individual appraisals (Lazarus), and self-beliefs (Bandura). All of these theories complement each other in explaining how various affective factors contribute to the level of student anxiety.

Figure 1 illustrates the re-conceptualized theoretical framework of foreign language anxiety in language learning. This framework illustrates the integration of five major theories that collectively explain the multidimensional nature of Foreign Language Anxiety. The emotional dimension (Horwitz, 1986; Krashen,

1982) highlights classroom anxiety and the affective filter, while the cognitive dimension (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992) emphasizes the impairment of working memory under anxiety. The appraisal dimension (Lazarus, 1984) explains how subjective evaluations of threats and coping resources influence emotional stress, and the motivational dimension (Bandura, 1977) focuses on self-efficacy beliefs that shape confidence, persistence, and emotional regulation. Together, these four dimensions converge on the learner, who is positioned at the center of the framework, representing performance, engagement, and achievement. The dashed oval surrounding the learner symbolizes the interaction of social and affective practices, indicating that FLA is not an isolated phenomenon but an outcome of continuous interaction between internal beliefs, emotional states, cognitive processes, and contextual appraisals. This framework provides a holistic theoretical lens for understanding FLA and supports pedagogical interventions aimed at reducing stress, enhancing coping mechanisms, and strengthening learner resilience in foreign language classrooms.

**Fig 1:** Re-conceptualized Theoretical Framework of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)



## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the theoretical synthesis and analysis of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), it is evident that addressing this issue requires a comprehensive and multi-level approach. Effective interventions should not only target the classroom setting but also extend to students, parents, policymakers, and the wider community. The following recommendations are proposed to translate theoretical insights into practical strategies that can help reduce FLA, enhance learners' self-efficacy, and create emotionally supportive environments for successful foreign language learning.

### School

1. Train teachers in affective management: Language teachers need to be given ongoing training to identify symptoms of language anxiety and apply theory-based pedagogical approaches such as FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and Krashen's Affective Screener.
2. Create an emotionally supportive college environment: Design activities that are fun and non-stressful, encourage collaborative learning, and avoid assessments that focus too much on perfection or exams.
3. Provide psychological guidance in language learning: Independent or group tutoring sessions can help students identify the causes of anxiety and build self-efficacy.

### Student

1. Practice emotional control and time management strategies: Students are advised to learn techniques such as deep breathing, reflective journaling or positive visualization to reduce stress before language lessons or exams.
2. Consistently increase independent effectiveness: Through independent practice, setting small goals and using resources such as language learning apps, students can build confidence and reduce the fear of making mistakes.

### Parents

1. Provide emotional support instead of comparison: Parents must recognize that learning a foreign language involves a long-term process with emotional factors. Avoid excessive pressure and encourage children's efforts even if mistakes occur.

2. Provide a language environment at home: Light exposure such as watching foreign language movies together, providing reading materials or using foreign language labels at home, can help improve proficiency in a relaxed way.

### Government

1. Design an integrated and student-centred language curriculum: The Ministry of Education should reconsider its approach to language teaching education to include psychological and affective elements of students as suggested by the FLA multidisciplinary model.
2. Provide teacher training modules based on affective theory including all these theories such as Bandura (self-efficacy), Krashen (affective filters), and Lazarus (emotional appraisal) to strengthen teachers pedagogy.
3. Fund FLA intervention programmes in schools: Special allocations for foreign language anxiety management programmes can reduce distractions while increasing interest in second or third language learning.

### Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs)

1. Organise motivational and stress management workshops for language learning: Educational non-governmental organisation (NGOs) can play a role by providing a supportive environment for students who are stressed through workshops and language camps that focus positive emotions.
2. Provide foreign language community mentors: Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can link students with native speakers or senior students to provide informal advice and enhance students' confidence.
3. Conduct field studies: Academic or educational NGOs can help expand FLA results by conducting action research in rural communities or high-risk areas to assist design more inclusive policies.

## CONCLUSION

The five theories discussed, namely Horwitz et al.'s Theory of Foreign Language School Anxiety (1986), Krashen's Affective Screening Theory (1982), Eysenck & Calvo's Information Processing Theory (1992), Lazarus's Transactional Judgment Theory (1984), and Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977), provide a holistic picture of how self-emotions, foreign language perceptions influence students' emotions, perceptions, and foreign language learning cognition. Although they come from different fields of psychology, these five theories complement each other by showing that anxiety is not an isolated phenomenon but is the result of the interaction of various internal and external factors.

The integration of these theories enables educators to help students gain more understanding, not only in terms of academic achievement but also emotional states, learning styles, and levels of self-confidence. Teachers can use these theories to develop more empathetic, responsive, and inclusive teaching approaches. For example, teachers can identify students who are prone to performance stress (as described by Horwitz) and take proactive steps such as providing constructive feedback, implementing less stressful collaborative activities, and reducing exam-oriented grading.

Furthermore, teaching strategies that emphasise building self-efficacy such as encouraging independent reflection, setting small goals, and recognising student gains, give the confidence to try even when they make mistakes. Emotion management approaches such as engaging training methods, peer support, and entertaining learning ways can also help to lower excessive affective filtering, allowing for more efficient language acquisition.

Another point that needs to be noted is that anxiety in foreign language learning is an issue that deserves serious attention, especially when learning is conducted online. The change from a face-to-face environment to virtual learning has brought major implications for the affective aspects of students, including anxiety levels, motivation and self-confidence. In this context, teachers need to create a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment so that students feel safe to try without fear of making mistakes. The use of interactive activities such as video forums, small group discussion sessions and online language exchanges can help



reduce stress and increase students' courage to communicate. A study by MacIntyre and Gregersen (2024) through the article *Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Online: Mitigating Strategies and Speaking Practices* found that students experience speaking anxiety in an online environment due to the lack of direct interaction and technical difficulties, but support strategies such as step-by-step training and positive feedback can reduce this stress. In addition, a study by Al-Malki and Rahman (2024) in *A Study of English Language Learning Anxiety and Teaching Strategies: The Context of Saudi Arabia* showed that first-year students experienced high anxiety due to fear of being negatively evaluated by teachers, and it was recommended that empathetic feedback and supportive teaching approaches be applied to control this anxiety.

In addition, Liu and Chen (2024) in their study titled *Digital Games for Learning Vocabulary: The Effects on Foreign Language Anxiety, Buoyancy, Online Engagement, and Vocabulary Learning* found that the use of digital games in online learning not only increased students' interest and engagement, but also reduced the level of foreign language anxiety through a fun and non-stressful learning environment. These studies confirmed that foreign language anxiety does not only exist in traditional learning, but is also influenced by new factors such as technological pressure and limited virtual interaction. Therefore, a pedagogical approach based on empathy, emotional support and student-friendly technology integration is very important to help students manage anxiety more effectively. In conclusion, in an effort to increase the effectiveness of foreign language proficiency through online learning, affective aspects such as anxiety need to be addressed holistically so that students can learn more confidently, motivated and competitively in today's digital education world.

In summary, comprehending and implementing interventions based on these theories can help create an emotionally secure learning environment, support psychology, and empower students to meet the challenges of learning a foreign language. The result is not only increased language proficiency but also more balanced student development from both cognitive and emotional aspects. Therefore, these theories need to continue to be used as important guides in designing more effective and humane curricula, pedagogical strategies, and language education foundations.

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