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The Effect of Classroom Anxiety on EFL Learner's Oral Narratives Fluency: The Case of Intermediate Level Students

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***Abstract*—This study is an attempt to investigate the effect of classroom anxiety on EFL Learner's oral narrative fluency. The objective of the study is first to specifically ascertain the extent to which Iranian EFL Learners assign their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) to the oral narrative fluency. Secondly, based on the viewpoints of the EFL professors of Guilan University, some practical strategies have been suggested to alleviate anxiety in speaking of EFL learners. The last samples were 11 students comprising 5 males and 6 females studying English Literature at Guilan University. Purposive Sampling (Quota Sampling) is conducted in order to choose the last participants of the study. The researchers has also exploited five- point Likert-Scale questionnaire namely Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which has been translated from English into Persian version by them. The present study follows mixed-method approach in which the data were collected and analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. After data analysis, the quantitative findings reveal that low average of anxiety among students can be correlated to the main speech fluency indicators positively. Qualitative results suggest that more fluent participants will be able to produce more accurate sentences, unless classroom anxiety acts as an obstacle on the way of being more accurate.**

***Index Terms*—Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), Classroom Anxiety (CA), narrative, fluency**

I. Introduction

Second or foreign language learners have a great amount of interest in perception of their ability while they are speaking. However, this attention which non-native speakers receive from their audience may be as a main part of their success. Thus, EFL learners will pursue to pay more attention to speaking rather than other skills and to a great extent, speaking activities, whether or not, will be interconnected to affection. Thus, it is apparent affective variables overshadow oral performance of the EFL learners. One of these affective variables is known as Language Anxiety. It is worthy of mention Worde (1998) argues that "more than half of foreign language learners experience some kind of it in their language classroom" (Mahmoodzadeh, 2012, p. 466). When students are talking about some of speaking tasks such as oral narration, classroom anxiety appears and it may perform as an obstacle in the way of speaking; Thus the EFL Learners can't be more fluent as well as possible, if classroom anxiety exists in a high scale, because it may act as a breakdown factor for an acceptable amount of speech fluency. It will be more obvious when native and non-native speakers are compared to each other in many previous studies (e.g. Riggenbach 1991; Ejzenberg 2000; Simensen 2010).

With due attention to all above said, with the beginning of communicative language teaching, English education in Iran as the same as other countries has been changed toward focusing and paying more attention to improving communicative ability. We can see this especially in non-governmental sectors and educational institutions and they are supposed to moving toward working on communicative ability. Due to this respect, anxiety as an affective variable will be a great obstacle on the way of EFL learners, and this phenomenon is also true in the case of Iranian Learners. Thus, that is why the majority of EFL learners, both in Iran and in many other countries, are suffering from a communicative language classroom.

II. Theoretical Background

A. Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA)

One of the important affective variables which attracted most attention to itself is anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) started a revolution in Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and provided its measurement in class through establishing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). In attempting to elucidate language anxiety, Horwitz, Horwitz

and Cope (1986) expounded foreign language anxiety as “a distinctive complex of self-perception, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning, arising from the uniqueness of the language-learning process” (p. 128). According to Brown (2000), “anxiety is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and worry” (p. 151).

According to Pappamihiel (2002), anxiety can be interwoven with "threats to self-efficacy and appraisals of situations as threatening" (p. 331). More specifically, Kumaravadivelu (2006) believes "anxiety refers to emotional state of apprehension, tension, nervousness, and worry mediated by the arousal of the automatic nervous system" (p. 33).

B. Types of Anxiety

In this study, the researchers aim to address types of anxiety through obvious definitions and try to make clear distinctions among them. In order to differentiate between state and trait anxiety, Speilberger (1983) found that state anxiety is an immediate, transitory emotional experience with instant cognitive effects, and *trait* anxiety is a stable predisposition to become anxious in a wide range of situations (MacIntyre, 1995, p. 93).

Pappamihiel (2002) provided another definition which refers to state and trait anxiety which indicates "state anxiety is a type of anxiety, which occurs because learners are exposed to particular conditions or situations, meanwhile, trait anxiety is a person's tendency to feel anxious regardless of the situations they are exposed to" (Riasati, 2011, p. 908).

In educational research, anxiety is usually divided into trait or state. Woodrow (2006) believes "Trait anxiety is a relatively stable personality trait. A person who is the trait anxious is likely to feel anxious in a variety of situations. State anxiety, on the other hand, is a temporary condition experienced at the particular moment" (p. 309-10). Also Woodrow (2006) argues that “a third type of anxiety is situational anxiety that is situation specific and this reflects a trait that recurs in specific situations" (ibid).

Additionally, Mesri (2012) argues that anxiety is generally can be classified into three types. “Trait anxiety, a more permanent disposition to be anxious, is viewed as an aspect of personality. State anxiety is an apprehension that is experienced at a particular moment in time as a response to definite situation. Lastly, situation-specific anxiety is related to apprehension aroused at specific situations and events” (p. 148).

