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Foreign Language Learning Anxiety: The Case of Iranian Kurdish-Persian Bilinguals

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ABSTRACT: As arecognized psychological construct, anxietyplays aninfluential role in the invaluable experience of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This affective factor has appealed lots of researchersinto examination of anxiety levels and severityin a wide variety of academic and non-academic contexts since the last three decades; however there are several unexplored EFL settings overlooked in this stream particularly in Iran. To this end, keeping to previous studies, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986)was administered to a randomly screened-out sample (No. 191) of Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persiannon-English-major undergraduate students at a technical college in Ilam, Iran. The findings of this preliminary unique study revealed that these bilinguals learning English as their third language indeed experienced a comparatively high level of foreign language learning anxietyin the forms of communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and anxiety in the EFL classroom environment.At the end, suggestions to lessen language learning anxiety in EFL settings and implications for further studies were delineated.

*Keywords:*Anxiety, Bilingual students, EFL,FLCAS,Iran

Background

The English language as the predominantly used language worldwide and a prerequisite to the acquisition of a wealth of knowledgehas become an important subject in the educational systems of counties across the globe. An interesting question in learning this international language particularly in English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) contexts is why some people can learn it at once and without difficulty while others come to nothing at this undertaking (Aydin and Zengin, 2008).

To tacklethis issue, a review of studies on language learning and teaching shows that researches have looked ata wide range of variables that may stem from neurological to psychological, cognitive, and affective domains such as language aptitude, learning styles and strategies, social contexts, and affective factors including empathy, self-esteem, inhibition, motivation, attitudes, and anxiety (Brown, 2007, p. 161; Aydinand Zengin, 2008). These socio-culturally-oriented factors seem to vary across different countries (Na, 2007; Al-Seraj, 2011).

Recently, language learning anxiety, particularly foreign language learning (FLL) anxiety, has been the focus of loads of studies (see e.g. Gnaschowand Sparks, 1996; Piechurska-Kuciel, 2006; Cubukcu, 2007; Atef-VahidandKashani, 2011; SerrajandNoordin, 2013) since this well-documented psychological construct has been taken into account as an influential factor in the domain of EFL learning (Zheng, 2008).

FLL anxiety has been defined by Horwitz (2001) as a multifaceted concept comprised of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. This complex concept can be of four components (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Zheng, 2008; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013) including:

Communication anxiety, that is the learners' fear of communicating with other people which might lead to difficulty in speaking in public, difficulty understanding others and making themselves understood, as well as being silent learners during the language learning process; test anxietybeing the learners' fear of exams, quizzes, and other activities employed to evaluate their competence and performance which might lead to negative motivation and put unrealistic demands on learners; negative evaluation anxiety as the learners' worry about how others view them which may also include avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectations that others might evaluate them negatively; and anxiety in the English classroomwhich is the learners' fear inside the classroom context where factors such as learning tasks and activities, teachers' engagement and even peer pressure may contribute to language learning anxiety (Horwitz, et al. 1986; Brown, 2007, p.162; Zheng, 2008).

The merging of these components thus leads to the creation of anxiety in language learners (Brown, 2007; Zheng, 2008; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013).

Like other EFL settings, English stands as a foreign language taught as a compulsory subject at Iranian high schools up to colleges and higher education institutions. Learning English has always been a great challenge for Iranian students due to the limited contact with target-language speakers and the dearth of opportunities to practice English in their daily lives. University-level students, exposed to English in their classrooms, need to get General English (GE) and English-for-Specific-Purposes (ESP) courses during their studies to fulfill the requirements of their undergraduate and graduate studies. Most of the learners express their fears and a feeling of uneasiness against learning EFL. The feeling of anxiety can provoke many problems in the acquisition, retention and production of the language which ultimately affects their grades, achievement and future studies (MacIntyreand Gardner, 1991; Cubukcu, 2007).

