Tabaran Institute of Higher Education
International Journal of Language Testing
Vol. 11, No. 1, March 2021
ISSN 2476-5880

EFL Student'' Evaluation Apprehension and their Academic Achievement, Gender, and Educational level: Towards Designing and Validating a Comprehensive Scale

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Received: 4 December 2020 Accepted: 31 January 2021

Abstract
Student evaluation apprehension as one of the detrimental factors in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context, reduces and gradually diminishes student participation in classroom activities, since learners are mostly concerned with how others (teacher and classmates) evaluate/judge their performance. Due to the fact that the studies considering the important role of student evaluation apprehension are scarce in number, this study was conducted to validate the newly-designed questionnaire via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and find the relationship between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement, gender, and educational level of 258 EFL students. The results from EFA, CFA, and reliability analyses revealed that the new questionnaire is a valid and reliable instrument measuring EFL students' evaluation apprehension. Moreover, a significant negative correlation was observed between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement. Besides, it was found that females experience evaluation apprehension more than males, and BA students were also found to have more evaluation apprehension than their MA counterparts.

Keywords: evaluation apprehension; EFL students; academic achievement; EFA; CFA

1. Introduction

Evaluation apprehension theory proposed by Cottrell (1972) refers to the scrutiny of individuals' performance while they work in groups considering the fact that those who perform in front of others have a concern about others' evaluations. Humans quickly learn that social rewards (e.g., approval) and punishments (e.g., disapproval) received from other people are due to their evaluations which in turn modulate individuals' arousal. Evaluation apprehension is an active, anxiety-toned fear that the subject tries to win a positive evaluation from the experimenter, or at least provide no grounds for a negative one (Rosenberg, 1965).

Cottrell, Wack, Sekerak, and Rittle (1968) found that individuals may encounter evaluation apprehension when they are involved in groups in which negative stereotypes are common. They clarify their contention by giving an example: women who take a math test may not perform to their full capability, since there are stereotyped beliefs about women's problems with mathematics. In this regard, evaluation apprehension may be called stereotype threat.

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Though, the difference between the two concepts lies within the privacy or presence of others; while the former can only occur in the presence of others, the latter may happen in private.

Moreover, according to Weber and Cook (1972), evaluation apprehension affects individuals' behavior in psychological experiments and leads to invalid casual interference. Hence, participants have displayed quicker conditioning in conditioning research and conformed less in conformity studies in order to reserve helpful self-presentation. Studies on evaluation apprehension have also revealed that when individuals are supposed to make a choice, they are highly anxious about "presenting themselves in a favorable light". This concept is known as the good subject role or apprehensive hypothesis. In addition, the concern for having a confident presentation comprises the willingness of presenting the preferred and well-adjusted response on the social basis which refers to the social desirability concept.

Tzounopoulos (2016) in her study aimed at exploring the main sources of fear and anxiety regarding negative evaluation in universities. It was found that teachers' questions and corrections, fear of tests, and communication apprehension towards native speakers, peers, and teachers are among the major stressors which in turn reduce student language performance.

Anxiety vs. Evaluation Apprehension

Anxiety is the feeling of apprehension, nervousness, and discomfort, usually about a forthcoming occurrence or an event with indeterminate outcomes. On the other hand, apprehension is defined as the anxiety or fear that something bad or unpleasant will happen. In other words, individuals anticipate something with anxiety. At large, anxiety can be regarded as a personal feeling of tension and worry along with a provocation of the independent nervous structure (Spielberger, Anton & Bedell 1976, as cited in Tzounopoulos, 2016, p. 823). It can be classified into three categories of the trait (manifests in a variety of situations), state (experienced at certain moments), and situation-specific (happens under specific circumstances) anxiety (Spielberger et al. 1976). On this basis, the anxiety in language learning is classified as situation-specific (MacIntyre, 1999). Second/ foreign language anxiety, has been among the most researched areas in the last two decades, since it is a debilitating factor in the process of language learning (e.g, Jannati & Estaji, 2015; Maute, & Abadiano, 2020; Tzounopoulos, 2016). However, recent research distinguishes language learning anxiety from other forms of anxiety and it is not suggested to consider it only in terms of general anxiety measures (Ellis, 2008; MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner 1989).

In spite of numerous studies on the concept of anxiety, it seems that more investigations are needed to explore student evaluation apprehension especially in an EFL context where students are supposed to speak and read in English. Some learners are concerned with their teacher's and peers' negative judgments which may affect their performance negatively. Hence, the researchers of the present study found the gap and decided to design a scale to measure EFL students' evaluation apprehension and find its as. ociation with three demographic variables.

2. Literature Review

In the last two decades, the notion of second /foreign language anxiety has been scrutinized by many researchers (Horwitz, 2010). However, language learning anxiety is not limited to what

general anxiety measures suggest and as evidence has proven it is different from other anxiety forms (Ellis 2008; MacIntyre 1999; MacIntyre & Gardner 1989).

