EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT ON LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG ESL LEARNERS AT BZU MULTAN

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Abstract
The paper explores the impact of a multilingual classroom environment on language anxiety among ESL students at Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in Multan. It helps us to understand how linguistic diversity affects the emotional and communicative experiences of learners through the perspectives of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, including Horwitz's (1986) foreign language anxiety model and Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis. However, diversity in language may be a source of anxiety as well as teaching materials (Dewaele, 2013). A quantitative study involving 80 ESL participants was conducted, and the participants were subjected to a structured questionnaire consisting of a dichotomous scale, which was a modification of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The results indicated that over 70 percent of the respondents experienced severe language anxiety, mainly due to poor pronunciation, lack of confidence when interacting with peers who have a different linguistic background, and the fear of getting poor grades. This study also helps us understand that by using friendly teaching strategies, group interactions, and allowing students to use their native languages, we can improve the learning experience. These methods can help us in reducing anxiety, stress, shyness, and fear in multilingual classrooms. By revealing the significance of inclusive and emotionally supportive practices in multilingual ESL classrooms, the research has valuable implications to guide teachers and organisations seeking to improve the outcomes of language learning among individuals.

Keywords: ESL, multilingualism, language anxiety, inclusive teaching, SLA.

Introduction

The classroom environment is the combination of social, physical, and institutional components that shape students' performance and engagement (Fraser, 2012). In addition, in the ESL context, language anxiety is mostly shaped by students' language ability, peer interaction, self-perception, teacher relationships, and learning environment (Sana & Atta, 2024). Building on this, multilingualism plays a vital role in shaping the classroom atmosphere. Multilingualism is defined by UNESCO (2018) as using three or more languages daily. In South Asia classrooms, students use different languages such as Punjabi, Saraiki, and Pashto in English-medium settings (Kalan et al., 2024). However, if students feel their language is less valued, language diversity could make them anxious. According to Samar and Pathan (2023), translanguaging gives students confidence and enhances learning. Additionally, the impact of language diversity becomes more apparent in classroom strategies. To explain concepts or assist classmates (Garcia & Wei, 2014). Furthermore, linguistic diversity promotes peer assistance and better understanding. Rules that are only in English, however, make learners more afraid and hesitant (Li & Dewaele, 2021).

A multilingual setting is a setting in which students speak different native languages, where the environment of the class plays an important role in shaping their confidence and anxiety (Fraser, 2021; Sana & Atta, 2024). The emergence of multilingual classrooms in the twenty-first

century can be attributed to globalisation processes as well as cross-border migration, international education options, and education reforms. A multilingual classroom is deemed to be one that has students who speak two or more languages and have different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Kalan et al., 2024). Many of these classes are often taught in English, especially in the higher educational establishments in developing countries. The students learning through the medium of English Second Language (ESL) make up the larger part of the student population; these students could experience difficulties in language proficiency and communication in classrooms (Malik & Pervaiz, 2023). When children communicate with those who speak a few other languages, besides the inability to use English, the situation becomes more complex and leads to anxiety and doubt. In this case, the concept of multilingualism plays a critical role (Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015). Kalan et al. (2024) define multilingualism as the ability of an individual or a group of people to speak at least three languages. Even though multilingualism is viewed by the majority as a positive attribute, which comes with numerous benefits such as enhancement of communication abilities, cultural flexibility, and intellectual flexibility, it may also be disadvantageous. Some of them are confusion, pressure to perform, and emotional discomfort, especially in individuals who are less fluent in multiple languages (Samar & Pathan, 2023). This two-fold nature of multilingualism is especially relevant in ESL classrooms where students are expected to operate in English, yet in the surroundings of their potential linguistic peers.

Specifically, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is among the most tangible emotional consequences of this type of environment. This term refers to the nervousness, fear, or anxiety experienced by students who are obliged to speak a second or foreign language in the classroom setting (Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015). This anxiety may be intensified in multilingual classrooms by several factors, such as the presence of skilled classmates, low confidence, foreign accents, and fear of judgment (Fatima et al., 2024). Hesitating, retreating, and even avoiding participating in the class are therefore tendencies among many ESL students. This paper looks into the impacts of multilingual classroom instances on language anxiety in ESL learners with specific reference to Bahauddin Zakariya University (BZU) in Multan. This study is limited to undergraduate students during the academic year 2025, while this research is based on the students of the English department, and the other departments and their teachers and students are not included in this because it is just for ESL learners. It is expected to understand the psychological implications of multilingualism and the mechanisms of coping with anxiety in the classroom employed by ESL students.

1.1. Background

English is widely utilised as the official language of teaching in Pakistan's educational system, particularly at the university level. Nonetheless, most students are from areas with unique linguistic characteristics. Speakers of Punjabi, Saraiki, Pashto, Sindhi, Balochi, and Urdu are among the students of the public university, BZU Multan. Students bring varying degrees of language exposure, fluency, and comfort to our highly multilingual classes. Despite the fact that English is used in instruction and testing, pupils frequently lack confidence when speaking it. Their prior education, which mostly focused on grammar-based teaching strategies, is one factor. Grammar standards and text translation are taught to students, but speaking and listening abilities are rarely promoted (Malik & Pervaiz, 2023). As a result, many students struggle to speak effectively or confidently in class debates, presentations, or group projects, even though they comprehend English.

