



A Psycholinguistic Approach to Arabic Speaking Skills Overcoming Language Anxiety and Enhancing Fluency

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Abstract

Language anxiety remains a significant barrier in second language acquisition, particularly in Arabic speaking skills. This study explores the psycholinguistic factors contributing to language anxiety and their impact on fluency among Arabic learners. Conducted in two educational institutions, Darullughah Wadda'wah and Maktab Mahmud Yan, this research employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative interviews, classroom observations, and focus group discussions. The findings indicate that fear of negative evaluation, lack of exposure, and cognitive overload are the primary causes of language anxiety. Additionally, self-efficacy, inner speech, and structured speaking tasks emerged as critical factors influencing fluency and confidence. Strategies such as mnemonic techniques, guided breathing exercises, and interactive speaking activities were found to significantly reduce anxiety and enhance oral proficiency. This study contributes to the existing literature by offering a psycholinguistic framework that bridges theoretical insights with practical interventions in Arabic language education. Despite its contributions, the study is limited to structured classroom environments, and further research should explore the application of psycholinguistic strategies in informal learning contexts. Future studies should also investigate the role of technology, including AI-driven learning tools, in mitigating language anxiety and promoting fluency. The implications of this research highlight the necessity for educators to adopt student-centered pedagogical approaches that foster confidence and facilitate anxiety-free language learning.

Keywords: *Language Anxiety, Psycholinguistics, Arabic Speaking Proficiency, Self-Efficacy, Mnemonics in Language Learning*

Introduction

The process of acquiring and developing speaking skills in a second or foreign language is often accompanied by various psychological challenges, one of the most

prevalent being language anxiety. This phenomenon affects learners' ability to communicate effectively, impeding fluency and confidence in oral expression. Arabic, as a foreign language, presents unique challenges due to its complex phonetic, syntactic, and morphological structures, making it particularly difficult for non-native learners. In educational contexts, students frequently experience anxiety when speaking Arabic, which negatively influences their linguistic performance and engagement in communicative activities (Khoiroh, 2024). Research in psycholinguistics has explored the cognitive and affective factors affecting second language acquisition, highlighting the role of language anxiety, self-efficacy, and motivation in shaping students' speaking abilities. However, while studies have extensively examined foreign language anxiety in English as a second language (ESL) and other widely taught languages, relatively little attention has been given to the specific case of Arabic speaking skills. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how psycholinguistic strategies can be effectively employed to reduce language anxiety and enhance fluency in Arabic learners.

Despite significant advancements in Arabic language education, many learners struggle with oral proficiency, often citing anxiety as a major barrier to fluent speech. Language anxiety manifests in various forms (Mahmudah & Hanifansyah, 2024), including fear of making mistakes, negative self-perception, and avoidance of speaking activities. Addressing these psychological constraints is crucial for improving students' linguistic competence and overall learning experience.

This study seeks to answer the following research questions: What are the primary causes of language anxiety among Arabic learners? How do psycholinguistic factors influence fluency and confidence in Arabic speaking? What strategies can be implemented to mitigate language anxiety and promote oral proficiency?

By addressing these questions, this study aims to provide evidence-based solutions to enhance Arabic speaking skills through a psycholinguistic framework.

Several studies have explored language anxiety in foreign language learning, particularly in English as a second language (ESL). For instance, Hajiyeva (2024) examined ESL students' anxiety and its impact on linguistic skills (Hajiyeva, 2024), while Wijaya (2023) identified effective strategies to overcome speaking anxiety in an Indonesian EFL context (Wijaya, 2023). Similarly, Alamer & Almulhim (2021) investigated the interrelation between language anxiety and motivation in language learning (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021).

However, limited research has specifically focused on Arabic language anxiety and its relation to psycholinguistic approaches. Studies such as Al-Khresheh (2024), which

explored speaking proficiency enhancement through presentation-based activities, provide some insights but do not explicitly integrate psycholinguistic strategies (Al-khresheh, 2024). Additionally, research by Zhou et al. (2023) emphasized the role of anxiety in second language communication but did not address Arabic learners' unique challenges (Zhou et al., 2023).