In line with studies on FLL anxiety worldwide, there have been several recently published research orientations to the examination of FLL anxiety in Iran. Most of them, however, have been concentrated on monolingual EFL learners or university students. Bilingual learners, who are a growing community in different parts of the country, are overlooked by researchers. Thus, in order to address the extent of FLL anxiety, the present study is to examine the levels and severity of anxiety, in an unexplored unique setting, among Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students to reveal the leading causes of FLL anxiety, come up with a deeper understanding of this affective variable in an unexplored context, and add a new perspective to the stream of FLL anxiety research carried out in Iran and worldwide over the preceding decades.

Foreign Language LearningAnxiety In Literature

With the importance of the learner status in the circle of language learning; affective factors such as learners' attitudes, empathy, inhibition, motivation and anxiety have been accounted for successful outcomes of language learning in different contexts, (Na, 2007). Since the past three decades, anxiety as an influential factor has been under scrutiny and examined among a wide community of language learners, particularly foreign language learners in many contexts (Na, 2007).

The current history of studies on anxiety in the language learning area is remarkably influenced by the seminal paper of Horwitz et al. (1986). One major contribution of their paper is that it offers a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS; Horwitz et al., 1986). This kind of self-report instrument, eliciting responses of anxiety specific to foreign language classroom settings, triggered an avalanche of similar studies. Research of this kind (see e.g. Ohata, 2005; Cao, 2011; Al-Seraj, 2011; Idr, 2012; Mamhot, Martin andMasangya, 2013) includes research studies aimed at exploring the extents and levels of FLL anxiety as well as the types of anxieties in a wide variety of EFL contexts.

In order to elucidate the mainstream studies on FLL anxiety, a selected number of recently published studies in this regard were summarized and reviewed.For example, in a Pakistani EFL context, Awan and her colleagues (2010) employed FLCAS to examine FLL anxiety among 149 undergraduate learners with regard to the type of situations that provoke anxiety during different stages of the learning process and the relationship of anxiety with learners' achievement. It was found that female students are less anxious in learning English as a foreign language than male students. Communication anxiety and English classroom environment were rated as the biggest causes of anxiety among Pakistani EFL learners, respectively.

In the same vein, using a modified version of FLCAS, Ay (2010) examined EFL anxiety of 160 Turkish young adolescent students in relation to language skills at different levels. Results of this study revealed that FLL anxiety experienced by young adolescent students differed in relation to levels of instruction and basic language skills. Foreign language anxiety was reported in receptive skills at beginner levels and then in productive skills as the levels advanced. The results indicated thatthestudents' level of instruction was taken into account as the main source of anxiety.

In a recently published study, Mamhot, Martin and Masagya (2013) examined language learning anxiety among 40 EFL respondents in the Philippines administering FLCAS and complementary questionnaires. The general results of this study showed that the Filipino learners had a high level of fear of negative evaluation regarding low self-perceived linguistic competency.

Similarly, there are more studies on FLL anxiety in different contexts. Ohata (2005) along with Williams and Andrade (2008) examined the levels of FLL anxiety among Japanese learners in two separate studies. They found that learner-related norms and expectations as well as teacher-related and language learning environment factors have an impact on the degree of FLL anxiety. In 2007, Na in a study on 115 Chinese students learning EFL showed that students had a comparatively high level of FLL anxiety. It was also discovered that high anxiety played a debilitative role in high school-level students' FLL particularly in terms of their communication skills. The results also revealed that in an EFL classroom, Chinese students felt extremely anxious particularly at the time of speaking in front of other students that might be called peer negative evaluation anxiety.

Marwan (2007) investigated Indonesian students' FLL anxiety. Exploring the types of anxiety experienced by EFL learners and the strategies they used to cope with their anxiety, he found that factors like lack of confidence, lack of preparation and fear of failing the class were the primary causes of their anxiety. Findings further revealed that lack of preparation was the main factor contributing to learning anxiety among all learners irrespective of their language proficiency.