Multilingualism is both a benefit and a challenge in this multilingual classroom setting. Pupils who have been exposed to a variety of languages during their upbringing, including Urdu, their native tongue, and English, are more likely to be linguistically flexible. These highly multilingual people have no trouble switching between languages, and they frequently do better on academic spoken assignments. However, pupils who have primarily used one or two languages, particularly those who have had little exposure to spoken English, find it difficult to keep up. According to Kalan et al. (2024), these kids are known as poor multi-linguals and frequently struggle with vocabulary, pronunciation, and comprehension, particularly in English.

Language anxiety is a psychological condition that can be brought on by this imbalance. Low multi-linguals may find it difficult to interact in the classroom. They might feel anxiety, humiliated, or inferior when using English in the presence of highly multilingual peers. Whereas multilingualism may often facilitate pleasure among the fluent learners, it instills fear and trepidation among individuals with lesser linguistic profiles based on studies such as those by Dewaele et al. (2024). This fact is also supported by the personal experience of the researcher as a student of English at BZU Multan. Many smart and able students do it not because they avoid speaking in the classroom or stutter during the oral exam, but rather due to the fear of error, not the ignorance of the topic. This anxiety is conditioned by the linguistic environment, in which the pupils are unconsciously contrasted with more confident and more language-knowing peers, and such apprehension is not groundless. Another significant issue is the lack of preparation of teachers to work with linguistically diverse classes. Teachers often are not aware of the emotional problems facing their students. Emotional readiness of students and their confidence with regard to language use are ignored in favour of written tests and delivery of materials. This gap widens the anxiety problem as it does not encourage pupils to participate actively. Thus, this research has two motives: academic and personal. The proposed study will provide insight into a relatively unknown yet important learning barrier that ESL students in Pakistan have to face, by exploring the relationship between a multilingual classroom setting and language anxiety.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions, which seek to pinpoint, comprehend, and resolve the fundamental problems about multilingualism and language anxiety in ESL classes, serve as the study's compass:

1. How does the multilingual classroom environment affect language anxiety among ESL learners?

2. What type of strategies and teaching methods could help students feel less anxious in multilingual classrooms, factors (i.e., anxiety, nervousness, shyness, and fear etc.)?

These enquiries are intended to provide light on the breadth of students' emotional and language difficulties, the dynamics of the classroom that influence their conduct, and the methods they may employ to tackle their anxieties.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This study is important since it applies to both theory and practice. By concentrating on the emotional experiences of ESL students in multilingual classrooms, it first seeks to add to the body of knowledge on language acquisition. Although there are studies on this subject in Arab and European contexts (Dewaele & Al-Saraj, 2015; Li et al., 2022), there isn't much of it conducted in Pakistan, particularly in South Punjabi universities like BZU Multan. By investigating actual student experiences in a linguistically diverse yet educationally underdeveloped area, our study contributes to closing that gap. Second, educators and curriculum designers can benefit greatly

from the study's conclusions. By pinpointing the main causes of language anxiety, the study provides suggestions for instructional strategies that can help students both linguistically and emotionally. Supportive settings, peer help, group projects, and language scaffolding strategies can all greatly lessen language anxiety, as demonstrated by Dewaele and Al-Saraj (2015).

Third, the research can be handy to policymakers and university administrators. Recognition of the emotional cost that multilingualism exacts on ESL students can also lead to better teacher preparation programs, as well as inclusive language policies and flexible assessment procedures (UNESCO, 2018). Language learning processes should be effective, and to achieve this, educational institutions should realise that emotional comfort and confidence are as important as the academic content (Fraser, 2012). Lastly, this research will serve as a foundation for future research. Educators, students, and educational leaders can find value in its conclusions. This paper sheds light on an important yet often invisible learning barrier with a focus on the interrelation between language anxiety and multilingualism. It will also offer some solutions that can enhance the accessibility, inclusivity, and support of language learning, besides examining the problem.

2. Literature Review

Language Anxiety and Multilingualism in the Acquisition of Second Languages. Since it determines the contours of the understanding of the scope, depth, and context of a research topic, the literature review is a critical element of any scholarly study. The interrelation between multilingual classroom environments and language anxiety has acquired significance as a research area in the second language acquisition (SLA) field. The linguistic diversity is starting to become the rule rather than the exception as the demographics of classrooms shift around the world due to increased migration and mobility, as well as access to education. In South Asian countries such as Pakistan, students often brokered educational settings in which multiple languages are spoken, at times harmoniously, at other times with pedagogical and psychological tension. However, no such research exists that contextualises these processes in Pakistani university contexts where English is taught as a second or third language in strongly multilingual environments, though the interest in multilingualism has increased globally.

