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FOREIGN LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING AUTONOMY AMONG LIBYAN PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the relationship between Libyan pre-service English language teachers' speaking anxiety and their language learning autonomy. Also, the students' levels of speaking anxiety and the factors that shape this anxiety were computed. In addition, the students' readiness for learning autonomy was investigated. Furthermore, the correlation between the participants' speaking anxiety and their oral performance was calculated. In achieving the research objectives, a mix-method research approach was employed. The quantitative approach was utilized using two students' self-reporting scales (speaking anxiety questionnaire and language learning autonomy questionnaire) whereas the qualitative approach was employed by conducting semi-structured interviews with selected students. The respondents were 300 English department pre-service teachers who are students at three universities in Libya. It was found that the students experience moderate to high level of speaking anxiety. Also, the main factor for their speaking anxiety is their low self-confidence. Besides that, a significant negative relationship between students' speaking anxiety and their oral performance was found, $r(300) = -.71$, $p < 0.01$. Additionally, the findings revealed that there is a significant negative correlation between students' speaking anxiety level and their language learning autonomy level, $r(300) = -.87$, $p < 0.01$. Finally, the qualitative data obtained through the interviews indicated the important roles teachers can play in addressing the speaking anxiety experienced by the students. As a conclusion, students' performance in speaking is low due to their experience of speaking anxiety and of being dependent learners. Increasing the awareness of Libyan EFL educators towards their students' speaking anxiety and of being non-autonomous learners is regarded as an important implication which could be followed by other steps in order to take real actions to overcome the existing situation.

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KEBIMBANGAN PERTUTURAN DALAM BAHASA ASING DAN AUTONOMI PEMBEIAJARAN BAHASA BALAM KALANGAN GURU BAHASA INGGERISPRA-PERKHIDMATAN LIBYA

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara kebimbangan pertuturan dalam bahasa asing dan autonomi pembelajaran bahasa mereka dalam kalangan guru bahasa Inggeris pra-perkhidmatan Libya. Di samping itu, tahap kebimbangan pertuturan pelajar dan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan kebimbangan ini telah dikenalpasti. Selain itu, kesediaan para pelajar untuk belajar secara autonomi turut disiasat. Seterusnya, korelasi antara kebimbangan bercakap peserta dan prestasi vokal mereka telah disiasat. Reka bentuk kajian campuran telah digunakan untuk mencapai matlamat penyelidikan. Pendekatan kuantitatif telah menggunakan dua jenis pelaporan kendiri pelajar (soalan selidik tentang kebimbangan pertuturan dan soal selidik tentang autonomi pembelajaran bahasa) manakala pendekatan kualitatif adalah berbentuk temu bual separa struktur. Kajian ini dijalankan dalam kalangan 300 orang guru pra-perkhidmatan Jabatan Bahasa Inggeris di tiga buah universiti di Libya. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa pelajar mengalami kebimbangan pertuturan pada tahap sederhana hingga tinggi. Faktor utama yang menimbulkan kebimbangan mereka adalah keyakinan diri mereka yang rendah. Di samping itu, hasil kajian ini menunjukkan hubungan negatif yang ketara antara kebimbangan pertuturan pelajar dan prestasi lisan mereka $r(300) = -.71$, $p < 0.01$. Selain itu, kajian turut menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan negatif yang ketara antara tahap kebimbangan pertuturan pelajar dan tahap autonomi pembelajaran bahasa mereka, $r(300) = -.87$, $p < 0.01$. Akhir sekali, data kualitatif yang diperolehi melalui temuduga menunjukkan peranan penting yang boleh dimainkan oleh guru dalam menangani kebimbangan pertuturan yang dialami pelajar. Sebagai kesimpulan, prestasi pelajar dalam pertuturan adalah rendah disebabkan pengalaman mereka dalam kebimbangan pertuturan dan sebagai pelajar yang tidak mampu belajar secara berdikari. Peningkatan kesedaran dalam kalangan pendidik EFL Libya terhadap pelajar mereka yang mempunyai isu kebimbangan pertuturan dan ciri mereka sebagai pelajar tidak berdikari merupakan implikasi yang paling penting yang harus diikuti dengan langkah-langkah lain untuk mengatasi masalah yang sedia ada.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	Ability
ACT	Activity
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CA	Communication Apprehension
CAL	Cronbach Alpha
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CR	Composite Reliability
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FNE	Fear of Negative Evaluation
HSAs	Hard-wired Speaking Anxieties
LLA	Language Learning Autonomy
LV	Latent Variable
RES	Responsibility
S	Student
SA	Speaking Anxiety
SAS	Speaking Anxiety Scale