Various studies have been conducted to investigate students' anxiety with regard to different skills. Zoannopoulou (2016), for instance, explored the major sources of language anxiety. To do so, a sample of Greek university students' language performance was analyzed and finally it was found that the main stressors are peersand native speakers, teachers' questions and corrections, communication apprehension felt toward teachers, fear of tests, and speaking in class. A negative correlation was also found among language performance, anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Other studies have found the same results (e.g., Aida 1994; Cheng et al. 1999; Sellers 2000).

As Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) have stated, foreign language anxiety is associated with performance evaluation in an academic or social context. Thus, three performance anxieties include fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. Communication apprehension is highly related to foreign language anxiety. It is a type of inhibition and fear of interacting with other people playing a crucial role in foreign language anxiety, since students are supposed to interact in a language class and their performance is constantly monitored. Test-anxiety, on the other hand, comes from a fear of failure. Those who face test anxiety believe that anything other than a flawless performance in a test is failure. In other words, students perceive success as a perfect presentation reflected on a test without which they feel nervous. In this regard, oral tests can be considered as both oral and test communication anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation as its name suggests, is also the anxiety about others' judgments and the ways to avoid negative evaluations. Hence, fear of negative evaluation is more comprehensive in scope than anxiety, since it is not restricted to merely test situations but can happen in all social circumstances like speaking in a foreign language class or interviewing for a job (Horwitz et al, 1986).

In a similar vein, findings from previous studies have indicated that there is a significant association between fear of negative evaluation and communication anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner 1989). Speaking in front of others (Koch & Terrell, 1991) and committing verbal or pronunciation errors, teachers' beliefs, students' self-perceptions towards the level of language courses, skills, and proficiency (Price, 1991; Young, 1991) are among other sources of sources for not participating in classroom activities all of which are in close relationship to evaluation apprehension.

Another study investigated the oral communication apprehension in addressing fear of public speaking. To do so, apprehension levels of 291 accounting and finance students were measured. The results of the study revealed that one in four, five or maybe six students in a class is highly apprehensive which means doing a presentation can be extremely difficult. Moreover, up to 3% of a class may have a maximum oral apprehension score who are unable to complete a presentation. Very apprehensive students can also be helped by individual and group training, assistance from a counsellor, a speech therapist, and doing short presentations in a very supportive atmosphere with positive feedback. Therefore, each class contains a number of high oral apprehensive students needing a supportive atmosphere to help them to learn and communicate with others (Shanahan, 2012).

In line with previous studies, Joo and Damron (2015) aimed at examining foreign language reading anxiety among college students studying Korean. The findings of the study revealed that reading anxiety and performance are negatively connected. It was also established that the major sources of foreign language reading anxiety include learning new symbols, remembering the meaning, lack of cultural knowledge, and having preferences towards speaking and listening, but not reading.

Rafeka, et al (2014) have also investigated the differences of communication apprehension in second language learning between male and female university learners. The results illustrated that female students encounter more anxiety than their male counterparts. Apart from that, due to peers and lecturer's undesirable evaluations in the processaof learning, language students were found to suffer from the negative feeling of anxiety.

Another study investigated the factors contributing to communication apprehension of English language learners in Malaysia. To do so, 49 pre-university students completed a questionnaire along with being semi-structured interviewed. The findings of the study indicated that students did not like group discussions in English. They were also unprepared and ignorant of the performance organization, displayed nervousness while presenting in front of others of the opposite sex, and were not self-assured regarding their English pronunciation (Tom, Johari, Rozaimi, & Huzaimah, 2013).

In a similar fashion, a study aimed at evaluating the relationships among students' fulfilment, addiction, requirements, communication apprehension, drives, and uses of Snapchat. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant association between participants' needs for Snapchat addiction and intensity. Besides, there is a connection between participants' needs and communication apprehension (Carter, Cruz, & Wrench, 2017). Besides, Edwards, and Edwards (2014) have supported the positive association between students' concerns before their performance and their levels of evaluation apprehension. The authors also contended that students whose performance was supposed to be evaluated by the teacher for a grade reported a greater amount of concern than those whose speech was not being evaluated for a grade (Edwards & Edwards, 2014).

Another study was an attempt to examine a model of how beliefs of students' writing, self-efficacy, apprehension, and performance are related to each other. It was found that students' beliefs of writing are related to their self-efficacy, apprehension, and performance as well as their grades for their written work. Moreover, participants with high writing self-efficacy experienced lower apprehension and enjoyed the writing process more than others (Reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman, 2014).

Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, and Hosseini Fatemi (2019) conducted an interdisciplinary review on the concept of student evaluation apprehension. The studies were classified into Second/Foreign Language Learning, Accounting and Finance, Medicine, and miscellaneous disciplines. The results of the study indicated that there are many determinants (e.g., teachers, peers, low grades) and ramifications (e.g., poor performance, lack of participation, lack of willingness to interact) of student apprehension (Jahedizadeh et al., 2019).