Having a focus on the psychological and emotional nature of language acquisition, this review of the literature tries to summarise substantial work in this field. It will discuss how foreign language anxiety (FLA), multilingualism, and the associated notions, such as motivation, translanguaging, and personality factors, interconnect and affect English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Also, an observation of substantial discrepancies in the literature, especially in the South Asian context, is made through the stretch of discussion to include the current empirical studies without having to lose the anchor of the proven theories. Results and theoretical developments of the previous studies that are most relevant are elaborated upon in the following paragraphs.

2.1. Overview of the Relevant Literature

In the matter of SLA, much research has been conducted within the last few decades, particularly concerning the psychological factors influencing the performance and motivation of learners. Two of these psychological dimensions that have gained relevance and, subsequently, exert an effective impact on the experiences of language learners are multilingualism and foreign language anxiety (FLA). In recent years, multilingualism has grown thanks to the enhanced diversity brought by globalization, especially in the classroom context, considering that in countries such as Pakistan, it is often the case that students speak numerous local languages, including English as their second or third language. FLA and multilingualism still have many

unanswered questions, particularly in the case of the South Asian context and the connection between multilingualism and language anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was created by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), who also conducted one of the first investigations in the sphere of FLA. This tool is nowadays widely applied to measure the level of anxiety of students in a classroom setting and identifies key factors that cause anxiety, including exam anxiety, communication anxiety, and the fear of getting a bad mark. Their work made many more studies possible that took a cognitive and affective look into language learning. The debilitating nature of worry on language performance was also supported by Macintyre and Gardner (1991), who further noted that in as much as learners may be equipped with the right linguistic competence, they often underperform the task simply because their anxiety levels are unrealistically high.

Dewaele (2013) contributed a vital aspect to this discussion by analysing how personal traits, particularly personality traits, can lessen the effects of anxiety. According to the PEN model (Psychoticism, Extraversion, and Neuroticism), his study establishes that not all multilinguals necessarily experience anxiety. As an example, more extraverted students can perform better in multilingual classrooms, whereas more neurotic students can remain anxious even in situations when they fluently speak several languages. This contribution is all the more noteworthy in that it shifts the focus away from the assumption that being multilingual merely reduces anxiety to a more global description that takes into account the situational as well as individual variables. Ryan and Deci (2000), Self-Determination Theory (SDT), made a significant contribution to the field of language acquisition after pointing out the critical role that motivation plays in the process. Their absorbing idea was that intrinsic motivation, psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness significantly contribute to learning outcomes. This theory claims that anxiety interferes with the motivation and performance of a learner by disturbing the feelings of competence and autonomy in these learners. Their model provides a useful perspective through which language anxiety can be analysed in classrooms, and their model has been extensively used in educational psychology.

Translanguaging is a revolutionary teaching practice in multilingual classrooms that has emerged in recent years. To make meaning, multilingual speakers can use all their linguistic resources freely, as proposed by the theory and practice of translanguaging as elaborated by Garcia and Wei (2014). Translanguaging in the classroom promotes inclusive behaviours that have the potential to enhance confidence and reduce anxiety levels, as well as recognising the entire repertoire of languages that students bring with them to the classroom. This approach is particularly relevant in South Asian classrooms (such as at BZU Multan) where the students often need to communicate in several regional languages to comprehend and write academic material in English. In investigating the affective classroom dynamics in Pakistani ESL classes, Ahsan et al. (2020) found that language policies, peer interaction, and teacher behaviour significantly influenced the emotional status of the learners. Their study places an enormous emphasis on the significance of the classroom environment and instructions in shaping language anxiety. They argue that the motivation and anxiety of students increase when such students are helped with culturally and linguistically sensitive pedagogical measures. In multilingual classrooms, good teaching strategies and translanguaging are both used to overcome language anxiety and help in language acquisition. According to Javaid et al. (2025d) that when we give a friendly environment to ESL learners and allow them to speak in their native languages, it helps them to participate in classroom discussions, build confidence, and also improve their concepts. It also helps us in

reducing anxiety, like shyness, nervousness, fear, and stress etc. This study also encouraged peer interaction and an inclusive classroom setting, and supports Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. While teachers' professional development also has a great impact on language growth. This study was conducted by Babinski et al. (2025), which found that when teachers get specific skills and training, their students' reading, writing, and language skills are also improved. This explores that good teaching strategies and settings can make a great impact on students' learning and also help them in second language acquisition.

Much of the work is geographically biased to Western and East Asian settings, despite the advances made to our knowledge of multilingualism and FLA. South Asian context is hardly researched, particularly in the Pakistani state-owned universities where language diversity is eminent, yet the teaching endeavours are often rigid and monolingual. Moreover, there exists scarce empirical research examining the impacts of a multilingual school environment, including students with different linguistic backgrounds, on FLA. To sum up, the body of research establishes both theoretical and empirical foundations of understanding the relationship between language anxiety and multilingualism. Basic concepts that have contributed to understanding the affective side of language acquisition consist of SDT, FLCAS, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. It is important to contextualise these concepts in under-researched settings, including South Asian institutions. Through the study of the connection between multilingualism and language anxiety among ESL students at BZU Multan, my study will help bridge this gap.