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SDT	Self-Determination Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
SV	Shared Variance
T	Teacher who participated in the interview
TQ	Teacher Question

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Background of the Study

The objective of teaching English is lifted from the notion of becoming proficient at specific structural sets of rules into the capability of using the language to communicate. People today require English not to be an author, a poet or to be employed in any job that related to the literary work, but they need English to communicate rationally in this globalized and highly linked world, in which English is considered a lingua franca and a lingua mundi. In short, English is utilized in numerous fields from international trade diplomacy and tourism to international media, air-traffic control, and technology (Alptekin, 2002). Furthermore, language learning's main objective is presently described

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as "authentic communication between persons of different languages and cultural backgrounds" (MacIntyre et al., 2002, p. 559). This change in language use affected language learning and teaching where many people are concerned about learning English to communicate. This shift in language teaching has brought new areas to be discovered by many researchers worldwide. Some areas contain learning autonomy which was presented as a result of the expansion of learner-centered methods in education. Another research area brought second language anxiety and its effects on second language performance.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate anxiety in speaking English as an important factor that impedes English pre-service teachers from speaking English fluently. As such, the present research attempts to measure pre-service teachers' anxiety level when speaking in English and aims to examine the relationship between their anxiety level and their performance in speaking. Equally important, the study investigates the factors of speaking anxiety and how these factors are affected by language learning autonomy factors. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between Libyan EFL pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety and their language learning autonomy.

English is a foreign language in Libya whereas Arabic is the first language. Teaching English in Libya has passed through different stages. During these stages, the teaching of English has declined from flourishing to deteriorating (Pertaub et al., 2002). Teaching English in Libya flourished from the 1970s to the 1980s whereas it was quite the opposite from the 1980s to the 1990s. During the said period, the teaching of English

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in Libya had deteriorated due to political reasons. Rules during Gadaffi's time has abolished the teaching of English in Libyan schools (Mohamed, 2014). From the late 1990s and years that follow, the teaching of English in Libya has recovered and flourished again due to political reasons as well. Despite the flourishing of teaching English again after the 1990s, Libyan students still suffer from their low English proficiency. Unfortunately, the teaching of English in Libya deteriorated in the period where the necessity and the need for learning it have increased rapidly since English has become a global language.

Nowadays, in the era of modernization and internationalization, there is an increased need to learn and master English. It is undeniable that the learning of English as a global language is important (Crystal, 2012). Libya is the gate to Africa and lies more than one thousand kilometers off the Mediterranean sea. It is considered as a safe passage to its neighboring Europe, giving it the potential to be a central market in future especially when its political system changed completely after the 17th Feb. revolution in 2011. These political changes have positive influences on the Libyan Education system. Therefore, there is a notable concern about the education system in general and the demand for learning English has increased after the revolution (Mohamed, 2014). After the fall of Gadaffi's government in 2011, the Libyan Ministry of Higher Education arranged a massive number of scholarship programs abroad to enable more than 80,000 teachers and students to get their master and doctoral degrees from different foreign countries (Elabbar, 2014).

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After all, English is the dominant language of both information and technology. As English is a necessary language to master, it should be taken into more consideration by the Libyan Ministry of Education to facilitate the process of its teaching and learning (Ahmad & Gao, 2004). Many Libyan students have difficulty in producing a sentence in English without making mistakes despite their early exposure to the language at schools (Orafi, 2008). The same issue has happened to graduates who have problems in conversing in English during job interviews. This scenario might affect employability rates among graduates as the low proficiency in English increases the percentage of unemployment in the country. In regards to the importance of English to Libyan students in particular and the problems that they face in acquiring and speaking in English language, efforts to identify the causes that obstruct their performance in English should be carried out (Orafi, 2008). From the review of the literature, there are several reasons behind the low English language proficiency related to cognitive and affective factors. Therefore, this study focuses on two affective variables which are speaking anxiety and language learning autonomy to investigate to what extent they are considered the reason behind students' low proficiency in speaking the English language. Also, this study examines how language learning autonomy affects students' speaking anxiety. Several researchers study the role of anxiety as an affective factor that affects English language proficiency in general and speaking English in particular (Aida, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a; Zhang, 2001).