According to the above-mentioned background of students' evaluation apprehension and its negative effects on individuals' performance and success, and due to the fact that the

instruments used to evaluate students' evaluation apprehension in previous studies might have been used in different contexts, it seems essential to design a specific questionnaire whose items are all related to a language learning context. Consequently, the present study, aims at validating a newly-designed questionnaire on the one hand, and using the validated questionnaire to explore the association between Iranian EFL students' evaluation apprehension and their academic achievement, gender, and educational level on the other hand within a single framework.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and Setting

Two hundred fifty-eight (258) Iranian university and private institute students participated in this study (197 females and 61 males). They were 16 to 49 years old (M = 24.6, SD = 7.07). They were diploma, BA, and MA students (diploma= 94, BA= 97, MA= 67). Moreover, participants from the university were studying translation and English Teaching in Mashhad, a city in Iran.

3.2. Instrumentation

To assess EFL students' evaluation apprehension, a questionnaire was designed. To do so, the existing theoretical frameworks of relevant constructs were scrutinized. Some items of the instrument were reproduced from the *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* (Horwitz et al., 1986) with an alpha coefficient of .93 that demonstrates the internal reliability of the scale. "The items presented are reflective of communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 129). Some of the items were retrieved from the Personal Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA-24), designed by (McCroskey, 1982) which is based on four major communication contexts including "public speaking, speaking in small groups, speaking in meetings, and speaking in dyads" (McCroskey, Beatty, Kearney, & Plax, 1985, p. 167). In other words, communication apprehension always happens via a communication process in which speaking is the most common event (Richmond, McCroskey, Davis, & Koontz, 1980).

On this basis, one of the dimensions of evaluation apprehension (*Participation in Classroom Discussions/Q and A Exchanges*) was emerged to emphasize that communication apprehension is a part of evaluation apprehension that may be experienced through interactions. However, evaluation apprehension is beyond communication situations in which individuals are generally concerned with others' judgments. In the context of EFL learning, students are mainly concerned about their accent, pronunciation, intonation, and stress (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Littlewood, 1984; Tejeda & Santos, 2014). This concern may have been caused by the fact that EFL students perceive productive skills as the most important abilities they should master (Al Hosni, 2014; Celce-Murcia, 2001). Hence, the other two aspects of foreign language classrooms (reading and lectures) formed the other two dimensions of SEAS (*Reading Commotion and Classroom Presentation*).

Consequently, twenty items measuring the three aspects of evaluation apprehension (reading commotion, presentation in the classroom, and participation in classroom discussions/ question and answer exchanges) were designed. The items are answered on a five-point scale from 1 ("definitely disagree") to 5 ("definitely agree"); for example, "If I read a text for myself I don't have any problem, but if I am supposed to read it aloud in class I become really anxious" (reading commotion), "When I am supposed to present a lecture in front of the class I become very stressful even if I am totally prepared" (presentation in the classroom), and "When my teacher is teaching and a question comes to my mind I hesitate to ask it, since I believe that others will judge me as a stupid student.." (participation in classroom discussions/ question and answer exchanges) (See appendix).

3.3. Procedure

Participants were asked to answer the EFL Student Evaluation Apprehension Scale (SEAS) in an online format. In effect, in order to easily distribute and collect data, students were provided with the web address of the questionnaire. By using an online survey, more students could get access to the questionnaire which was translated into Persian and did not necessitate any explanation presented by the researcher. They were also asked to mention demographic information such as gender, age, proficiency, and educational level.

4. Results

The first phase of the present study comprised a series of different stages to design and validate the Persian EFL student evaluation apprehension scale (SEAS). Once the items were written, a group of experts evaluated the comprehensiveness and clarity of the items which led to a more refined version of the instrument. Then, the questionnaire was used to assess the evaluation apprehension of the participants.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics of EFL students' evaluation apprehension comprising three components. Throughout this study, RC stands for reading commotion, PC for presentation consternation, and PIC for participation in classroom discussions/ question and answer exchanges.

As the Table shows, among the comprising factors of evaluation apprehension, reading commotion (*M*=20.25, *SD*=6.79) has the highest mean followed by participation in Classroom Discussions (*M*=18.89, *SD*=6.14). Classroom presentation (*M*=15.94, *SD*=5.74) receives the lowest mean score.

Table 1.
Descriptive Statistics of the Comprising Factors of Student Evaluation Apprehension.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
RC	258	7.00	35.00	20.25	6.79
PC	257	6.00	30.00	15.94	5.74
PIC	258	7.00	35.00	18.89	6.1
Valid N (listwise)	257				

ISSN 2476-5880

In order to evaluate the validity of the scale, exploratory factor analysis was performed. Therefore, in order to confirm that the data set is appropriate for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of Sampling Adequacy was employed. The KMO value of .6 and above as well as Barlett's Test of Sphericity value of .05 and below are indicators of sample adequacy. As it can be seen in Table 2, the KMO value is .922, and Bartlett's test is significant (p = .000), therefore the selected sample in this study was suitable for factor analysis.