Al-Seraj (2011) did a research to find out the experiences of female college students learning EFL in Saudi Arabia.To gain insight into the learners' perspectives of FLL anxiety; the researcher used questionnaires, individual and group interviews, and classroom and informal observations. The findings revealed that anxiety-provoking situations included the environment, the teacher, and the content of material in the class, as well as the communication style.

Generally, the review of such anxiety-related studies revealed that FLL anxiety as a well-documented psychological construct (Zheng, 2008) has been the focus of studies in recent years in a variety of EFL context. Two noticeable points that should be mentioned here include the instruments employed in such studies and their inclination towards presenting the levels and extremes of FLL anxiety in the form of Horwitz et al's (1986) components, that is communication anxiety, test anxiety, negative evaluation anxiety, and anxiety in the English classroom.

In Iran, similar research (see e.g. RezazadehandTavakoli, 2009; Riasati, 2011; AzarfamandBaki, 2012; Noori, 2013; TalebinejadandNekouei, 2013) has also been conducted with different groups of people. The review of a sample of recently published studies in this respect shows that anxiety-related research has been in consonance with other mainstream studies in other EFL contexts across the globe.

Atef-Vahid and Kashani (2011) explored EFL learning anxiety among 38 third-year high school students in English classrooms and its relationship with overall English achievement. Students' FLL anxiety was surveyed and analyzed using the FLCAS and their English achievement was measured through their final standardized English exam administered by the school. The results showed that although some students felt extremely confident and relaxed, however, one-third of the students experienced moderate to high-anxiety levels while learning the English language in class. English classroom anxiety had the highest correlational value among other types of anxiety in FLCAS.

Employing FLCAS and an open-ended structured questionnaire, Yamat and Bidabadi (2012) in their study identified the level of anxiety among 63 randomly selected Iranian university freshmen in EFL classrooms along with the effect of gender on such an affective factor. The findings revealed that these university students experienced the anxiety of being evaluated negatively in EFL classrooms. The findings also demonstrated no statistically significant difference between male and female EFL learners.

Using FLCAS, Izadi and Atasheneh (2012) investigated the effects of FLL anxiety on the communicative skills of listening and speaking of a sample of 30 Iranian EFL students. They found that anxiety is a matter which is directly related to the students' self-confidence and self-esteem.

Shabani (2012) conducted a study on the levels and sources of language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in an EFL Iranian context. Data were gathered through administering two scales including FLACS and fear of negative evaluation to a sample of 61 Persian-speaking EFL learners. Descriptive analysis indicated that participants suffered from language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The findings demonstrated that the prime sources of language anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are fear of failing the class and fear of leaving unfavorable impression on others, respectively.

In another study, Mahmoodzadeh (2012) employed a self-designed version of FLCAS and investigated EFL anxiety among Iranian EFL learners particularly speaking skills anxiety and its relationship with learners' gender. In terms of the gender differences, the results suggested that the female participants were found to be more prone to experiencing EFL speaking anxiety.

In a follow-up study, Mahmoodzadeh (2013) focused on monolingual EFL learners' anxiety in an Iranian context. To determine the extent of FLL anxiety alongside with the learners' gender, developedFLCASquestionnaireswereadministered to 96 lower intermediate EFL learners.The findings, highlighting language classroom anxiety, indicated that mixed-gender classrooms can be considered as an anxiety-provokingteaching context in Iran, since the presence of the opposite gender in EFL classrooms wasfound to cause statistically significant amount of language anxiety among Iranian learners.

Nahavandi and Mukundan(2013) explored the level of anxiety of 548 Iranian EFL students using FLCAS. They tried to correlate three variables including different first languages, proficiency levels and gender. The results of the study indicated communication anxiety was the predominant anxiety component among English-major students.