C. Conceptual Foundations: Components of Foreign Language Anxiety

Components of foreign language anxiety have been significantly paid attention. Horwitz et al. (1986) concluded that the components of foreign language anxiety could be attributed to three performance anxieties: (1) Communication Apprehension, (2) Fear of negative evaluation, (3) Test anxiety. Furthermore, the integration of these factors leads to the creation of anxiety in language learners. In the meantime, due to consideration of foreign language anxiety components, Horwitz (1986) established the foreign language anxiety scale (FLCAS) to measure communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. As a result of the aforementioned study, it was suggested that language anxiety be distinct from other types of anxiety. In other words, foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) came into existence as a self-report measure which assesses “the degree of anxiety, as evidenced by negative performance expectancies and social comparison, psycho-physiological symptoms, and avoidance behaviors” (ibid, p. 559). Communication apprehension (CA) has been defined as an “individual level of fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with another person or persons” (McCroskey, 1977, p. 78). Horwitz et al. (1986) defined communication apprehension (CA) as “a type of shyness characterized by fear of anxiety about communicating with people” (p.127). For example, the item “I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in the language class” is directly related to communication apprehension. With due attention to fear of negative evaluation, Horwitz et al. (1986) believed defined fear of negative evaluation was triggered by the teacher as a fluent speaker and the classmates. Fear of negative evaluation, for example, ‘I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance’. “Test anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure (Horwitz et al., p. 127). Students who feel test anxious often put unrealistic demands on themselves. And test anxiety, for example, ‘I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.”

D. Speech Fluency

Fluency can be considered as one of the main components of mastery over a language. Work on fluency has started with formal research linked development in demonstration programs since the mid-1960s. Considering the importance of speech fluency, a body of research can be seen allocated to this concept. Brumfit (1984) believes that fluency should be regarded as “natural language use”, whether or not it results in native-speaker-like language comprehension or production (p. 56).

Moreover, Lennon (2000) defines fluency as “the rapid, smooth, accurate, and efficient translation of thoughts or communicative intention under the temporal constraints of on-line processing” (p. 26). Also as established by Lennon (2000), the fluency term can be divided into narrow and broad sense. Broad sense refers to all round and global oral proficiency that is a fluent speaker has a high command of the foreign or second language; Narrow sense in which fluency can be considered as overall L2 competency. Moreover, Fulcher (2003) argues that although fluency in the broad sense is probably the most generic way to refer to overall L2 competency, the term is problematic because it is nonetheless vague (Prefontaine, 2010, p. 135).

With due attention to narrow sense of fluency, Segalowitz (2010) in *'Cognitive base of second language fluency'*, introduced three aspects of fluency as cognitive fluency, utterance fluency, and perceived fluency and made distinction among them as below:

1) Cognitive fluency: referring to "ability of the L2 speakers to smoothly translate thoughts to L2 speech" (De Jong 2013).

2) Utterance fluency: refers to "oral features of utterances that reflect the operation of underlying cognitive processes" (Segalowitz, 2010, p. 48).

3) Perceived fluency: refers to "inferences listeners make about speaker's cognitive fluency based on their perception of utterance fluency" (ibid).

E. Speech Fluency Measurement

Measures of fluency have been considered by a group of researchers concerned with longitudinal aspects of fluency measurement (Lennon 1990; Freed 1995; Towell 1996). Another group of researchers distinguished fluent speakers from non-fluent ones (Riggenbach 1991; Ejzenberg 2000; Simensen 2010). In the most of the studies two main points are prominent. First, number of the participants is restricted as much as possible, and the reason refers to difficulty of the task with no doubt. Second, in many studies there are no statistical and computerized analyses in estimation of pauses, except limited recently published studies (e.g. De Jong 2009; 2013; Prefontaine 2010), in which using computer technology (e.g. PRAAT software) is observable.

Most of previous studies (e.g. Lennon 1990; Riggenbach 1991; Towell et al. 1996, Kormos and D'enes 2004, De Jong 2013) believe that some of the indicators of fluency play a great role in determination of fluency measurement such as:

1) Speech rate: that is, the number of syllables articulated per minute; Kormos and D'enes (2004) argue that "the total number of syllables produced in a given speech sample was divided by the amount of total time required to produce the speech sample expressed in seconds. This figure was then multiplied by sixty to give a figure expressed in syllable per minute" (p. 154).

2) Mean length of runs: that is, average number of syllables produced in utterances above the pause of 0.25 seconds (e.g. Lennon 1990; Riggenbach 1991; Towell et al. 1996).

3) Phonation time Ratio: "that is, the percentage of time spent speaking as a percentage proportion of the time taken to produce the speech sample" (Towell et al. 1996). Also phonation time ratio can be defined as "phonation time divided by total time" (De Jong 2013).