Table 2.
KMO and Bartlett's Test.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.92
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2771.42
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

Table 3 shows the total variance explained. This table is used to determine how many components (factors) to extract. Only components having an eigenvalue of 1 or more should be considered in the scale. According to the column labeled Initial Eigenvalues, only the first three components have eigenvalues above 1 (9.03, 1.52, 1.11) all of which explain a total of 58.38 percent of the variance (The factors with initial eigenvalues lower than one were removed to save space).

Table 3.
Total Variance Explained.

	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
Component	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	9.03	45.17	45.17	9.03	45.17	45.17	4.28	21.44	21.44
2	1.52	7.63	52.81	1.52	7.63	52.81	3.88	19.40	40.85
3	1.11	5.57	58.38	1.11	5.57	58.38	3.50	17.53	58.38

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

As can be seen in Table 3, the initial eigenvalues of all three extracted values are one or higher. Kaiser (1958) has recommended to stop extracting factors if the eigenvalue is one. Other researchers, however, advocate the employment of scree plots to choose from the extracted factors (cited in Khodadady, Farokh Alaee, & Natanzi, 2011). Scree plots demonstrate the diagram of eigenvalues and the natural bend where the curve flattens out is spotted to retain the factors which are above the bend (Costello & Osborne 2005). Figure 1 illustrates the scree plot of the extracted factors in the present study. As can be seen, a change (elbow) is shaped above point four. Only the components above this point should be retained (Pallant, 2007). In figure 1, components 1 to 3 explain much more of the variance than the other components.

ISSN 2476-5880

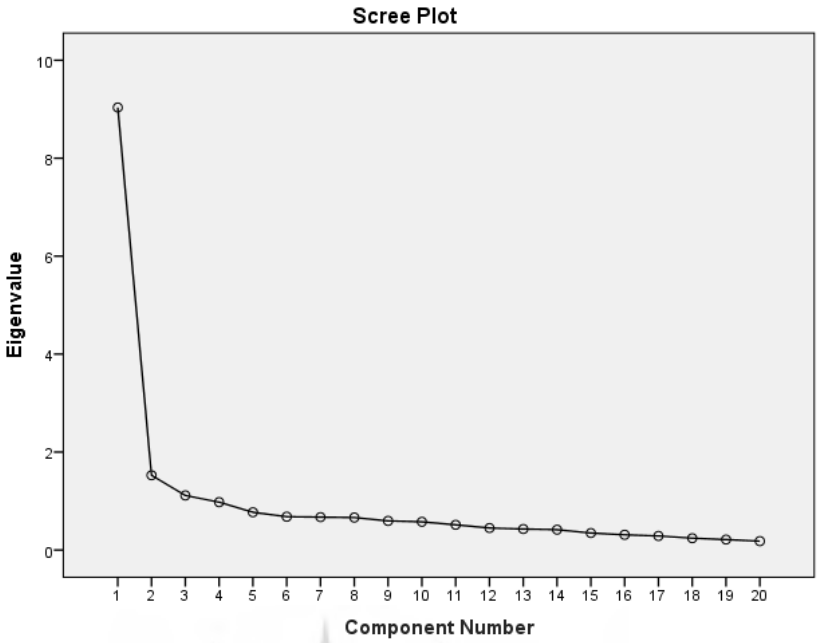


Figure 1. Scree plot of 3 extracted factors.

Table 4 represents the rotated component matrix in order to see the rotated loadings of each item individually on the three components. As can be seen, the majority of the items load quite strongly (above .4) on the three components. Items 1 to 7 load on the first component (.73, .80, .73, .73, .42, .63, .63), items 8 to 13 load on the second component (.70, .71, .59, .68, .63, .61), and items 14 to 20 load on the third component (.79, .78, .77, .51, .60, .44, .45).

Table 4.
Rotated Component Matrix.

Items		Component 1	Component 2	Component 3	Items	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
	APP1	.739	.169	.272	APP11	.150	.684	.239
	APP2	.803	.198	.212	APP12	.328	.639	.203
	APP3	.735	.247	.228	APP13	.294	.617	.292
	APP4	.737	.360	.067	APP14	.234	.152	.792
	APP5	.424	.162	.339	APP15	.215	.214	.785
	APP6	.639	.327	.201	APP16	.183	.306	.773
	APP7	.636	.251	.304	APP17	.406	.267	.512
	APP8	.326	.700	.280	APP18	.241	.318	.606
	APP9	.294	.717	.247	APP19	.002	.413	.441
0	APP1	.074	.596	.523	APP20	.281	.305	.451