Generally, the results of these studies demonstrated that language learning anxiety exerts a debilitating role in EFL classroom in different contexts. However, a review of the recently growing studies on FLL anxiety revealed that previous studies in Iran have mostly focused on FLL anxiety among Iranian monolingual learners, while there is no research study, to the authors' knowledge, conducted on the examination of FLL anxiety

among bilingual students, particularly among Iranian bilingual non-English-major college-level students who are learning English out of the circle as a third language.

Purpose Of The Study

As mentioned before, earlier studies on FLL anxiety especially EFL anxiety have concentrated on monolingual learners in a variety of academic and non-academic contexts in Iran and the world over, but they have not been into the examination of this significant affective factor among bilingual EFL learners as growing communities learning English as a third language particularly in Iran. To contribute to the previous research in this regard and provide a better understanding of FLL anxiety in Iran, the current study aims at looking deeply into the affective state of non-English-major undergraduate students learning EFL in a dominantly bilingual (Kurdish-Persian) context in Iran. Specifically, this study is an attempt to find out whether these EFL learners are experiencing FLL anxieties in their unique setting in which they are learning the English language as their third language. To this end, the following research questions were addressed:

DoIranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students experience any FLL anxiety?

What are the prevailing manifestations of FLL anxiety among Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students?

Methodology
Participants

Adopting a descriptive-analytic design, the study was conducted at Bakhtar Institute of Higher Education, a private technical college in Ilam, a predominantly bilingual Kurdish-Persian context, in western Iran. The participants of this study consisted of 191 undergraduate students (112 male (58.6 %) and 79 female (41.4 %)) majoring in different disciplinesincluding Computer Sciences, Electronics, Construction Worksand Architecture were the leading participants of this study.

Using a bilingualism background questionnaire, they were screened-out for their history of bilingualism out of 540 students at this institution to meet the requirements and validity of the study. The age range of the participants varied from 18 to 28 with the mean of 19.5 years. The bilingual EFL learnersall had 3 to 5 years of experience of English learning at high school and pre-college levels. During the administration of the questionnaires, the enrolled participants were studying General English and ESP courses.

Instrumentation

A self-designed bilingualism background questionnaire including age, gender, birthplace, native language, second language, etc. as well as the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), as the most well-known instrument according to a review of previous studies, designed and validated by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) were employed to obtain data for the current study.

The FLCAS as a systematic 33-item survey questionnaire is categorized by the causes of anxiety that would be prevalent among EFL learners in different learning contexts. The factors are identified as communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and anxiety in the English classroom. These are further classified into the following items:

Table 1. The causes of anxiety based on FLCAS

Classified Factors	Items (No. 33)
Communication Anxiety	1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32
Test Anxiety	2, 8, 10, 19, 21
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33
Anxiety in the English Classroom	4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, 28, 30

The respondents to this scale are asked to rate each of the FLCAS statements using a five-point Likert-scale interval ranging from "Strongly Agree"to"StronglyDisagree". It measures a person's level of anxiety by coming up with an anxiety score by adding up the ratings on the 33 items.

Procedure

At first, the purpose of the current study was explained to the EFL university teachers at Bakhtar Institute of Higher Education. Then, they were asked to get the convenient schedule of their class sessions as to the administration of the bilingualism background and the FLCAS questionnaires to the target bilingual undergraduate students. To ensure that the participants had no problem in understanding the questionnaire, the presentone of the researchers translated the questionnaires from English version into Persian version as the formal academic language of the bilingual students in Iran. Then, in order to assure the validity of the questionnaire and consider more cautiously the influence ofcross-culturally conceptual transfer of the items, the questionnaire was given to two experts on translationstudies to evaluate its validity.

Before conducting the main study, a pilot test of the questionnairewasalso administered among 10bilingual EFL learners chosen from the same population in which the internal reliability of thePersian version of the questionnaire was found to have an alpha coefficient of 0.83. To collect the necessary data,the questionnaires were then distributed among the participants to complete it.