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1.2 Problem Statement

Like the other EFL/ESL pre-service teachers, Libyan EFL pre-service teachers suffer from low speaking proficiency. Like Libya, in Jordan and Palestine, the Arabic language is the first language, and English is considered as a foreign language. Hence, EFL Jordanian and Palestinian students might experience the same problems that Libyan students face regarding learning the English language. According to Huwari and Aziz (2011), Jordanian students who study in University Utara Malaysia (UUM) have a high level of speaking anxiety. Yahya (2013) conducted a study on 104 students at Arab American University in Jenin, Palestine concluded that students have a high level of speaking anxiety especially in their fear of negative evaluation. It is important to study speaking anxiety as Byrne, Flood and Shanahan (2012) had indicated that priority should be given to reduce speaking anxiety before working on improving communication skills.

As there are not enough Libyan English lecturers in Libyan universities, the Libyan Ministry of Education usually employs foreign English lecturers and professors from various countries such as India and Philippines on a contract basis. Although these international teachers feel satisfied with their students' reading, writing, and listening skills, they always complain that the students are not able to convey their ideas orally, not to mention their low proficiency in speaking tasks. Anxious English language students might not be able to successfully pass oral tasks due to their anxiety impeding their ability to fare well (Yan & Horwitz, 2008). In contrast, relaxed students would perform better because they do not experience the language anxiety impedance(Woodrow, 2006). Anxiety is considered as the primary crucial blocking variable besides other affective

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variables that negatively affect the language learning process. Foreign language anxiety is a hindrance, and it curbs the language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1991). This has a substantial impact on speaking skills as it is confirmed by Horwitz et al., (1986). Speaking is the most challenging aspect of language learning, and it is one of the most negatively influential affective variables. It plays a vital role in language learning and contributes to reducing learners' oral engagement and performance (Byrne et al., 2012). Despite using new teaching methods in teaching English as a foreign or second language, students still suffer from anxiety. According to Nazir et al., (2014, p. 216) "the ESL/EFL students may be good at reading, writing, and listening, but they seem to be poor at speaking skills." Moreover, English headmasters complain about students' low performance in speaking test compared to their performance in other language skills during the admission test that was administered as one of the conditions for getting accepted into any English language departments in Libya. Based on the researcher's experience teaching English in Libya to the various levels for more than twelve years, students seem to have different levels of language anxiety which is low, average and high. It is noted that students with low level of anxiety perform better and participate more in the class (Bashosh et al., 2013). Nevertheless, students whose speaking scores are lower in contrast to their scores in the other skills are very quiet and reluctant to participate in the class.

On the other hand, Libyan students themselves always complain about their low proficiency in speaking. Their complaints come especially after graduation. According to Shihiba (2011), this problem may be due to the teaching method that teachers use in Libyan schools. The teacher-centered approach is the dominant approach inside Libyan

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classrooms. The teacher-centered approach does not enable the students to learn how to communicate and just make them focus on how to obtain high grades and pass the exams. As a result, after graduation, Libyan EFL learners try to overcome this problem by joining private speaking classes with friendly smiling teachers away from university classroom atmosphere where they can participate in the language learning process.

Several factors theorized that affected learners' language achievement affects English language acquisition which includes learners' foreign language anxiety and their language learning autonomy (Horwitz, 2010; Little, 2013; Rezalou, 2014). Learning autonomy resulting from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) advanced by Deci and Ryan (1985) was described by many researchers to influence language performance specifically within foreign language classrooms. Language autonomy was assumed to affect students language achievement positively as it allows learners to take control of their learning experiences, affecting their learning motivation positively and help students regulate their emotions for example language anxiety (Deci & Ryan, 2010). The focus of this present study will be on speaking anxiety and the language learning autonomy and whether or not language learning autonomy factors affect speaking anxiety factors.

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1.3 Research Objects

The research objectives are as following:

1. To identify speaking anxiety factors that cause speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers studying at the English department in three universities in Libya?