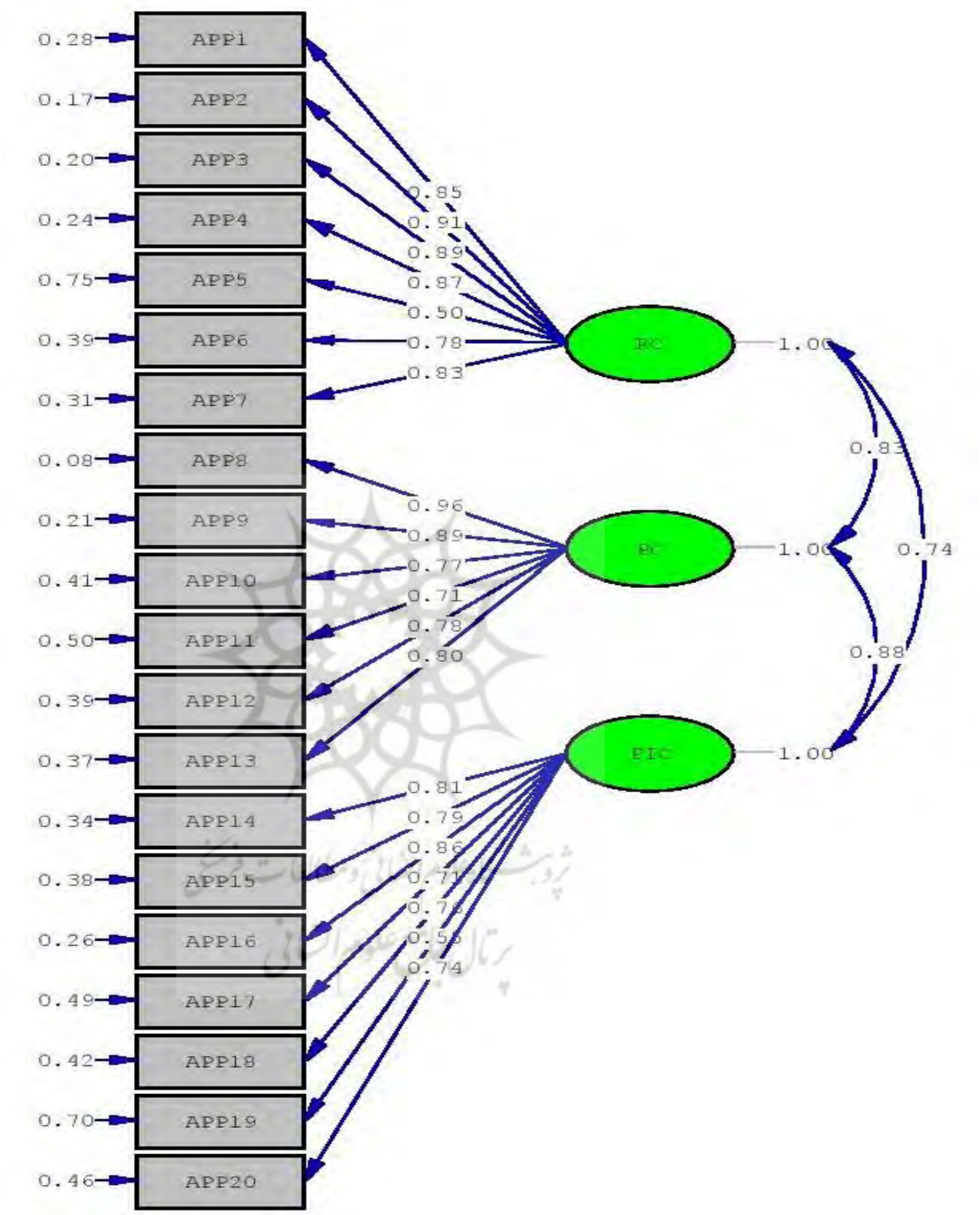
The results of exploratory factor analysis revealed that all twenty items load on their relevant components (items 1 to 7: RC, items 8 to 13: PC, and items 14 to 20: PIC). In order to ensure the suitability of the questionnaire items, a confirmatory factor analysis via the LISREL 8.50 statistical package was run. Throughout this study, RC stands for reading commotion, PC for presentation in the classroom, PIC for participation in class discussions, and APP for evaluation apprehension.

The model consisted of three factors: reading commotion (7 items), presentation consternation (6 items), and participation in classroom discussions/ question and answer exchanges (7 items). A number of indices were estimated to inspect the model fit, including the chi square/*df* ratio (lower than 2 or 3), the normed fit index (NFI), the good fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI)**,** and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) of about .06 or .08 (Schreiber, Amaury, Stage, Barlow, & King, 2006). The structural model is illustrated in Figure1. As demonstrated by Fig. 2, the $\chi 2$ value (1771.25), the df ratio (647), NFI (.91), and CFI (.92) all reached the satisfactory fit thresholds. The two fit indices that did not meet the acceptable fit thresholds (GFI = 0.68 and RMSEA = .015) were below those thresholds. However, in a structural model it is ordinary to have some indices which do not follow the majority trend (Tseng et al., 2006). Thus, the proposed model has a good general fit with the empirical data.

The index on the lines is also the indicator of standardized estimates. This is the standardized coefficient *())* demonstrating the factor loading of items regarding the corresponding factor which presents the effect size. Accordingly, the closer the magnitude to 1.0, the greater the factor loading of items and the higher the correlation is. On the other hand, the magnitude of lower than 0.30 is a sign of weak factor loading which paves the way towards revising or discarding the item.