2.2. Important Theories or Concepts Employed and How They Are Used

Theoretical frameworks are needed in order to focus research inquiries, influence data calculation, and offer a deeper understanding of the complex educational processes. Certain psychological, motivational, and pedagogical theories are highly relevant to my study, which aims to investigate the impact of a multilingual classroom environment on language anxiety in ESL students at BZU Multan. Affective Filter Hypothesis, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the PEN Model of Personality and Language Anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and the Translanguaging Theory are among some of them. I selected these frameworks since, when considered collectively, they offer a complete realization of the relationships between motivation, emotional statuses, individual traits, and language use in multilingual learning environments. The most significant and suitable theories that should be applied in this inquiry, to my mind, are the Affective Filter Hypothesis, FLCAS, and Translanguaging Theory. These three directly relate to the primary concerns behind emotional stress, language processing problems, and the ability to teach inclusively in multilingual classrooms. Focusing on the motivation of learners and the diversity of personalities, SDT and the PEN Model expand the discussion and reinforce the model.

2.2.1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), can be regarded as the main theoretical framework of the given research. It helps provide a clear and measurable concept of foreign language anxiety by separating its three major sub-factors, namely, communication anxiety, fear of getting a low grade, and test anxiety. FLCAS is particularly advantageous in my research since it is based on proven surveys to measure the abstract notion of anxiety into actual data. This will allow me to determine the affective response of the ESL students of BZU Multan to the use of language in multilingual classes. The feeling of pressure that arises out of such complex interactions is very well portrayed by FLCAS since such

students are often required to consume information in their native/ regional languages and at the same time produce in English.

2.2.2. Affective Filter Hypothesis

FLCAS can find a helpful explanatory tool in Stephen Krashen Bowman's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which demonstrates how fear works as a psychological block to language learning. This hypothesis explains that when learners have negative feelings such as worry or lack of confidence, the affective filter is up, and so the input does not reach the section of the brain that is concerned with language acquisition. This concept is more relevant to multilingual classrooms, such as in BZU Multan, where students often believe that teachers do not understand them or they are judged by peers due to their vocabulary choices or accent differences.

2.2.3. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Ryan and Deci (2000) introduced the Self-Determination Theory, which can be considered a motivational perspective in the study of language anxiety. It emphasizes the extreme importance of satisfying three basic psychological needs: relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Language anxiety can severely undermine these needs as it causes a student to feel isolated or unqualified, especially when English is not their native language. All these challenges are increased in BZU Multan, as a high number of students might be speaking English as their second or even third language. Through SDT, I will argue in this paper that the feeling of competence and autonomy can be replenished in learners when they receive a chance at collaboration, teaching strategies that are flexible, and emotional guidance. It increases engagement in the learning process and reduces anxiety accordingly.

2.2.4. PEN Model of Personality and Language Anxiety

An important psychological aspect of understanding language anxiety is provided by the PEN Model introduced by Dewaele (2013) on the basis of the personality theory by Eysenck. Students can be classified into psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism, and this means that personality factors strongly influence the way students respond in a multilingual classroom environment. As an illustration, the interaction of different languages can prove to be helpful to extraverted students, yet in favourable settings, neurotic learners are likely to feel overwhelmed or anxious. The theory is useful to me in that it makes me focus on individual learner differences that might have remained unrewarded. This paper acknowledges that multilingualism is not a universal remedy to anxiety; instead, it has different effects on people depending on their psychological profiles through the application of the PEN model. This gives plausibility to the concept of response-sensitive differentiated education approaches on the foundation of personality.

2.2.5. Translanguaging Theory

Theoretically, the Translanguaging Theory, which was created by García and Wei (2014), is probably the most innovative and educationally efficient theory employed in the given research. This approach challenges the paradigms in language teaching by encouraging learners to use all resources available to them (linguistic resources) to communicate and get an understanding. When translanguaging is applied in the classes at BZU Multan, where students frequently switch between Punjabi, Urdu, Seraiki, and English, learning appears more available, inclusive, and less pressuring. I think this method is quite suitable and effective as it considers multilingualism as an advantage, not a flaw, which reduces the pressure of performance and increases confidence. In my study, I followed classrooms in order to examine how translanguaging may alleviate language anxiety by affirming children Luis linguistic identities.

2.2.6. Final Perspective

Overall, it is possible to say that each of the theories selected in this study to serve as the foundation of the research, including Translanguaging Theory, SDT, PEN Model, Affective Filter Hypothesis, and FLCAS, have their specific, yet complementary roles in the understanding of language anxiety among multilinguals in ESL settings. The Affective Filter Hypothesis and FLCAS provide an accurate model of identifying and examining behaviours relative to anxiety. The Self-Determination Theory and the PEN Model go further, into psychological and motivational aspects. However, most importantly, the Translanguaging Theory offers a progressive and practical pedagogical approach that is fully aligned with the nature of South Asian classrooms with diverse language profiles.