4) Articulation Rate: "In calculating the articulation rate the total number of syllables produced in a given speech sample was divided by the amount of the time taken to produce them in seconds" (Kormos & D'enes, 2004, p.151).

As can be seen above, the researchers also estimated another factor of speech fluency namely articulation rate, though some researchers believe it cannot be considered as an effective factor for estimating fluency. In the meantime, Chambers (1997) states that "becoming fluent therefore is not about speaking faster (articulation rate), but about pausing less at appropriate junctures in an utterance" (Prefontaine, 2010, p. 137). In addition to above-mentioned indicators of fluency measurement, there are other indicators in this domain such as filled and unfilled pauses. Due to this respect, Kormos and D'enes (2004) believe that "research findings are equivocal concerning the frequency of filled and unfilled pauses as well as disfluencies such as repetitions, restarts and repairs" (p. 148).

F. Speech Accuracy

In recent years, the EFL research has drawn its attention to the concept of accuracy as one of the key concepts of language output. Götz (2013) believes that "if we look at the perceptive fluency, however, accuracy is one of the key-variables to be included, as evidently nobody would perceive a speaker as fluent if they were not perceived as reasonably accurate as well" (p. 46). Götz (2013) also maintains that "a high level of fluency, in the sense of an overall oral proficiency, is very likely correlate with a high level of accuracy" (p. 47).

Riggenbach (1991) asserts that if EFL Learners are able to communicate in a very native-like way considering other fluency indicators, they wouldn't be appertained to highly fluent by a native speaker, if they commit many errors in their output.

With regard to all above mentioned, within the previous studies, it can be concluded that not only there exists a relationship between speech fluency and speech accuracy, but also speech accuracy is negatively interconnected to the errors at the lexical and syntactic level and to the incorrect use of items and constructions. Therefore, it can be measured by "proportion of error-free clauses relative to the total number of clauses" (Kormos & D'enes, 2004, p.153).

III. Methodology

A. Questions

This study seeks to find the answers to the following research questions:

1. Does classroom anxiety affect the learners' oral narrative fluency?

a) Does classroom anxiety affect the learners' fluency factors (i.e. speech rate, articulation rate, phonation time ratio and mean length of runs)?

2. Which strategies can be used by the teachers to alleviate classroom anxiety during student's oral performance?

To answer the second question, the researchers distributed a self-made questionnaire to some of experienced professors of Guilan University where they suggested some strategies to reduce foreign language learners' anxiety in the classroom (Appendix B).

B. Participants

The early population sample of the present study, in order to determination of the level of proficiency, and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), included forty three Iranian EFL Learners studying English Literature at Guilan University. The subjects were selected from first-year students within two different classes of laboratory course in English, including twenty males and twenty three females. The age of the learners ranged from eighteen to twenty two with the mean of twenty years.

Having considered the learners' level of speaking proficiency through a placement test written by Colchester English Study Centre, and also with respect to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), the researchers examined the last 11 participants by ACTFL oral proficiency interview (OPI) in order to ensure that they were placed at intermediate level. So by doing this, the researchers understood these 11 participants were placed at the same level in speaking (i.e. intermediate level). Therefore, the last participants were specified through quota sampling. In addition, the last participants involved in the current study comprised eleven Iranian EFL Learners whom they were excluded from early forty three population sample, including five males and six females, and they were supposed to do a narrative task with regard to fluency analysis of their speech. It should be noted that last samples were selected based on the proportion of a quarter number of males and females learners with consideration of the number of not very anxious and slightly anxious students.

C. Instruments

Instruments of this study are namely FLCAS questionnaire, ACTFL speaking proficiency guidelines, picture stories for narrative tasks and qualitative self-made questionnaire.

The most popular instrument for measuring FL anxiety is Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The scale is innovated by Horwitz et al. (1986), and it comprises 33 questions accompany with specific questions about communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety as the fundamental components of foreign language anxiety. The FLCAS can be considered as a quantitative questionnaire, because it consists of a five-point Likert-scales' questionnaire ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the current study, in order to make certain that the participants had no difficulties in understanding the concepts of available items; the developed self-reporting questionnaire was prepared. Thus, the basic form of FLCAS consisting thirty three items in English was translated from English version into Persian. In order to validate the Persian version of the questionnaire, three English Language teachers translated the original questionnaire into Persian simultaneously; then, in order to consolidate a final version, a selective approach was selected among three available translated questionnaires. Consequently, the edited and translated version was represented. At the end, an expert of translation was asked to validate the final translated version. Hence, he verified that there was enough accordance between English and Persian version (See Appendix A).

ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) proficiency guidelines for speaking assessment encompass five major levels of proficiency as Distinguished, Superior, Advanced, Intermediate and Novice. The elucidation of each major level is representative of specific range of abilities. The major levels Advanced, Intermediate, and Novice are divided into High, Mid, and Low sublevels. Generally, the provided guidelines ACTFL can be used to evaluate speech that is Interpersonal (interactive, two way communication) or Presentational (one way, non-interactive), however, the second one (Presentational speech) has been investigated in the current study.