The *t*-value of each item is demonstrated in table 5. If the *t*-value (t); if $t > 2$ or $t < -2$, the result is said to be statistically significant. As both indices demonstrate, all the items present accepted factor loadings with *t*-values higher than 2 and β indices greater than 0.50.

ISSN 2476-5880



$\chi 2$= 1771.25, *df*= 647, *RMSEA*=. 015, *GFI*=.68, *NFI*=.91, *CFI*=.92

Figure 2. The schematic representation of evaluation apprehension and its comprising factors.

ISSN 2476-5880

Table 5.
Summary of the Standardized Loadings.

Observed Variable	Latent Variable	*t*-value	Observed Variable	Latent Variable	*t*-value
APP1	RC	18.45	APP11	PC	14.26
APP2	RC	20.88	APP12	PC	16.39
APP3	RC	20.12	APP13	PC	16.85
APP4	RC	19.38	APP14	PIC	17.22
APP5	RC	9.23	APP15	PIC	16.30
APP6	RC	16.31	APP16	PIC	18.72
APP7	RC	17.91	APP17	PIC	14.28
APP8	PC	22.85	APP18	PIC	15.64
APP9	PC	20.00	APP19	PIC	10.28
APP10	PC	16.03	APP20	PIC	14.86

The convergent validity of the three-factor model was then estimated through correlation between factors. Table 6 below illustrates the results.

Table 6.
The Correlation Coefficients among Evaluation Apprehension Components.

	RC	PC	PIC
1. RC	1.00		
2. PC	.68**	1.00	
3. PIC	.71**	.76**	1.00

**Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05

As the Table shows, the model with the best fit confirmed inter-correlation between the scales in which PC and PIC have the highest correlation (r=.76, p<0.05).

The reliability of the questionnaire found via Cronbach's alpha was .86.

To scrutinize the association between students' evaluation apprehension and academic achievement (GPA), a Pearson product-moment correlation was run. Descriptive statistics of students' academic achievement are as follows: *minimum*= 12, *maximum*= 19.92, *mean*= 17.36, and *SD*= 1.47.

The correlation coefficients between EFL learners' evaluation apprehension and academic achievement (GPA) can be seen in Table 7. As can be seen, there is a significant negative correlation between each component of evaluation apprehension and student GPA as well as between the total apprehension and student academic achievement.

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Table 7.
The Correlation Coefficients Between Evaluation Apprehension and its Components and GPA.

	RC	PC	PIC	APP
GPA	-.15*	-.19**	-.23**	-.22**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To see whether students' evaluation apprehension differs significantly between genders, an independent-samples *t*- test was utilized. Table 8 presents descriptive statistics of students' evaluation apprehension across males and females.

Table 8.
Descriptive Statistics of Evaluation Apprehension across Male and Female Students.

	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
RC	1.00	61	18.11	6.3	.81
	2.00	197	20.91	6.80	.48
PC	1.00	61	14.03	4.56	.58
	2.00	196	16.53	5.95	.42
PIC	1.00	61	16.60	4.49	.57
	2.00	197	19.60	6.42	.45
total	1.00	61	48.75	13.61	1.74
	2.00	196	56.97	17.24	1.23

As the Table indicates, male and female students' scores on evaluation apprehension are quite different from each other. Table 9 is the results of the independent-samples *t*- test among the participants of the two groups.

Table 9.
Independent-Samples T-Test Displaying the Results of Gender Differences.

	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
RC	-2.85	256	.005	-2.80	.98
PC	-3.01	255	.003	-2.50	.82
PIC	-3.39	256	.001	-2.99	.88
APP	-3.40	255	.001	-8.22	2.41

As the table demonstrates, there is a statistically significant difference between males and females on evaluation apprehension and its components.

ISSN 2476-5880

Identical analysis was conducted regarding the role of educational level in each evaluation apprehension components. The participants were classified into three groups: Group 1 who held a Diploma or were high school students, Group 2 who had a BA degree or were BA students, and Group 3 who held an MA deserve or were MA students. Table 10 displays the results of the *ANOVA* test for the three groups.

Table 10.
The Results of ANOVA for Determining Differences Among the Three Groups.

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
RC	Between Groups	396.41	2	198.20	4.40	.013
	Within Groups	11462.70	255	44.95		
	Total	11859.11	257			
PC	Between Groups	426.21	2	213.10	6.73	.001
	Within Groups	8035.91	254	31.63		
	Total	8462.12	256			
PIC	Between Groups	485.96	2	242.98	6.71	.001
	Within Groups	9230.21	255	36.19		
	Total	9716.17	257			
APP	Between Groups	4061.03	2	2030.51	7.56	.001
	Within Groups	68184.82	254	268.44		
	Total	72245.86	256			

As Table 10 indicates, significant differences can be observed among the three groups regarding the three evaluation apprehension components.

