

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY: CONCEPT, CAUSE, EFFECT AND MANAGING STRATEGIES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety is defined as “a specific complex of self-perception, attitudes, feelings, and behaviors associated with classroom language learning emerging from the distinctiveness of the language learning process” (p. 128). This broad conceptualization of the construct leads to the narrow definition of language anxiety as a form of stress, nervousness, emotional response, and worry associated with learning a foreign language. If not identified and well-managed, anxiety can cause problems for a foreign language student by interfering with their ability to learn, retain, and produce new language. Even though anxiety is a known determinant of foreign language learning, there has been little research into its causes, effects, and coping strategies. The goal of this study was to provide a systematic review of the literature on foreign language classroom anxiety by (1) clarifying the concept of foreign language anxiety, and how it differs from other related types of anxiety; (2) highlighting the key causes of foreign language anxiety; (3) discussing its effects; and (4) recommending strategies for managing it. The review was conducted using Petticrew and Roberts’ (2006) method of systematic review in the social sciences. This approach included developing research objectives, selecting a search strategy, conducting a literature search, establishing the inclusion criteria, analyzing the quality of the studies, and extracting data from included articles. With English keywords, 45 possibly relevant studies were found on Eric, Scopus, Sage, and Elsevier, and 20 of them met the inclusion criteria. All the reviewed studies were published between 1985 and 2020. This review may be helpful for teachers, students, school principals, researchers, and policymakers to understand the potential effects of foreign language anxiety, identify its causes, and develop effective management strategies to minimize its negative effects.