Additionally, this study employed some of the picture stories extracted from one of the most well-known story books namely [1]'Vater und Sohn'. The pictures of each story are ranging from three to nine; moreover, images are so easy, obvious and comprehensible for description. The reason for such a claim was that the pictures of the stories were firstly given to three students as a pilot where they were able to understand them easily.

Finally, the qualitative self-made questionnaire used in the present study was unstructured and open-ended. It was comprised a general question for Guilan University Professors where they were asked "*which strategies do you prefer as a professor to alleviate classroom anxiety during students' oral performance?*

D. Procedures

The researchers selected the first population sample of 43 male and female students for giving both placement tests (in order to determine the students' level of proficiency) and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale namely FLCAS (in order to estimate the participants' level of anxiety). It should be noted that, before giving the placement test, the researchers did it as a pilot test to 3 individuals for determining its validity and estimation total time of the exam. The researchers' initial findings of the placement test revealed that the participants' level of proficiency (as the first population sample of this study) ranging from Elementary to Advanced. Also, the first evidence of FLCAS scores indicated that anxiety level of participants was ranging from Not Very Anxious to Slightly Anxious. An un-expectable

[1] The Persian Translated versions of the books 'Vater und Sohn band 1, 2 & 3' were written by Jahanshahi, (1982) in Iran.

thing was that the researchers didn't access to Fairly Anxious students, so they were forced to select all of the last participants from Not Very Anxious and Slightly Anxious students. Then the last 11 participants were selected and assessed based on ACTFL speaking guidelines through oral proficiency interview (OPI) which was investigated as more important reason for the final sampling because it helped the researchers to obtain more precise evaluation of the last participants, and placement test wasn't adequate tool to estimate proficiency level solitarily. Thus ACTFL was done as oral proficiency interview by asking the last 11participants specific questions. Therefore, the participants started to speak and their sounds were recorded. Thus, with respect to their utterances, ACTFL standard criteria, and the level base characteristics, the researchers found that the last sample were matched with intermediate level characteristics which proposed by ACTFL.

After the final sampling, materials collected for this research involved voice-recorded speech samples that were one to three minutes long on average. The researchers had already prepared some picture stories without the main text from the book 'Vater und Sohn'. Before the participants began to speak, the researches gave them an opportunity about two minutes to take a look at to the pictures for preparation. Finally, the recorded voices were analyzed for fluency measurement; then the samples were converted from spoken form into written form in order to investigating the grammatical accuracy of participants' utterances through available texts.

IV. Results

To answer the research questions, first the statistical technique should be specified. The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (K-S) revealed that the test distribution (Mean anxiety of the participants and the obtained fluency factors) is normal. Thus, the Parametric Statistical Technique can be used to analyze the data. To answer the first research question, the data were collected and analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.

To estimate the first research question, the researchers should refer the minor research question. The minor research question is directly related to the relationship between classroom anxiety and the learners' fluency factors such as speech rate, articulation rate, phonation time ratio and mean length of runs. For answering to the first minor research question, it is necessary to estimate the relationship between classroom anxiety as an independent variable and the four components of speech fluency as dependent variable separately through Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. It should be noted that this research has utilized the Pairwise Correlation between classroom anxiety (i.e. Independent Variable) and components of speech fluency (i.e. speech rate, articulation rate, phonation - time ratio & mean length of runs) associated with the last 11 participants of the study. More particularly, the mean anxiety of the last participants is (M = 2.73) that is less than 3 as mean of the FLCAS score. Generally, it seems that the participants almost experience less amount of classroom anxiety during their oral performance.

To interpret the Pearson Correlation Coefficient the 'eyeball' method is adopted. Salkind (2006) explained "there are two ways to interpret these general indicators of relationships. The first method is the 'eyeball' method, in which correlations of a certain value are associated with a certain nominal degree of relationship" (p. 196). Then he described the eyeball method as below:

TABLE 1.
CORRELATION OF A CERTAIN VALUE ARE ASSOCIATED WITH A CERTAIN NOMINAL DEGREE OF RELATIONSHIP

Correlation Between	**Are said to be**
.8 and 1.0	Very strong
.6 and .8	Strong
.4 and .6	Moderate
.2 and .4	Weak
.0 and .2	Very weak

Therefore, the Correlations' Coefficient Tables are ready to display as bellow:

TABLE 2.
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ANXIETY AVERAGE AND SPEECH RATE
CORRELATIONS

		Anxiety Average	Speech Rate
Anxiety Average	Pearson Correlation	1	,519
	Sig. (1-tailed)		,051
	N	11	11
Speech Rate	Pearson Correlation	,519	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	,051	
	N	11	11

According to Table 2, it can be observed that (r) between two variables is (r = 0.519) with the level of significance (p = 0.051). With respect to the Pearson Correlation between classroom anxiety and speech rate (r = 0.519), and the related significant level (p = 0.051), it can be perceived that to some extent, there is positive correlation between the classroom anxiety average (i.e. low average of anxiety) and the speech rate, whereas $p > 0.05$ indicates that there non-significant interrelation between these two factors. With respect to the obtained p value which is close to 0.05, it can be perceived

that the less amount of anxiety has a trend to be correlated with the speech rate in the same direction, i.e., positive direction.