The *ANOVA* analysis revealed that among the three constructs of evaluation apprehension, there is a difference somewhere among the means, however the particular location of differences is not clear. Consequently, in order to locate the exact place of differences, a *post-hoc* comparison of the means was run for the three dimensions. To do so, a Scheffe's test was utilized. Table 11 shows the results of Scheffe's test.

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Table 11.
Teeccœeffess Test for Determining the Location of Difference across the Three Groups.

Dependent Variable	(I) educationallevel	(J) educationallevel	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
RC	1.00	2.00	-1.12	.97	.513
		3.00	2.03	1.07	.168
	2.00	1.00	1.12	.97	.513
		3.00	3.15*	1.06	.013
	3.00	1.00	-2.03	1.07	.168
		2.00	-3.15*	1.06	.013
PC	1.00	2.00	-1.2	.81	.305
		3.00	2.03	.90	.081
	2.00	1.00	1.25	.81	.305
		3.00	3.29*	.89	.001
	3.00	1.00	-2.03	.90	.081
		2.00	-3.29*	.89	.001
PIC	1.00	2.00	-2.12	.87	.053
		3.00	1.26	.96	.425
	2.00	1.00	2.12	.87	.053
		3.00	3.38*	.95	.002
	3.00	1.00	-1.26	.96	.425
		2.00	-3.38*	.95	.002
APP	1.00	2.00	-4.50	2.37	.167
		3.00	5.65	2.63	.101
	2.00	1.00	4.50	2.37	.167
		3.00	10.15*	2.61	.001
	3.00	1.00	-5.65	2.63	.101
		2.00	-10.15*	2.61	.001

The results of the *post hoc* Scheffe's test indicated that, at the level of 0.05 there is a significant difference between Group 2 and Group 3 regarding *reading commotion* and *presentation in the classroom*. Regarding *participation in classroom discussions* significant differences are found between Group 1 and Group 2 as well as Group 2 and Group 3. Considering evaluation apprehension in general, a significant difference can be found between Group 2 and Group 3 learners. No significant differences, however; are detected between learners in Group 1 and Group 2 as well Group 1 and Group 3.

5. Discussion

The present study aimed at designing a new instrument to assess EFL student evaluation apprehension and exploring the relationship between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement, gender, and educational level. To achieve the goals of the present research, the Persian version of the Student Evaluation Apprehension Scale (SEAS) was

administered to a sample of Iranian university and institute students. The results of EFA, CFA, and reliability estimates verified the validity and reliability of the newly designed instrument. It was also found that there is a negative association between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement.

Evaluation apprehension, as an external attribution, considers people's way of thinking as a determining factor affecting an individual's performance in front of others. The anxiousness comes from the fear of not receiving positive feedback, being negatively rated, or not being judged fairly. The anxiety felt by performers can be facilitating or debilitating. That is to say, if a person is well-prepared to do a task in the presence of other people, the apprehension will help him/her to do the best which minimizes negative evaluations and enhances the performance. On the other hand, if he/she is not ready enough to perform a particular action or a well-learned task, the anxiety is debilitating, since others may have a negative evaluation and impair the performance (in some cases the individuals have had enough practice but do not have a good performance due to affective factors). Actually, they feel incompetent not just because of people around, but due to the fear of being observed and ridiculed (Jahedizadeh et al., 2019).

The case is more vivid in the domain of education. Consider a student, for instance, who wants to perform a task (e.g., present a lecture) in front of the class with the teacher and peers. The student may have two distinctive perceptions, i.e., others will evaluate him/her as a competent student or as an incompetent one in which the former is related to high levels of preparations to present the lecture and the latter is concerned with not being well-prepared to do such a task, however; it may have other reasons than lack of preparation. Hence, these evaluations affect student performance and can even have more long-term effects remaining in students' minds for ages. A relevant issue is teachers' treatment and feedback for students' poor performance (Ghanizadeh, Amiri, & Jahedizadeh, 2020; Ghanizadeh, Merikhi, & Jahedizadeh, 2017) due to high levels of apprehension.

The field of foreign/second language learning is not an exception. There are many opportunities in which learners must perform a task in the presence of others and thus be evaluated by the teacher or the other students. Giving a speech, having discussions, question and answer chains as pair or group works, playing roles, having conversations and dialogues, reading aloud, and communicating in a second/foreign language, are all instances of performing in the presence of others all of which may be absent in other sources like mathematics, physics, or geography, since the teacher is usually the sole speaker (Jahedizadeh et al., 2019).

On this basis, the individuals' performance would be different if they do the task alone without any body watching them. We hear from some students who say that they have practiced a lot at home or in front of the mirror but as they stand in front of the class they just freeze and panic as if no practice was applied which means that being totally prepared does not guarantee the best performance. The results of such experiences which are merely felt because of the presence of persons who may approve or disapprove of them would be debilitating if they are not carefully scrutinized. Such students may lose their self-confidence, feel anxious in all learning situations, and even lose their motivation to perform any task in their classes. Regarding the last issue, it is evident in literature that lack of motivation has many ramifications among which reducing language achievement was addressed in advance (e.g., Arabi, Ghanizadeh, &

Jahedizadeh, 2018; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2015; Ghanizadeh & Jahedizadeh, 2017a, b; Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2016; ShayesteFar & Fazlali, 2020).