Once all the data were completed, the questionnaires were classified, tallied and tabulated. SPSS 19.00 software was employed to analyze the data in the forms of percentages, means and standard deviations for each item and each anxiety component categorized by Horwitz et al. (1986) to see the general situation of Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian learners' levels and extremes of FLL anxiety.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the FLCAS portrayed a general picture of Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian non-English-major students' FLL anxiety levels and severity in an academic context. Following previous studies (e.g. Horwitz et al., 1986; Chan, 2004; Lucaset al., 2011), responses to all the FLCAS items were reported in Table 1 in the form of percentages, means and standard deviations. All the percentages (rounded to the nearest whole number) referred to the number of bilinguals who were in (complete) agreement or disagreement with the FLCAS statements indicative of FLL anxiety. Additionally, means and standard deviations of the FLCAS were presented by items for further analysis.

Table 2. The percentages, means and standard deviations of the FLCAS among Iranian bilingual non-English-major undergraduate students

FLCAS Items	SA* %	A %	N %	DA %	SD %	Ms	SDs
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	43.2	20.0	14.7	10.9	11.2	5.87	16.87
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	10.5	18.8	9.4	38.2	19.9	5.91	16.86
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be asked to speak in my class.	23.0	30.4	12.6	16.8	15.2	4.71	13.89
4. I am afraid when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English class.	23.6	29.4	12.6	18.8	13.6	5.30	13.80
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes.	31.4	24.6	13.1	20.4	6.8	5.98	18.23
6. In English classes, I think of things that are unrelated to the lesson.	10.5	22.5	17.8	27.2	18.3	6.72	18.09
7. I think that my classmates' English is better than mine.	43.8	20.1	12.0	13.6	10.5	4.36	12.05
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my class.	14.7	10.6	17.3	30.4	23.5	6.50	18.13
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	32.5	37.2	12.0	10.5	5.8	4.20	13.94
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	36.6	25.1	12.0	12.0	12.6	3.89	12.12
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over English class.	13.6	13.6	24.6	24.1	19.9	7.05	19.30
12. In English class, I am so nervous that I forget what I know.	16.8	35.6	13.6	20.4	7.9	8.19	22.53
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	28.3	23.6	15.2	13.1	18.8	4.30	9.86
14. I will not be nervous when speaking with native English speakers.	10.5	18.8	24.1	27.2	18.3	4.24	9.85
15. I get depressed when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	37.2	27.2	7.3	18.3	8.4	4.43	12.02
16. Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.	15.2	37.2	8.4	23.0	16.2	2.87	1.36
17. I often feel like not going to my English class.	6.3	8.4	11.5	37.2	35.1	5.37	11.91
18. I feel confident when I speak in English class.	20.9	5.8	19.9	15.7	33.0	7.20	20.49
19. I am afraid that my English teacher will correct every mistake I make.	11.5	22.5	15.2	31.9	17.3	4.71	12.01
20. I feel my heart pounding when I am going to be asked to speak in English class.	25.1	24.1	16.8	18.8	13.1	4.71	13.89
21. The more I prepare for an English test, the more confused I get.	11.0	11.0	16.2	33.0	27.7	4.56	9.82
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.	19.9	22.0	19.4	27.2	8.4	5.83	16.86
23. I always feel that my classmates speak better English than I.	22.0	34.1	9.9	14.6	13.6	8.54	22.44
24. I feel shy when speaking English in front of other students.	40.2	22.2	12.0	15.1	10.5	4.98	13.83
25. English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	17.3	26.2	15.2	28.8	8.9	6.37	18.15
26. I feel tenser and have more pressure in English class than in other classes.	11.0	14.7	16.2	34.6	22.0	4.92	11.98
27. I get nervous when I speak in my English class.	5.8	13.6	19.4	38.2	20.9	5.56	13.74
28. Before English class, I feel confident and relaxed.	18.3	30.4	23.0	16.8	6.8	7.15	20.50
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	17.8	29.8	18.3	25.7	5.2	5.72	16.88
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	16.2	23.0	26.2	24.6	6.8	5.84	16.86
31. I am afraid that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak English.	20.9	34.1	6.2	21.5	14.7	5.36	15.45
32. I feel easy when native English speakers are with me.	11.5	28.8	30.4	20.4	5.2	6.30	18.15
33. I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	23.6	33.0	16.8	16.2	7.3	5.52	16.92