To interpret the Pearson Correlation Coefficient through the 'eyeball' method, it can be concluded that the obtained correlation between classroom anxiety and speech rate (r = 0.519) is located between correlations 0.4 and 0.6 (Table 1). In a nutshell, as can be seen in Table 1, there exists moderate degree of correlation between the learners' low level of anxiety and speech rate as one of the indicators of speech fluency.

TABLE 3.
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ANXIETY AVERAGE AND ARTICULATION RATE
CORRELATIONS

		Anxiety Average	Articulation Rate
Anxiety Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.016
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.481
	N	11	11
Articulation Rate	Pearson Correlation	.016	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.481	
	N	11	11

As can be seen in Table 3, it appears that that (r) between two variables is (r = 0.016) with the level of significance (p = 0.481). With respect to the Pearson Correlation between classroom anxiety and articulation rate (r = 0.016), and related significant level (p = 0.481) the findings suggests that there exists no significant correlation between the classroom anxiety average (i.e. low average of anxiety) and articulation rate.

TABLE 4.
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ANXIETY AVERAGE AND PHONATION TIME RATIO
CORRELATIONS

		Anxiety Average	Phonation Time Ratio
Anxiety Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.706**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.008
	N	11	11
Phonation Time Ratio	Pearson Correlation	.706**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.008	
	N	11	11

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

With due attention to Table 4, it is seen that (r) between two variables is (r = 0.706) with the level of significance (p = 0.008). Considering the Pearson Correlation between classroom anxiety and phonation - time ratio (r = 0.706), and the related significant level (p = 0.008), which is (p < 0.01), the findings reveal that there is positive correlation between the classroom anxiety average (i.e. low average of anxiety) and the phonation - time ratio. It means that the less anxiety, the more phonation – time ratio will be produced.

To interpret the Pearson Correlation Coefficient through the 'eyeball' method, it can be concluded that the obtained correlation between classroom anxiety and phonation – time ratio (r = 0.706) is located between correlations 0.6 and 0.8 (Table 1). In the meantime, as can be seen in Table 1, there exists strong degree of correlation between the learners' low level of anxiety and phonation – time ratio as one of the main indicators of speech fluency. Therefore, there is strong positive correlation between the two aforementioned variables.

TABLE 5.
PEARSON PRODUCT MOMENT CORRELATION COEFFICIENT BETWEEN ANXIETY AVERAGE AND MEAN LENGTH OF RUNS
CORRELATIONS

		Anxiety Average	Mean Length of Runs
Anxiety Average	Pearson Correlation	1	.717**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.007
	N	11	11
Mean Length of Runs	Pearson Correlation	.717**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.007	
	N	11	11

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

According to Table 5, it is obvious that (r) between two variables is (r = 0.717), with the level of significance (p = 0.007). Considering the Pearson Correlation between classroom anxiety and phonation - time ratio (r = 0.717), and the related significant level (p = 0.007), which is (p < 0.01), the findings indicate that there is positive correlation between the classroom anxiety average (i.e. low average of anxiety) and the mean length of runs. It means that the less anxiety, the more mean length of runs will be produced by the learners.

To interpret the Pearson Correlation Coefficient through the 'eyeball' method, it can be concluded that the achieved correlation between classroom anxiety and mean length of runs (r = 0.717), is located between correlations 0.6 and 0.8 (Table 1). Meanwhile, as can be seen in Table 1, there exists strong degree of correlation between the learners' low level of anxiety and mean length of runs as one of the main indicators of speech fluency. Therefore, there is strong positive correlation between the two aforementioned variables. Focusing on the effects of Classroom Anxiety (CA) on the learners' fluency factors, the present study has shown, to a great extent, low amount of anxiety could be correlated to aforementioned factors.

Considering the last major research question, the researchers endeavored to collect the data from the qualitative self-made questionnaire. The obtained results of the self-made qualitative questionnaire from Guilan University professors' opinions were taken into account as some guidelines for reducing classroom anxiety which occurs in EFL learners, especially in the case of high anxious ones. The results reveal that there seem to be partly consensus among these professors over the issue of using some strategies in order to alleviate classroom anxiety during students' oral performance. These joint opinions among the instructors can be listed as below:

1) Postpone error correction to after the lecture is over. Thus, it is better not to correct students when they are giving a lecture. If correction is done gently when the presentation is over, the students will feel more confident to present their lectures.