This study contributes to the literature by bridging the gap between psycholinguistics, language anxiety, and Arabic oral proficiency. It offers a comprehensive analysis of how cognitive and affective strategies can be employed to foster confidence and fluency in Arabic learners, thereby providing practical implications for educators and language policy makers.

This research focuses on university students learning Arabic as a foreign language, particularly those experiencing moderate to high levels of language anxiety. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys to measure anxiety levels and qualitative interviews to explore learners' perceptions and coping mechanisms. While the study provides valuable insights into psycholinguistic interventions, it is limited to formal classroom settings and may not fully account for informal language learning contexts.

The findings of this study hold significant implications for Arabic language educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers. By identifying effective strategies to reduce anxiety and enhance fluency, this research can contribute to more student-centered pedagogical approaches that foster positive learning experiences and improved oral communication skills.

In sum, this study aims to deepen our understanding of language anxiety in Arabic speaking skills and offer psycholinguistic-based strategies to enhance fluency and confidence. By addressing a critical research gap, it seeks to advance both theoretical and practical knowledge in Arabic language education, paving the way for more effective and anxiety-free learning environments.

Method

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach to explore the psychological and linguistic factors influencing Arabic speaking skills (Creswell & Creswell, 2020). The research is guided by psycholinguistic theories that emphasize cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors in second language acquisition. The mixed-methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of language anxiety and fluency enhancement strategies. The study follows a convergent parallel design, where qualitative and quantitative data

are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then merged for interpretation. This approach ensures a well-rounded perspective on how psycholinguistic strategies affect Arabic language learning.

The study investigates two groups of learners: 30 students from Darullughah Wadda'wah and 30 students from Maktab Mahmud Yan Malaysia. These institutions were selected due to their structured Arabic language curricula and emphasis on spoken proficiency. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, ensuring they represented varying degrees of speaking anxiety and proficiency levels in Arabic. Data Collection Methods included both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data were collected through survey instruments to assess students' language anxiety levels using a Likert scale based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and speech fluency assessments to measure fluency, pronunciation accuracy, and confidence levels before and after interventions. Qualitative data were gathered through semi-structured interviews (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021), where students discussed their perceived anxiety triggers, self-efficacy, and coping mechanisms, classroom observations to monitor real-time responses to speaking activities (Denaro et al., 2021), and focus group discussions with Arabic instructors to gather insights into effective teaching strategies to mitigate anxiety (Candra Susanto et al., 2024).

Data Analysis was conducted through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative analysis used descriptive and inferential statistics, with correlations tested via SPSS software. Qualitative analysis applied thematic analysis to identify patterns in students' responses, anxiety experiences, and effective psycholinguistic interventions. Triangulation was applied by comparing findings from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations to ensure validity and reliability. Despite its contributions, the study is limited to formal classroom settings and may not fully account for informal language learning contexts. Future research should examine long-term implementation and effectiveness across diverse learner demographics, including younger students and self-taught learners.

Result and Discussion

Causes of Language Anxiety Among Arabic Learners

The analysis of qualitative interviews and classroom observations revealed that Arabic learners experience language anxiety due to several primary factors. The fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation was a dominant concern, with 78% of students expressing anxiety about being judged by peers and instructors for