2.3. Gaps and Controversies in the Literature

Even though educational psychology and applied linguistics have extensively studied the connection between multilingualism and language anxiety, there are still many unanswered questions and disagreements, especially when it comes to under-represented environments like Pakistani public colleges. These gaps expose theoretical and methodological shortcomings in the conceptualisation and measurement of language anxiety and multilingualism, in addition to reflecting geographic and cultural blind spots in the body of existing literature. This section analyses these problems critically and describes how my research addresses those gaps in the literature by offering contextualised and theoretically informed contributions based on BZU Multan's multilingual classroom setting.

2.3.1. Lack of Contextualized Research in South Asia—Covered by This Study

The dearth of studies carried out in South Asian university settings is among the most obvious gaps in the current body of research. The majority of the seminal research on multilingualism and Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) comes from Western or East Asian contexts, such as China, South Korea, Japan, and the United States, where educational policies, linguistic hierarchies, and cultural norms are very different from those in Pakistan (Bensalem & Thompson, 2021; Dewaele, 2013). Students at Pakistani universities, on the other hand, are forced to work in monolingual English-medium settings despite being fluent in Urdu, Punjabi, Seraiki, Pashto, or Balochi. This discrepancy results in a distinct type of language anxiety that is under-represented in current research. By concentrating on BZU Multan—a public institution where students come from a variety of linguistic origins and English is typically a second or third language—my research directly addresses this spatial and sociolinguistic divide. The over-reliance on Western-centric models of FLA is challenged by my work, which contributes new empirical information that is culturally and educationally relevant to South Asia by collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from this setting.

2.3.2. This study examined conflicting findings about the effect of multilingualism on anxiety.

The conflicting results about whether multilingualism lowers or raises anxiety represent another significant debate in the research. According to some research, multilingual learners are more emotionally resilient and cognitively flexible, which helps lessen anxiety (Dewaele, 2013; Bensalem and Thompson, 2021). Others contend that, especially when classroom regulations impose a dominant language like English, multilingual students may experience increased linguistic insecurity, peer comparison, or institutional pressure, all of which exacerbate anxiety levels. Such conflicts are not just theoretical; they are daily realities at BZU Multan, where many students speak many languages, but English is still the standard language of instruction. By

addressing the questions of whether, how, and under what circumstances multilingualism affects anxiety, my research adds to this discussion. This methodical approach, which is based on student narratives and classroom observations, illuminates the complex, situation-specific impacts of multilingualism on emotional health.

2.3.3. Translanguaging's Underappreciated Contribution to Lowering FLA: An Examination Using Pedagogical Analysis

Despite its popularity as a paradigm for inclusive multilingual education, there is still a dearth of empirical research on the Translanguaging Theory's ability to reduce anxiety (García& Wei, 2014). Its pedagogical or identity-based advantages are the focus of the majority of current research, but its emotional effects on ESL students, particularly in strict, test-focused settings like Pakistan's, are rarely investigated. The discouragement of using native or regional languages in many Pakistani classrooms reinforces a monolingual normativity that heightens emotional distress and cognitive strain. In particular, my research investigates how translanguaging techniques— like code-switching, peer translation, and multilingual group projects—can reduce emotional stress and boost self-esteem in ESL students. I close a large empirical gap and offer useful proof for applying anxiety-reducing translanguaging techniques by including this framework in the interview methodology and classroom observations.

2.3.4. This study examined the neglect of individual differences, particularly those related to gender and personality.

The majority of earlier studies often ignore how gender and personality characteristics interact with language anxiety in multilingual environments. Few studies have looked at neuroticism and extraversion in gendered, conservative nations like Pakistan, where cultural expectations impact classroom behaviours, despite Dewaele (2013) using the PEN Model to investigate these factors. This is a crucial mistake, in my opinion, since gender norms may determine how publicly students show their worry, while personality qualities may affect how students experience anxiety. For instance, introverted male students may completely shun involvement in conservative environments, whereas female students may experience increased anxiety due to pressure to perform flawlessly in English. Through the use of gender and PEN personality traits as analytical categories, my research provides a nuanced understanding of learner diversity and promotes more person-sensitive teaching methods.

2.3.5. Limited FLA Conceptualizations—Expanded in This Study Using SDT

Many researchers use a limited definition of foreign language anxiety, concentrating primarily on exam anxiety or communication anxiety, as is the case with traditional FLCAS usage. This reductionist method ignores the intricate relationships that exist between classroom dynamics, motivation, and self-perception. The present study broadens the perspective by examining how multilingual classroom practices either support or impede psychological demands like competence, autonomy, and relatedness, drawing on Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory. Students who are denied the opportunity to speak their native tongues, for example, could feel less independent, whereas those who get helpful criticism and encouragement from their peers might feel more capable and emotionally stable. The psychological foundations of FLA, which are currently neglected in multilingual ESL literature, can be better understood thanks to this SDT-informed viewpoint.