There are always some students who are secluded, not become volunteer, and are considered as passive members of the class. The teacher may judge them as incompetent, though they are smart, qualified, and capable of doing a particular task. Therefore, identifying these students prevents teachers from unfair judging and scoring (Jahedizadeh et al., 2019).

The results of the study also showed that there is a significant negative relationship between students' evaluation apprehension and academic achievement which is in line with previous studies (e.g., Mccroskey & Andersen, 1976). Concerning the association between student evaluation apprehension and gender, it was found that females experience evaluation apprehension more than their male counterparts. Such findings are also consistent with previous efforts exploring the relationship between students' apprehension and gender (Rafeka et al, 2014). Frantz, Marlow, and Wathen (2005), for instance, found the same results according to which females had higher communication apprehension levels than males.

As far as the educational level is concerned, it was found that BA and MA students experience different levels of evaluation apprehension in which BA students experience higher levels of apprehension than their MA counterparts. This finding can be attributed to the fact that MA students had more experiences in presentation or participation in classroom discussions. In other words, they had more opportunities to perform in the presence of other students and the teacher (more years of education) which paves the way towards reducing the amount of apprehension. MA students are more capable of adapting themselves to stressful situations and everyday challenges, a concept known as resilience (Najafzadeh, Ghanizadeh, Jahedizadeh, 2018) and more specifically academic buoyancy (Jahedizadeh, Ghonsooly, & Ghanizadeh, 2019).

6. Conclusions

This study was conducted to validate a newly-designed questionnaire for measuring EFL students' evaluation apprehension via exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses and to find the relationship between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement, gender, and educational level. The results from EFA, CFA, and reliability analyses revealed that the new questionnaire is a valid and reliable instrument measuring EFL students' evaluation apprehension. Moreover, a significant negative correlation was observed between student evaluation apprehension and academic achievement. Besides, it was found that females experience evaluation apprehension more than males and BA students were also found to have more evaluation apprehension than their MA counterparts.

Given that the present study is the first endeavor in EFL literature which designed a specific instrument to measure EFL students' evaluation apprehension and examined its association with GPA, gender, and educational level within a single framework, it can be deemed as a prelude to initiate other studies. Consequently, several recommendations for future research are put forward. Future studies can employ random sampling techniques which are free from any bias in sample selection. As another suggestion, future researchers can use different types of instruments besides questionnaires such as; interviews, observations, and case

studies which allow researchers to determine possible interrelationships among the constructs (Ghanizadeh & Ghonsooly, 2014). Follow up studies to confirm and pinpoint the results among EFL students at schools are also recommended.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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ISSN 2476-5880

Appendix. The Designed *Student Evaluation Apprehension Scale* (*SEAS*)

1 I have no problem reading an English text for myself, but if I'm going to read the same text aloud for the whole class, I get really apprehended.
2 Whenever I have to read an English text for the whole class, I always worry about words that I can't pronounce correctly.
3 While reading an English text in class I always worry about facing a grammar point, number, or sign that I've never seen before.
4 If I had to read an English text for the whole class that I had no idea about, I would be very apprehended.
5 When I am reading an English text I cannot understand its meaning because I only care about the correct pronunciation of the sentences.
6 As I wait in class to read the text, my heart rate goes up and my palms sweat.
7 If I pause while reading an English text in class or lose the line and others help me, I get very anxious because I couldn't handle it alone.
8 When I am standing in front of the class to present something in English, I feel really bad, just as I had previously guessed.
9 Even when I have complete mastery of everything I have to offer in English, when the whole class looks at me I lose my concentration and forget what I wanted to say.
10 I prefer getting a low grade in a language course to presenting something to the class.
11 When I want to say something in class, I prefer to sit instead of standing in front of the class that everyone's attention is on me.
12 When I am presenting in English in front of the class, I am worried about what others think about me (for example, my appearance or proficiency).
13 When I am presenting in English in front of the class, if two people talk with or laugh at each other, I am sure they talk about me and immediately lose my concentration and become apprehended.
14 If I have a question about the language in the classroom, I don't ask it because I'm worried I'll be judged negatively if I ask in public.
15 When the teacher asks a question in class, even if I'm sure of the answer, I won't answer it because I'm afraid to speak in public.
16 I never volunteer in class because I always have the fear of not doing it right.
17 In my language class, I always worry about my teacher calling my name and asking a question I don't know the answer.
18 I prefer that the teacher gives the exams in black and white rather than ask questions verbally because in writing I answer the questions without any concern or bad feeling.
19 Before saying something in English in class, I check the words and grammar several times in my mind (I won't say it immediately).
20 I am very surprised that some of my classmates speak /argue in the language class and express their opinions.