SA= Strongly Agree, A=Agree, N=Neutral, DA=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree, Ms=Means, SDs= Standard Deviations

Overall analysis of the obtained results from the percentages revealed the most anxiety-provoking causes spelt out by Iranian bilingual students' responses to the FLCAS items. In answer to the research questions of the present study, the findings were delineated and discussed. As a result, the extremely anxious situations according to the findings were as follows:

Exploration of the responses to the first component of the FLCAS items, communication anxiety, revealed that these Iranian bilingual participants are in (complete) agreement(64%) towards being unsure of themselves when they are speaking in English classrooms (Item 1). This was also true for Item 24 (I feel shy

when speaking English in front of other students) with 62.4% of students endorsing feeling shy while speaking in English in front of peers. The respondents strongly agreed or agreed with such statements "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class" (item 9, 70%); "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says" (Item 29, 48%) and "I feel easy when native English speakers are with me" (Item 32, 40%). Generally, in consonance with previous studies on FLL anxiety in Iranian and Pakistani EFL learning contexts (see e.g. NahavandiandMukundan, 2013; Awan et al., 2010, respectively), the findingsindicated that communication via the third language they were learning particularly speaking in front of others, that is peers, as well as mutual communication with their EFL teachers in the English classrooms is one the most serious types of anxiety.Interestingly, such a level of communication anxiety was depicted in their responses to item 14 (46%) and 18 (49%) "I will not be nervous when speaking with native English speakers" and "I feel confident when I speak in English class", respectively. In response to these two statements, the bilingual respondents spelt out that they will feel nervous if they have communications with native speakers (Item 18, 49%).

The bilingual undergraduate students' responses to the items of the second FLCAS component, test anxiety, were also estimated. Analysis of the five items classified under the component of text anxiety demonstrated Iranian bilingual EFL learners' anxiety towards being tested in English as the third language they were learning. The students strongly disagreed and disagreed with four items including "I don't worry about making mistakes in English class" (Item 2, 59%); "I am usually at ease during tests in my class" (Item 8, 54%); "I worry about the consequences of failing my English class" (Item 10, 62%); and "I am afraid that my English teacher will correct every mistake I make" (Item 19, 50%). Such findings showed that the students experience a high level of anxiety before administering a test in the third language, during the test and performance in EFL, and after the test administration. These bilingual L3 learners were test-anxious either because of undue expectation of test results or because of unpleasant test experience in the past. Such findings were consistent with Chan's (2004) study as well as a study on Iranian monolingual EFL learners (Shabani, 2012). The only statement that received a high percentage of strong disagreement was Item 21 in which bilingual students showed that if they prepare for an English test, they will not get confused anymore in the process of EFL testing. Generally, the analysis of the statements revealed that bilingual EFL students in this academic context will not experience test anxiety provided that they prepare for EFL testing very well.