3. Methodology
3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research method in determining the effect of a multilingual classroom environment on language anxiety among ESL learners. The quantitative method allowed obtaining numerical data, which could be objectively interpreted and implemented in statistical analysis by means of a structured dichotomous-scale (Yes/No) questionnaire. The framework was based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), as this tool defines significant elements of anxiety, including communication apprehension and fear of a negative assessment. It also includes the design of the Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which links the emotional factors to language acquisition achievements. Also, the competence and autonomy of learners in multilingual settings were studied with the help of the elements of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which directly affected the motivational perspectives discussed in the literature.

3.2. Participants

The participants in the study were eighty undergraduate ESL students of semester one to eight who were studying in the Department of English, BZU Multan. The language backgrounds of the participants were Saraiki, Punjabi, Urdu, Pashto, etc. There was a ratio of 44.8 percent men and 55.2 percent women. Following Dewaele's (2013) application of the PEN model of personality and the examination of Gardner (1985) on the motivation in second language learning, the study was capable of considering such aspects as gender, personality, and language exposure due to the diversity of the population.

3.3. Sampling Technique

A convenience sample strategy was employed since the researcher had direct access to the participants and was familiar with the university environment. This method was successful in reaching a relevant sample of multilingual ESL students who were active subjects in the classroom instructions. Convenience sampling was chosen because of its practicability and direct availability of the multilingual target population. The sample was highly relevant because of the continuous exposure of the participants to a variety of languages, which was crucial to the objectives of the study. Following Dewaele (2013) and Gardner (1985), the sample that consisted of male and female ESL students offered information on anxiety and multilingualism about gender and study level.

3.4. Instrument

The primary tool used to collect data was a structured questionnaire in the form of a dichotomous scale (Yes/No). To measure the affective and cognitive subcomponents of language anxiety, the questionnaire was adapted from FLCAS (Horwitz et al., 1986) and supplemented with items inspired by Young (1991) and Macintyre & Gardner (1994). All the items were dedicated to such issues as communication pressure, fear of being judged, and anxiety during multilingual training. The scale avoided open-ended questions to ensure uniformity of responses and to provide easy statistical interpretation. Also, part of the responses in the questionnaire were founded on the Self-Determination Theory by Ryan and Deci (2000) and the Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1982) that allude to emotional limit and significance of proficiency and autonomy in reducing anxiety. The strategy was informed by anxiety-related aspects described in Gabarre et al. (2016) and related current work, like Alamer (2021), even though no digital tools like Facebook were employed. This was done while preserving a face-to-face classroom setting.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

Google Forms was used to distribute the survey in order to guarantee anonymity and ease of use. The goal of the study was explained to the participants, and they voluntarily consented. For a week during regular university sessions, responses were gathered.

3.6. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, particularly frequency counts and percentages, were used to analyse the data to find common patterns of language anxiety among the various participant groups. The study was able to identify important correlations between anxiety levels and factors, including gender, semester, and native language, thanks to this methodology. The framework for analysis adhered to the guidelines provided by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) for the interpretation of psychological constructs in SLA. Furthermore, theoretical links were established with: Components of FLCAS anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Motivational components from SDT in Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Ryan &Deci, 2000). The impact of multilingual exposure on anxiety (García& Wei, 2014)

4. Results

The results of the survey given to BZU Multan's ESL students are shown in this section. Finding patterns of language anxiety in a multilingual classroom is the main goal of the analysis. Every finding is connected to more general research issues and relates to particular questionnaire items. The following format is used to arrange the results:

Fig 1

*Do you experience nervousness when speaking English in class?*
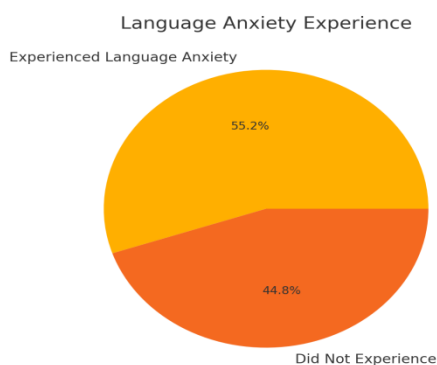
55.2 % of the participants experienced anxiety when speaking in English in class. So, in ESL contexts, this question evaluates general speaking nervousness. The majority of students reported feeling anxious, which reflected their unease speaking aloud. The stress of speaking in front of peers who speak different languages probably makes people more anxious. Students' fear while speaking English aloud is exacerbated by multilingual classroom settings. The significant rate of anxiety supports the idea that learner confidence is impacted by multilingualism.

Similarly, a question was asked Do you shy away from English-language class discussions because you're afraid of making a mistake.

Fig 2
Do you shy away from English-language class discussions because you're afraid of making a mistake?