pronunciation errors or grammatical mistakes. A student from Darullughah Wadda'wah shared that they often chose silence over speaking for fear of being laughed at: *"I always hesitate before speaking because I am afraid of making mistakes and being embarrassed in front of my classmates."* Additionally, lack of exposure and limited practice opportunities contributed significantly, as 65% of respondents reported insufficient speaking practice in daily life, leading to low confidence in spontaneous speech. One student from Maktab Mahmud Yan noted: "I can read and understand Arabic texts well, but when I try to speak, my mind goes blank, and I struggle to form sentences." Furthermore, cognitive overload and processing difficulties affected 72% of students, who found Arabic phonetics, morphology, and syntax particularly challenging. Observations showed that students frequently hesitated or repeated words when forming sentences, reflecting cognitive strain. These findings align with previous research on foreign language anxiety, such as Hajiyeva et al. (2023), who identified similar issues in ESL learners. However, Arabic learners face additional phonological and morphological complexities, as highlighted by Al-Khresheh (2024). The results emphasize the need for structured support to reduce anxiety, particularly through increased exposure and guided practice.

Influence of Psycholinguistic Factors on Fluency and Confidence

Examining the influence of psycholinguistic factors on fluency and confidence, the study found that self-efficacy played a crucial role in overcoming anxiety. Students who exhibited higher self-efficacy demonstrated better speaking performance, with 82% of them engaging actively in interactive speaking tasks and showing reduced hesitation. A student explained: "I used to avoid speaking Arabic because I doubted my ability, but after practicing self-affirmation and participating in more discussions, I became more confident." The role of inner speech and mental rehearsal was also notable, as 60% of students reported that mentally rehearsing sentences before speaking helped alleviate anxiety. A student from Darullughah Wadda'wah explained: *"Before speaking, I rehearse my sentences in my mind. This technique helps me organize my thoughts and speak more fluently."* Moreover, the emotional state of students significantly impacted speech production, with those experiencing high anxiety producing shorter and less complex sentences. Classroom observations indicated that positive reinforcement from instructors led to noticeable improvements in fluency. These findings reinforce psycholinguistic theories, particularly those related to self-efficacy and inner speech, as suggested by Zhou et al. (2023). Prior studies indicate that inner speech enhances language planning, leading to smoother spoken

output (Alamer & Almulhim, 2021). The present study builds on these insights by demonstrating that targeted interventions, such as structured self-talk exercises, can enhance fluency in Arabic learners.

Strategies to Mitigate Language Anxiety and Promote Oral Proficiency

To mitigate language anxiety and promote oral proficiency, several effective strategies emerged from qualitative data and classroom interventions. The use of mnemonics and formulaic expressions significantly improved confidence, with 70% of students reporting better speech fluency when relying on pre-learned Arabic phrases. One student shared: "Memorizing key phrases gives me a sense of security when speaking, I don't have to construct sentences from scratch every time, which makes me feel more confident." Interactive speaking activities, including role-play and discussion-based exercises, led to a 30% increase in participation rates. Observations indicated that students engaged more willingly in speaking tasks when structured in a supportive and non-threatening environment. Additionally, cognitive restructuring and anxiety management techniques, such as guided breathing exercises before speaking tasks, helped 55% of students reduce anxiety. A student noted: *"Before an oral test, I practice deep breathing to calm my nerves, and it really helps me focus on my speech."* Positive self-talk and instructor encouragement further contributed to increased fluency over time. These strategies align with best practices identified in previous studies on anxiety reduction in second language learning, such as Wijaya (2023). While research in ESL contexts has demonstrated the effectiveness of structured speaking tasks, this study uniquely highlights the value of psycholinguistic approaches in Arabic learning, particularly the integration of formulaic expressions and inner speech techniques.

In conclusion, this study underscores the significant role of psycholinguistic factors in shaping Arabic learners' speaking skills. The findings suggest that targeted interventions addressing self-efficacy, structured exposure, and anxiety management can effectively enhance fluency and confidence. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to measure the sustained impact of these strategies in different learning environments.