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2. To measure the speaking anxiety level of pre-service teachers at the English department in three universities in Libya when speaking in English.
3. To examine the extent of the relationship between the students' level of speaking anxiety and their speaking performance in the college-based oral tests.
4. To measure the language learning autonomy level of pre-service teachers at the English department in three universities in Libya through investigating their readiness for autonomous learning in terms of their responsibility, ability and activity.
5. To investigate the relationship between Libyan pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety and their language learning autonomy as well as examining to what extent language learning autonomy factors effect speaking anxiety factors.

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1.4 Research Questions

The research questions to facilitate the study are as follows:

1. What are the factors that cause speaking anxiety among pre-service teachers studying at the English department in three universities in Libya?
2. What are the levels of speaking anxiety experienced by pre-service teachers studying at the English department in three universities in Libya when speaking in English?
3. What is the extent of the relationship between pre-service teachers' speaking anxiety level and their speaking performance?

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4. What are the levels of language learning autonomy experienced by pre-service teachers studying at the English department in three universities in Libya? To what extent are they ready to be autonomous learners in terms of their responsibility, ability and activity?
5. What is the relationship between Libyan pre-service EFL teachers' speaking anxiety and their language learning autonomy? To what extent do language learning autonomy factors affect speaking anxiety factors?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study provides more insight about speaking anxiety that foreign language learners experience, mainly English pre-service teachers in an English Department at Al Asmarya University for Islamic Sciences, Al Zaytoonah University and Al Mergeb University in Libya. The present study also provides some information about how much the English pre-service teachers are affected by speaking anxiety while speaking in English. Moreover, the study highlights the causes of the difficulties faced by English pre-service teachers when speaking in English. Since some English pre-service teachers were enabled through this study to explain and illustrate their emotional state when speaking in English, the understanding of these affective reasons assisted in understanding the speaking anxiety phenomenon. Furthermore, the relationship between the students' speaking anxiety and their speaking performance was examined during this study. This relationship might be different in contrast to findings from other studies due to the nature of the sample that was used in this research. The sample in this study is English pre-

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service teachers who are English specialist learners with high proficiencies in English. Consequently, this study measures the level of anxiety which affects English pre-service teachers without affecting the cognitive variables.

In addition, this study investigates the relationship between pre-service EFL teachers' speaking anxiety and their language learning autonomy which make it the first of its kind. Besides, the study examines the effect of language learning autonomy factors on speaking anxiety factors which have never examined before to fill the gap in the related literature. This relationship was investigated using the Amos software. More importantly, this research will contribute to the research on investigating and understanding the speaking anxiety phenomena. Also, this research will help the curriculum planners, by taking into consideration the findings of this study, to design a curriculum that can assist students to overcome speaking anxiety and elevate their autonomous learning.

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1.6 Scope of the Study

The findings of this study are limited to the participants in three universities in Libya (Al Asmarya University for Islamic Sciences, Al Zaytoonah University and Al Mergeb University). Moreover, some limitations may occur due to the use of certain instruments of data collection such as the foreign language speaking anxiety scale (FLSAS) questionnaire, language learning autonomy questionnaire, and learners' interview questions. Therefore, the findings of this study are limited to these scales. Furthermore, there are some limitations related to the sample used in this study which is pre-service

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English teachers in the mentioned universities. As a result of that, this study may not be generalized to non-English major students who study in other universities.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The following are definitions for the main terms that were used in this study.

1.7.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

"a distinct set of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 130).

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1.7.2 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Foreign language speaking anxiety is associated with the emotional reactions with which one speaks foreign languages under uneasy, fearful, nervous or worrying situations in EFL classroom setting (Wilson, 2006).

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1.7.3 English as a Foreign Language

EFL is an abbreviation for "English as a Foreign Language." This is mainly used to talk about students (whose first language is not English) learning English while living in their own country (Fauziati, 2010).

1.7.4 Affective Factors

Affective factors are defined as "those that deal with the emotional reactions and motivations of the learner" (Scovel, 1978, p. 131).

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1.7.5 Autonomy

Autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's learning . . . To take charge of one's learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3).

1.7.6 Language Learning Autonomy

Language autonomy is a capacity to take responsibility for one's own language learning. Therefore, language autonomy involves abilities and attitudes that students possess and can develop to various degrees (Benson, 2007).

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1.7.7 Independent Learning

Independent learning refers to learners to be 'self-regulated learning' through understanding their learning, being motivated to take responsibility for their learning, and working with teachers to structure their learning environment (Meyer et al., 2008).

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