2) Asking the class to keep quiet while the presentation in progress, if the students make some noises while a student is presenting.

3) Informing the class, before the presentation, of the topic and the presenter's treatment of it. Also, the task should be made clear by the course instructor and the way the performance is to be carried out is to be fully disclosed.

These teachers are consensus of postponing error correction, supplying a quiet and confident situation for students in order to reduce their tension, and making the task clear for students.

As it is obvious, indirect findings of the research are those, which are concerned with other findings of the research; although inferential findings are important, they are not directly related to the research questions. In this context, an important issue which can be affected by speech fluency will be considered, and it refers to speech accuracy. In the meantime, the results of speech accuracy relative to the last participants are interpreted qualitatively. Therefore, more attention has been paid to the obtained results of speech accuracy relative to the both speech fluency and classroom anxiety of the learners. The following table is illustrative:

TABLE 6.
SPEECH FLUENCY FACTORS, SPEECH ACCURACY AND ANXIETY SCORES OF THE LAST PARTICIPANTS

The Last Participants ↓ **Speech Rate**	**Speech Fluency Factors**				**Accuracy Percent**	**Anxiety Score**
	Speech Rate	Articulation Rate	Phonation Time Ratio	Mean Length of Runs		
Participant 11	154.80	218.40	0.71	5.99	88%	3.18
Participant 4	147	198	0.74	5.60	92%	2.75
Participant 8	134.40	198	0.67	4.56	78%	3.39
Participant 2	128.40	152.40	0.84	6.61	75%	3.57
Participant 9	122.40	186	0.66	4.17	77%	2.51
Participant 7	118.80	166.20	0.71	5.21	70%	2.39
Participant 5	118.80	165	0.72	4.56	83%	2.57
Participant 10	116.40	193.80	0.60	3.41	85%	2.24
Participant 6	101.40	166.20	0.61	3.02	76%	2.12
Participant 3	99.60	177.60	0.56	3.17	77%	2.36
Participant 1	98.40	136.80	0.71	4.02	70%	3.03

As can be observed in table 6, all of the participants are ranked in descending order relative to speech rate. As it will be explained in discussion, speech rate and mean length of runs are known as more suitable indicators of speech fluency than the other two factors i.e. articulation rate or phonation time ratio. Table 6 divides the participants into three categories: 1) the first four students that seem to be more fluent than the others, 2) the second four students whom they are less fluent than the first group, and 3) the last three students that neither strong signs of fluency, nor strong signs of accuracy can be observed in them. The table and figures indicates that participants number 11 & 4, who achieved the highest scores in speech rate (154.80 & 147, respectively) and mean length of runs (5.99 & 5.60, respectively) as the two main indicators of fluency; also, these two participants were more accurate in language production (88% & 92%, respectively) than the others. The participant number 8 wasn't in a condition similar to the first two counterparts; as it is seen, he attained the third grade in speech rate among the last 11 participants of the table, whereas the results for mean length of runs (4.56) and speech accuracy percent (78%) weren't expected in value compared to most fluent and accurate participants (i.e. Participants 11 & 4); it may be because he was the first presenter, and he was really mixed up as he had told during the performance. It is noticeable that with respect to the anxiety score, he would be considered as slightly anxious student. Although participants 8 & 2 can be considered at the top four participants of the table in the speech rate ranking and also the participant number 2 attained the fourth grade in speech rate (128.4) with the best mean length of runs among all the last participants' sample (6.61), both of them failed to gain high accuracy percent, and this

happened because they were slightly anxious (3.39 & 3.57, respectively). Thus, it can be concluded that the more fluent learners will be able to produce more accurate sentences, unless anxiety act as an obstacle in the way of being accurate.

The results of analysis for the second four students suggest that there were not found noticeable amount of differences in fluency factors among these four participants (i.e. participants 9, 7, 5 & 10). The participants 9 & 7 were less accurate (77%, 70%, respectively) compared to participants 5 & 10, despite the fact that all of them were considered as not very anxious student. There are some reasons for this discrepancy. Firstly, participants 7 & 9 didn't pay more attention to the sentence structure and time sequence of their utterances which they have produced, so this was the reason of being less accurate. Secondly, on one hand, participants 5 & 10 correct themselves by using repairs or restarts, just when errors found by them. So, incorrect clauses which they produced turned into correct clauses (by using repairs & restarts). Naturally, these clauses were not taken into account as ungrammatical structures. On the other hand, with regard to their anxiety scores (2.57 & 2.24, respectively), participants 5 & 10 were categorized as not very anxious students. So we can conclude that the low amount of classroom anxiety may reinforce speech accuracy. Considering the table 6, the results of accuracy analysis for the last three participants (i.e. participants 6, 3, & 1) indicates that they weren't fluent at all, because there were no sign of fluency on their oral narrative performances. Accordingly, accuracy of speech production in these three participants was not placed in a high degree as well as some other colleagues. Therefore, there were neither fluent nor accurate.