Items related to the fear of negative evaluation as the second component of FLCAS were also analyzed in order to portray the anxiety levels and severity of FLL among the bilingual respondents. The bilingual students' responses to the related items demonstrated that in most items they strongly agree or agree with the anxiety-provoking situations in their English classrooms expressed in these statements such as "I tremble when I know that I'm going to be asked to speak in English class" (Itam3, 54%); "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class" (Item 13, 52%?); "I get depressed when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting" (Item 15, 65%); "I feel my heart pounding when I am going to be asked to speak in English class" (Item 20, 50%); "I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance" (Item 33, 57%). Similarly, they expressed their anxieties towards other learners in the classroom in statements including "I think that my classmates' English is better than mine" (Item 7, 64%); "I always feel that my classmates speak better English than I" (Item 23, 56%); "I am afraid that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak English" (item 31, 55%). There was only Item 25, "English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind" which received relatively same responses, that is 44% of students were in (complete) agreementand41% in (total) disagreement. Generally, the findings from the bilingual learners of English in this context revealed that they experience a high level of anxiety particularly in contexts wherein the EFL teachers as well as other bilingual learners' evaluations play the leading roles in the degree of FLL anxiety. The results were consistent with the examination of FLCAS in several EFL contexts (see e.g. Na, 2007; YamatandBidabadi, 2012; Mamhot et al., 2013).

The final component of FLCAS is anxiety in the English classroom highlighting the role of the EFL classroom context and its related factors in the levels and severity of FLL anxiety among EFL learners. Among the items related to this component, five statements were endorsed by the EFL respondents, that are, "I am afraid when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English class" (Item 4, 53%); "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes" (Item 5, 56%); "In English class, I am so nervous that I forget what I know" (Item 12, 52%); "Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it" (Item 16, 53%); and "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English" (Item 30, 57%). The findings in this regard revealed that the EFL teachers, the number of classes that students have to take and the activities and rules they have to follow to learn EFL are the main causes of a high level of anxiety in the English classroom. The results were in line with other studies employing FLCAS (see e.g. Na, 2007; Awan et al., 2010; Atef-VahidandKashani, 2011). On the other hand, several statements which were rejected by the bilingual participants as anxiety-provoking situations included "In English classes, I think of things that are unrelated to the lesson" (Item 6, 49%); "I don't understand why some people get so upset over English class" (Item 11, 44%); "I often feel like not going to my English class" (Item 17, 73%); "I feel tenser and have more pressure in

English class than in other classes" (Item 26, 58%); and "Before English class, I feel confident and relaxed" (Item 28, 49%). The findings revealed that the bilingual respondents are pleased with EFL classroom attendance; they have concentration in the EFL classrooms though they experience kind of anxiety before taking EFL classrooms. Interestingly, the item 22 in this component received an equal number of responses in agreement (42%) and disagreement (38%) with, "I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class".

Moreover, through the computation of means and standard deviations of each component of FLCAS, it was found that bilingual students experience a high level of anxiety in all components. Table 2 shows means and standard deviations of students in terms of each kind of anxiety.

Table 3.Theoverall means and standard deviations of the components of FLCAS among Iranian bilingual non-English-major undergraduate students

Classified Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Anxiety	5.50	15.46
Fear of Negative Evaluation	5.36	14.96
Test Anxiety	5.11	13.78
Anxiety in the English Classroom	5.92	15.58

These results according to Horwitz et al. (1986) suggest that Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian non-English-major students feel uniquely unable to deal with the task of learning English as their third language. The findings of this exploratory study suggest that significant FLL anxiety is experienced by many Iranian bilingual undergraduate students in this unique context in response to most of the aspects of FLL. A majority of the statements as well as all the components reflective of FLL anxiety were supported by the participant students surveyed. Therefore, the results imply that anxious students are common in FLL classrooms all over the world and in Iran, too.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Knowing about anxiety as one of the sell-documented affective factors in the process of EFL learning and its severity as well as its repercussions in the EFL context is of utmost importance (Horwitz et al., 1986; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013). While other studies on EFL learning anxiety focused on monolingual language learners, this study focused on Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students learning English as their L3 and found obvious tendency of FLL anxiety in four leading components of FLCAS including communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and anxiety in the EFL classroom. Shedding light on the levels and extremes of FLL anxiety among these unique participants in an Iranian context deepened our understanding of EFL learning anxiety particularly among the community of academic-level bilinguals and facilitated our efforts to reduce it.