Class Discussion Participation Avoidance
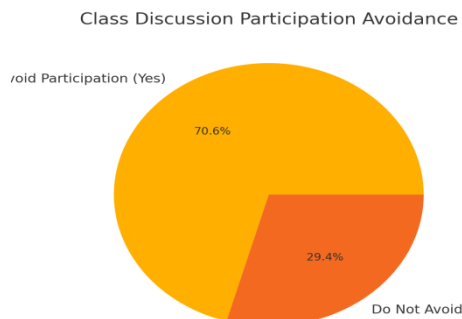
So, because they were afraid of making a mistake, 70.6% of pupils avoided participating in class. Avoidance behaviour is a sign of increased self-monitoring and a defensive learning posture. Open engagement may be discouraged by a fear of being judged by peers who have differing linguistic strengths. Fear of receiving a poor grade is one of the main causes of anxiety in multilingual classrooms, which can result in avoidance behaviours.

Similarly, a question was asked when English is utilised in class: Do you experience anxiety or tension?

Fig 3
When English is utilised in class, do you experience anxiety or tension?


Emotional Reaction to English Use
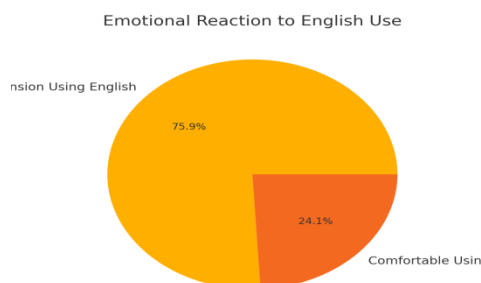
When English was used, 75.9% of respondents said they felt tense or afraid. This large proportion highlights a psychological barrier brought on by the employment of English in multilingual settings. Anxiety is probably brought on by English's perceived complexity and unfamiliarity. Because they are unfamiliar with the main language of instruction, multilingual learners have higher anxiety levels.

Another question was asked: Do you like learning in your native language?

Fig 4
Do you like learning in your native tongue?

Language Preference in Class

Prefer Own Language

62.1%

37.9%

Prefer English
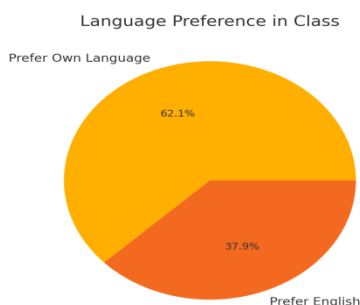
Over two-thirds of interviewees said they would rather learn in their mother tongue. When instruction is in their home tongue, students frequently feel more confident. Learning discomfort results from a mismatch between the preferred language and the language used in instruction. In multilingual ESL classrooms, linguistic incompatibilities are a major source of worry, as indicated by a preference for native language instruction.

Another question was asked: when speaking English, do you experience shyness or self-consciousness?

Fig 5
When speaking English, do you experience shyness or self-consciousness?

Shyness Regarding English Use

Shy About English

62.1%

37.9%

Not Shy
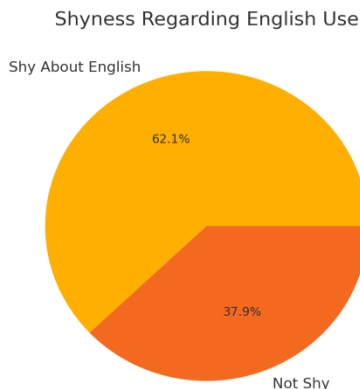
The worry of being judged made the majority of participants feel bashful. Self-consciousness and shyness suggest that sociolinguistic constraints like accents, pronunciation, and peer comparison exacerbate language anxiety in multilingual environments. Language anxiety is largely caused by a lack of confidence and a fear of being judged by others.

Another question is, do you believe that learning is improved in classes with just English instruction**?**

Fig 6
Do you believe that learning is improved in classes with just English instruction?


Preference for English-Only Environment
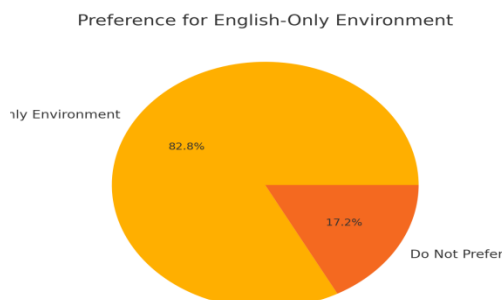
The majority thought that learning environments that primarily used English were more successful. Students appreciated immersive environments in spite of initial signs of uneasiness. This implies a paradox: students recognise the value of utilising English but are afraid of doing so. Students prefer structured English immersion as a way to manage their anxiety because they understand how it helps them become more competent.

Another question was asked: Do you have anxiety when speaking English?

Fig 7
Do you have anxiety when speaking English?

Apprehensiveness in Speaking English
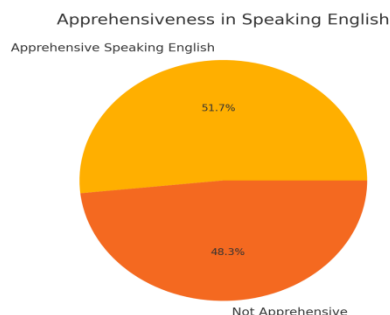
51.7% of respondents acknowledged experiencing anxiety when speaking in English. Emotional discomfort and a decreased inclination to speak are signs of apprehension. This could be the result of a lack of proficiency or confusion with multiple languages. In ESL contexts, multilingual stressors frequently result in communication anxiety.