V. Discussion

The quantitative direct findings of this study indicate that there exist some variables which can be counted as strong and reliable predictors of fluency scores, especially for non-native speaker judges such as phonation time ratio and mean length of runs. The Pairwise Pearson Correlation Coefficient between classroom anxiety and each of the aforementioned indicators of fluency that has been done separately indicates that these two variables, as mentioned above, can be considered as the more strong indicators, whereas the other factor, i.e., articulation rate, cannot be considered as a good predictor. Considering speech rate, the correlation is non-significant. In table 1, the researchers explained the degree of relationship between two variables through the 'eyeball' method. Regarding this, table 2 shows there is a moderate positive correlation between the low degree of classroom anxiety and speech rate. As can be seen in this table, the correlation between the anxiety score and speech rate is non-significant, but it can be assumed that there is a trend for correlation of these two variables. Conclusively, if a more population sample were assessed, a more powerful degree of correlation between anxiety score and speech rate might be perceived. About Table 3, it can be claimed that there is no significant relationship between classroom anxiety in average, and articulation rate, as some previous studies claimed it too. Chambers (1997) states that "becoming fluent therefore is not about speaking faster (articulation rate), but about pausing less at appropriate junctures in an utterance" (Prefontaine, 2010, p. 137). Also considering Tables 4 & 5, the results reveal that there are strong positive correlations between low average amount of classroom anxiety in value and phonation time ratio in table 4, and strong positive correlations between low classroom anxiety average and mean length of runs in table 5. Thus, it can be claimed that above mentioned fluency factors can be correlated positively with the mean of anxiety for the last 11 participants ($M = 2.73$) that is lower than the mean anxiety for FLCAS ($M = 3$) in value. Kormos and Denes (2004) believed that the mean length of runs and speech rate were also found to be good indicators for speech fluency. "Phonation time ratio and mean length of pauses were also related to fluency scores, but this relationship was weaker than in the case of the mean length of runs and speech rate" (ibid, p. 161).

The findings also indicate that the relationship between fluency factors and mean anxiety average (anxiety average score: total scores obtained from 33 FLCAS items, which is divided by 33 as total number of items) for the last 11 participants ($M = 2.73$, $M < 3$) were estimated through Pearson Correlation Coefficient. The mean anxiety for the last participants ($M = 2.73$) indicates that, this figure ($M < 3$) shows the average of FLCAS score, and it means that the last participants of the study are *totally* considered as not very anxious students, because the obtained mean score of classroom anxiety is less than three as a normal average. From another perspective, by individual consideration of participants, the present study suggests that the classroom anxiety cannot be counted as a deterrent variable all the times. Sometimes less amount of it may causes quickness in speaking, as it happened in the more anxious participants, among the last samples of the present study. As can be deliberated in Table 6, three participants (11, 8 & 2), who have acquired anxiety score more than 3 (slightly anxious students), they are ranked at the top of the table in terms of the most important predictors for speech fluency (speech rate & mean length of the runs). Thus, they could acquire acceptable fluency scores rather than the others; only participant number 4 was ranked at the second place among the not very anxious learners in Table 6, exactly as the researchers encountered some exclusion during the research. With respect to all foregoing, the study can claim that the low amount of foreign language anxiety can be correlated to the most important fluency predictors.

Concerning the learner's speech accuracy, with little attention to Table 6, indirect findings of the study indicate that the more fluent participants will be able to produce more accurate utterances (Participants 11 & 4), unless classroom anxiety acts as an obstacle in the way of being accurate (Participants 8 & 2). In contrast, the students who feel less anxious, they will be able to produce more accurate speech (Participants 5 & 10). Also, there is a third group of students

(Participants 9 & 7), who they don't pay attention to either the sentence structures or time sequence of their utterances which they have produced, so this can be one of the reasons for being less accurate.

VI. Conclusion

The study investigated "The Effect of Classroom Anxiety on EFL Learner's Oral Narratives Fluency: The Case of Intermediate Level Students. The mixed-method research was employed in this study. In the quantitative section of the study, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was measured. Also in the research we analyzed speech samples collected from 11 Iranian L2 learners including 5 male and 6 female students; thus, we calculated fluency factors by annually. Additionally, the relationship between the mean average of classroom anxiety with fluency factors for the last participants are measured through Pairwise Pearson Correlation Coefficient in both males and females relative to their specific level of anxiety, and related numeric data analyzed statistically. The results of the correlational study revealed that the mean amount of anxiety score among the last participant samples (M = 2.73) is less than the mean average of anxiety (M < 3), and the low value of anxiety can be correlated positively with the most important predictors of speech fluency. In the quantitative part of the research, existed amount of speech accuracy for the last participants represented by percentage. Thus, the qualitative results revealed that the more fluent participants will be able to produce more accurate utterances, unless classroom anxiety acts as an obstacle in the way of being accurate. In contrast, the students who feel less anxious, they will be able to produce more accurate speech. Finally, self-made questionnaire, including a fundamental question about available strategies of reducing anxiety (especially in relation to high anxious students) was given to some experienced professors of Guilan University as a voting sheet in order to collect their opinions.