Based on the findings of this exploratory study, some implications and suggestions are given as follows. First, we have to increase Iranian EFL teachers' awareness of FLL anxiety because such a psychological affective construct is an important factor which affects students' EFL learningprocess(Lucas et al., 2011).That is, FLL anxiety can probably be alleviated, at least to an extent, by a supportive teacher who will acknowledge students' FLL anxiety and offer suggestions for attaining foreign language confidence (Horwitz et al., 1986).

To balance the levels and severity of FLL anxiety, teachers must pay more attention to this affective factor and prepare properly for teaching. Of the techniques to alleviate the severity of FLL anxiety are making students feel safe to learn and practice EFL by creation of a relaxed and learner-friendly environment (Lucas et al., 2011; Liu, 2012), designing EFL teaching materials and activities which can reduce EFL students' anxiety indirectly (Chan, 2004; Lucas et al., 2011;Mesri, 2012), giving more encouragement by avoiding negative evaluation of EFL learners in classrooms and giving positive reinforcement and feedbacks (Lucas et al., 2011; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013), leveling the curriculum design of EFL and ESP courses in collaboration with EFL learners and based on their language proficiency as well as their teaching goals and objectives (Chan, 2004), adopting other measures or in Lucas et al's (2011) terms "alternative assessment and evaluation schemes" instead of conventional end-of-semester testing methods to evaluate and test EFL learners' competence and performance in EFL and eliminating the failure-success ranking of students by their test scores, and giving advice on effective EFL language learning strategies. Although teachers can make use of the above-mentioned means to help students to deal with their anxiety in English classrooms, teachers should not try to help students get away from anxiety completely. Much research indicates that adequate anxiety plays a positive role and can motivate students to maintain their efforts on learning. Therefore, the teachers' real job is to help students keep adequate anxiety, neither too high nor too low (Na, 2007; Mesri, 2012) because completely avoiding all these anxiety-provoking situations is neither practical nor helpful (Horwitz et al., 1986).

In addition to the curriculum designs of FLL courses and teachers' styles and procedures of teaching (Mesri, 2012; Mahmoodzadeh, 2013), there are a series of important variables such as age gender, language

proficiency, learning styles and strategies (Williams and Burden, 2000, p. 154) as well as L3 learning background, learners' beliefs and perceptions about EFL learning and teaching, cultural and social norms and expectations (Willaims and Burden, 2000, p. 94), plus several cognitive and affective variables including empathy, self-esteem, autonomy, inhibition, motivation, and attitudes (Brown, 2007, p. 161; Lucas et al., 2011; Liu, 2012) that may contribute to the levels and extremes of FLL anxiety in different settings, particularly here in Iran. These issues, however, are not addressed in the present study; therefore, the effects and the interdependence of such variables should be examined systematically in future investigations to reveal how such variables reduce or enhance the levels and severity of FLL anxiety experienced by EFL learners.

Several limitations of the study need to be pointed out. First, the results cannot be generalized to all Iranian bilingual EFL educational settings due to the fact that the limited participants were selected from a technical college located in a specific Kurdish-Persian region in Iran. Thus, as Mesri (2012) and Mahmoodzadeh (2013) state, there is an essential need for future research to cross-validate findings achieved from such studies to some different and larger samples of EFL classrooms in Iran. Another drawback of this study relates to the data collection instrument employed, FLCAS. This type of self-report survey questionnaire would be supplemented with further data collection techniques such as semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and diaries (Liu, 2012) in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of FLL anxiety as an influential factor in the process of language learning. As a whole, this study was a preliminary attempt to uncover the FLL anxiety of a community of Iranian bilingual Kurdish-Persian undergraduate students learning English as their L3 in an academic context. Further investigations are required to support the findings of the present study, explore anxiety-provoking factors, and discover anxiety-reducing techniques in more specified EFL learning contexts in order to open more windows to the psychological aspects of language learning and teaching.

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