5. Discussion

5.1. Interpretation of Results

The results of this study unequivocally show that language anxiety among ESL students at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan is significantly correlated with multilingual classroom environments. When forced to talk in English, many students showed anxiety, self-doubt, and avoidance, particularly when surrounded by multilingual peers. Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982), which contends that emotional variables like anxiety and tension can provide a filter that inhibits language input and makes learning more challenging, provides a clear

explanation for this discomfort. Furthermore, communication apprehension and dread of a negative appraisal were highlighted by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as key characteristics of language anxiety. Students' actions, such as being silent, avoiding eye contact, and being reluctant to contribute to English-language discussions, were indicative of this. Many participants thought that, particularly in a multilingual situation, peers with higher language proficiency would assess them more harshly.

It's interesting to note that some bilingual or multilingual pupils also benefited from their linguistic flexibility by using it to improve their expression and comprehension. This supports Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (2001), which contends that first language proficiency can aid second language acquisition. Likewise, translanguaging—the process of transitioning between languages—allows pupils to express themselves more freely, boosting their confidence and lowering their fear, as explained by García & Wei (2014). Accordingly, the study shows that multilingualism has two effects: it can increase anxiety because of social comparison and fear of making a mistake, but it can also lower anxiety because it enables learners to rely on their native tongue for assistance.

5.2. Comparison with Existing Literature

These results align with contemporary research as well as traditional views. Students who experience high levels of worry and low self-esteem are less likely to communicate, according to MacIntyre & Gardner (1994). This pattern was echoed by our participants, particularly those who were afraid of being judged negatively.

5.2.1. Recent studies from 2020 onward provide deeper insight:

According to Li et al. (2022), students' desire to speak is directly impacted by the emotional climate in the classroom. An encouraging multilingual classroom boosts engagement and lowers anxiety. This supports our findings that anxiety is reduced by teacher acceptance of different languages and peer support. The importance of emotional safety and grit in lowering linguistic anxiety was emphasised by Li & Dewaele (2021). Participants' confidence in speaking English was higher when they felt more emotionally safe in a multilingual environment. According to Peng & Liu (2024), sociocultural elements such as linguistic identity and social support significantly influence anxiety related to learning a foreign language. Students in our study who felt linguistically and culturally accepted spoke English with less hesitancy. According to Bozkurt & Aydin (2023), speaking anxiety is reduced by collaborative learning, particularly in in-person multilingual contexts. In a similar vein, several of our participants reported feeling safer and more engaged after engaging in pair or small group activities in their native tongues. According to Chand (2021), undergraduates have the worst language anxiety when they are unpractised and afraid of being criticised. The present findings that dominant language users frequently inadvertently quiet less fluent students are supported by this. Furthermore, translanguaging aids learners in switching between languages to create meaning and reduce anxiety, as highlighted by Sharma & Vyas (2021). This was supported by numerous participants who reported feeling more at ease when permitted to speak in Urdu or their native tongue before expressing themselves in English. Our results were consistent with Resnik & Dewaele's (2021) explanation that a welcoming classroom culture and pleasant teacher behaviour reduce anxiety. Together, these findings support the idea that, depending on how inclusivity and interaction are managed, multilingual classrooms can either increase or decrease anxiety.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Summary of Key Findings

This research was conducted at Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan to find out the impacts of a multilingual classroom environment on language anxiety among ESL learners. Findings indicated that multilingual classrooms can equally increase and decrease anxiety depending on the classroom environment, peer support, and language policies of the institution. Students said that they became more nervous when they were subjected to the harsh English-only norms and apparent linguistic superiority. Conversely, the individuals who found themselves in an encouraging, adaptable, and translanguaging-friendly environment stated that they feel less nervous and more willing to communicate. The current results align with recent studies by Li and Dewaele (2021), Peng and Liu (2024), and Bozkurt and Aydin (2023) as well as such significant frameworks as Affective Filter Hypothesis by Krashen (1982), the FLCAS model by Horwitz et al. (1986), and translanguaging theory (García& Wei, 2014).

6.2. Contributions of the present study

The current study enhances the scant body of research concerning the relationship between multilingualism and language anxiety in Pakistani higher educational contexts. It confirms the validity of the universal aspects of affective factors (motivation, anxiety, classroom emotions, etc.) by linking theoretically developed frameworks (in East Asia and Western settings) with locally specific classroom processes. Moreover, the findings confirm the instructional approaches that consider linguistic repertoires of students as assets, not liabilities, to contribute to existing debates on translanguaging and inclusive ESL education.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should use mixed-method approaches, integrating interviews or classroom observations to capture more complex emotional and sociolinguistic aspects, given the study's quantitative design and narrow institutional emphasis. To generalise results, comparative research across fields, geographical areas, and student demographics is also encouraged. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of digital learning environments, teacher attitudes, and translanguaging techniques on language anxiety might enhance our comprehension of the classroom experiences of multilingual students.

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