Appendix A. Persian Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) Questionnaire

برگه سنجش میزان هیجان کلاسی زبان بیگانه

نام و نام خانوادگی:					***برای پاسخ به هر سوال یکی از قسمتهای زیر را انتخاب کنید***	
(1) کاملا مخالفم	(2) مخالفم	(3) نظری ندارم	(4) موافقم	(5) کاملا موافقم	جملات	ردیف
					زمانی که در کلاس زبان انگلیسی صحبت می کنم، هرگز به خود اعتماد به نفس کامل ندارم.	1
					من درباره ی اشتباه کردن در کلاس زبان نگران نیستم.	2
					زمانی که در کلاس زبان بخواهند صدایم کنند ، به خود می لرزم.	3
					وقتی نمی فهمم معلم به زبان انگلیسی چه می گوید، می ترسم.	4
					شرکت در کلاسهای متعدد زبان ، مرا ناراحت نمی کند.	5
					اغلب متوجه می شوم که در طی کلاس های زبان به موارد بی ارتباط با موضوع درس فکر می کنم.	6
					مدام فکر می کنم که بقیه ی دانش آموزان در کلاس زبان از من بهتر هستند.	7
					هنگام امتحان زبان در کلاس احساس راحتی می کنم.	8
					وقتی باید بدون آمادگی در کلاس زبان صحبت کنم دچار ترس می شوم.	9
					راجع به عواقب مردودی در کلاس زبان انگلیسی نگران می شوم.	10
					اینکه بعضی از افراد در کلاس زبان دچار ناتوانی می شوند برای من قابل درک نیست.	11
					در کلاس زبان ، از اینکه چیزهایی که می دانم را فراموش کنم، بسیار عصبی می شوم.	12
					از اینکه برای پاسخ به سوالات در کلاس زبان داوطلب شوم خجالت می کشم.	13
					از اینکه با انگلیسی زبانان به انگلیسی صحبت کنم عصبی نمی شوم.	14
					وقتی آنچه را که معلم تصحیح می کند متوجه نمی شوم آشفته می شوم.	15
					حتی اگر برای کلاس زبان خوب آماده شده باشم درباره ی آن احساس دلواپسی می کنم.	16
					اغلب احساس میکنم که دوست دارم به کلاس زبان نروم.	17
					وقتی در کلاس زبان صحبت می کنم، اعتماد به نفس دارم.	18
					از این می ترسم که معلم زبان اماده ی تصحیح هر یک اشتباهاتم است.	19
					زمانیکه قرار است نام من در کلاس خوانده شود ، تپش قلب خود را احساس می کنم.	20
					هر چقدر برای ازمون درس بخوانم،به همان اندازه گیج می شوم.	21
					نیاز به امادگی زیادی را جهت حضور در کلاس زبان احساس نمی کنم.	22
					همیشه احساس می کنم که دانش آموزان دیگر زبان خارجی را بهتر از من صحبت می کنند.	23
					هنگام صحبت کردن به زبان انگلیسی در مقابل سایر دانشجویان احساس کمرویی می کنم.	24
					کلاس زبان انچنان سریع به پیش می رود که درباره ی عقب ماندن نگرانمی شوم.	25
					در کلاسهای زبان نسبت به سایر کلاسها ، تنش بیشتری را احساس می کنم.	26

(1) کاملا مخالفم	(2) مخالفم	(3) نظری ندارم	(4) موافقم	(5) کاملا موافقم	جملات	ردیف
					هنگامی که در کلاس زبان، به انگلیسی صحبت می کنم هیجان عصبی و گیج می شوم.	27
					در راه رفتن به سمت کلاس زبان احساس آرامش و اطمینان می کنم.	28
					وقتی هر کلمه ای را که معلم زبان می گوید نمی فهمم ، عصبی می شوم.	29
					تعداد و شمار قواعد لازم جهت یادگیری و صحبت کردن به زبان انگلیسی مرا دستپاچه می کند.	30
					از اینکه سایر دانشجویان هنگام تکلم به زبان انگلیسی به من بخندندمی ترسم.	31
					احتمالا در گفتگو به انگلیسی در کنار انگلیسی زبانها احساس راحتی می کنم.	32
					زمانی که معلم زبان سوالاتی را می پرسد که از قبل آماده نکرده ام، عصبی میشوم.	33

APPENDIX B. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SHEET

Interviewer:	Interviewee:
Date:	Instructional Experiences:
Interview No:	Field of Study:

1) Which strategies do you prefer as a professor to alleviate classroom anxiety during student's oral performance?

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