The study gathered quantitative data from 60 students—30 from Darullughah Wadda'wah (Indonesia) and 30 from Maktab Mahmud Yan (Malaysia)—to measure the impact of psycholinguistic interventions on Arabic speaking skills. Language anxiety levels were assessed using a modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which employs a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Prior to any intervention, over 65% of participants indicated moderate-to-high anxiety (mean FLCAS score = 3.86, SD = 0.74), primarily driven by fear of

negative evaluation (78%) and insufficient exposure to spoken Arabic (65%). Cognitive overload due to Arabic's phonological and morphological complexity also emerged as a salient stressor (72%). These anxiety factors led to frequent speech pauses, reduced complexity of utterances, and diminished confidence in spontaneous speaking tasks.

Following a series of targeted interventions—ranging from mnemonic techniques to guided breathing exercises—both the fluency assessment scores and FLCAS measures showed notable improvement. A paired-samples t-test indicated that the difference between pre- and post-intervention FLCAS scores was statistically significant ($t(59) = 5.73, p < .001$), with the average anxiety level decreasing from 3.86 ($SD = 0.74$) to 3.12 ($SD = 0.62$). In tandem, fluency metrics (such as words per minute, reduced hesitation, and clarity of speech) improved significantly: 70% of students reported greater ease in initiating conversations after learning formulaic expressions, and 60% emphasized mental rehearsal (inner speech) as a key factor in reducing communication apprehension. Classroom observations confirmed a 30% rise in active participation during role-play activities, while 55% of students found that deep breathing and cognitive restructuring lessened their anxiety during oral evaluations.

These quantitative results underscore the substantial impact of psycholinguistic strategies on lowering language anxiety and boosting oral proficiency. Students who reported higher levels of self-efficacy (82% of the sample) engaged more confidently in Arabic-speaking tasks, suggesting a strong link between psychological readiness and language performance. Altogether, the statistical outcomes point to the efficacy of an integrated approach—combining anxiety management, mnemonic support, and encouraging instructor feedback—in creating a more humanistic and confidence-building learning environment for Arabic language learners.

Moreover, a deeper look into the correlations between self-efficacy, speaking accuracy, and long-term language retention underscores the potential for more advanced analytical methods—such as structural equation modeling—to further validate the efficacy of these psycholinguistic interventions (De Bree & Zee, 2021; Fathi et al., 2024; Shang & Ma, 2024; Zhang, 2024). By employing large-scale datasets or longitudinal tracking of learners' speaking outcomes, future studies could disentangle the relative contribution of each anxiety-reduction strategy (e.g., mnemonic devices, guided breathing) to overall fluency gains. Such an approach would also enable researchers to identify how individual learner differences—such as personality traits or prior linguistic background—moderate the impact of targeted interventions (Bos et al., 2024; Fjermestad et al., 2025; Martin et al., 2021; Tsang,

2022). Integrating emerging technologies like AI-driven speech-recognition tools could facilitate real-time feedback on pronunciation and error correction, thereby offering a more personalized and adaptive learning environment. In doing so, this line of inquiry would not only refine our understanding of how to mitigate language anxiety in Arabic classrooms but also help align psycholinguistic theory with innovative, learner-centered pedagogy in second language acquisition.

This study highlights the significant role of psycholinguistic factors in influencing Arabic learners' speaking skills. The findings emphasize that language anxiety remains a crucial barrier to fluency, influenced by factors such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of practice, and cognitive overload. By integrating self-efficacy, inner speech techniques, and structured speaking strategies, learners can overcome these challenges and develop greater oral proficiency. Additionally, the use of targeted anxiety-reducing interventions, such as breathing exercises and positive reinforcement, proved effective in improving students' confidence and speech fluency. These results provide practical implications for educators, suggesting that a supportive and structured learning environment can significantly enhance students' Arabic speaking abilities.

Despite these contributions, this study has certain limitations. The research primarily focused on university students within structured academic settings, potentially limiting the generalizability of findings to informal learning contexts or younger learners. Future research should explore longitudinal studies to measure the long-term effectiveness of psycholinguistic interventions across diverse learner demographics. Additionally, investigating the role of technology and AI-assisted learning tools in reducing language anxiety could provide valuable insights for enhancing Arabic language instruction in modern educational frameworks.

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