

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

EXPLORING CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS, LINGUISTIC DISCRIMINATION, AND LANGUAGE LEARNING ANXIETY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BOSNIAN AND ARAB STUDENTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the impact of cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning anxiety among Bosnian and Arab students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Language learning anxiety, a critical aspect of language acquisition, is influenced by various factors, including cultural expectations and experiences of linguistic discrimination. The study compares the experiences of Bosnian and Arab students, delving into cultural nuances and discriminatory perceptions that shape their language learning journey. Through a qualitative research design, including semi-structured interviews and a comprehensive questionnaire, data were collected from 20 participants. The findings reveal distinctive patterns in the influence of cultural expectations on language learning attitudes and the negative impact of linguistic discrimination on students' willingness to communicate - Bosnian students idealize native accents, while Arabic students seek native-like proficiency to avoid potential discrimination. Linguistic discrimination emerges as a significant source of anxiety, impacting students' willingness to communicate and draining their motivation. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the gap of literature on the specific impact of cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination on EFL learning anxiety. The insights gained provide a foundation for developing culturally sensitive interventions to alleviate anxiety and enhance language learning outcomes.

Keywords: (EFL) Learning Anxiety, Cultural Expectations, Linguistic Discrimination, Multicultural Context, Language Acquisition, Diversity in Language Learning



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Introduction

Language learning is a complex process that involves various cognitive and affective factors. One prominent emotional aspect that significantly influences language acquisition is language learning anxiety. Language learning anxiety has been the subject of research for several decades, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) were among the first to define language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). However, it has been observed that there are other key factors that impact the level of this kind of anxiety, two of those factors are cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination. Cultural differences play a significant role in shaping learners’ perceptions, expectations, and responses to language learning situations. Culturally influenced communication styles, social norms, and attitudes toward authority figures can all contribute to the manifestation of anxiety in language classrooms (Young, 1991). Discrimination, favoring one language variety over another, is a significant source of anxiety in multicultural settings, learners with non-native accents or different linguistic features may fear negative evaluation or discrimination (Derwing & Munro, 2013). As people from diverse linguistic backgrounds strive to excel in English, they navigate a complex terrain shaped not only by linguistic challenges but also by cultural expectations and the possibility of facing discrimination. This study aims to explore the intricate interplay between cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination, examining their combined impact on EFL learning anxiety within two distinct communities: Bosnians and Arabs.

An emerging realization in research highlights the critical influence of linguistic discrimination in shaping the complex landscape of language learning anxiety. Linguistic discrimination, manifested through bias, prejudice, or stigmatization based on language proficiency or accent, can significantly impact individuals’ psychological and emotional well-being during the language acquisition journey. Linguistic discrimination plays a role in the academic underperformance of non-native English speakers when compared to their native English-speaking counterparts (Roessingh & Douglas, 2012 Top of Form). Therefore, discriminatory attitudes elicit reactions like fear, anxiety, and apprehension, among other responses, that hinder and restrict class engagement, the quality of inter-

action, the adaptation of new concepts and knowledge, motivation in language learning, and the understanding of course contents (Rojas et al., 2016). Stereotypes associated with particular accents or language varieties can contribute to a heightened sense of self-consciousness and anxiety in language learners (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by closely examining the intricate relationship between linguistic discrimination and the manifestation of anxiety in language learners.

This research aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring and comparing the experiences of Bosnian and Arab individuals in their quest for English language proficiency in Bosnian academic institutions. The aim of this research is to investigate cultural expectations and attitudes toward English as a foreign language, exploring their potential influence on the level of language learning anxiety. The study aims to understand how these cultural expectations contribute to students’ willingness to participate and motivation in the language learning process. Additionally, the research seeks to examine the repercussions of experiencing linguistic discrimination on students’ levels of anxiety and motivation within the context of learning English. By dissecting the influence of cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination on the levels of anxiety within these populations, we aim to shed light on the intricate dynamics that shape language learning outcomes in diverse cultural contexts where English language knowledge is appreciated. English proficiency is important for achieving educational and economic milestones in both cultures. As a global lingua franca, English exerts a profound influence across various domains. Dedović-Atilla and Dubravac (2022), as well as Dubravac and Milak (2016), highlight the significant impact of English as a lingua franca on sectors like business and advertising respectively in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Likewise, in the Arab marketplace, globalization has underscored the necessity of English language proficiency, as highlighted by Al-Saraj (2014). Therefore, there is a pressing need for research aimed at enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) acquisition, particularly by investigating factors that hinder this process.

Literature review

EFL learning anxiety has been a topic of extensive research, exploring the complexities and challenges faced by language learners worldwide. Anxiety in language learning has been recognized

as a multilayered phenomenon with various dimensions, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and language classroom anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). It has gathered attention due to its potential influence on learners' language acquisition, proficiency, and overall learning experience. Scholars such as Horwitz et al. (1986) have emphasized the universal nature of language anxiety, highlighting its detrimental effects on various aspects of language learning, including speaking, listening, and writing.

According to MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) socio-educational model, language anxiety is intricately connected to social factors, including the classroom environment, teacher-student interactions, and peer relationships. Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) further emphasizes the role of anxiety in shaping learners' attitudes and motivations toward language learning. These foundational studies set the stage for understanding the nuanced interplay between affective factors and language acquisition.

Cultural differences play a significant role in shaping learners' perceptions, expectations, and responses to language learning situations. Different cultural communication norms, societal expectations, and perspectives on authority figures can influence how anxiety is manifested in language learning environments (Young, 1991). The cultural dimensions of individualism and collectivism, as proposed by Hofstede (1980), may impact how learners experience anxiety, with collectivist cultures prioritizing group harmony and individualist cultures emphasizing personal achievement. Furthermore, the concept of "face" in intercultural communication (Goffman, 1967) introduces the idea that learners from cultures valuing positive social interactions and avoiding embarrassment may be more susceptible to anxiety when faced with potential language mistakes or negative evaluation. Al-Saraj (2014) investigated the impact of culture on Arabic (Saudi) students' anxiety. The research found that fear of making mistakes in Saudi Arabian culture is significant due to potential embarrassment and loss of face, therefore, students may avoid speaking in class due to fear of making mistakes and subsequent embarrassment. Additionally, Al-Shboul et al. (2013) investigated FLA among Jordanian students and have found high levels of anxiety concerning reading and pronunciation. Therefore, understanding how cultural factors and linguistic discrimination contribute to

language anxiety can be crucial for developing effective teaching strategies and fostering inclusive language learning environments.

Linguistic discrimination, the act of favoring one language variety over another, can be a significant source of anxiety for language learners, particularly in multicultural and multilingual environments. Linguistic - minority groups who face challenges in the educational system often experience a disempowerment in academic settings due to their interactions with the linguistically dominant group, which affects their academic performance (Cummins, 1988). Unfortunately, the relation between linguistic discrimination and language learning anxiety has not been studied enough, therefore, there is a need for further research to investigate this relation. Learners who speak with non-native accents or use different linguistic features may experience heightened anxiety due to the fear of negative evaluation or discrimination (Derwing & Munro, 2013). Stereotypes associated with particular accents or language varieties can contribute to self-consciousness and anxiety in language learners (Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Moreover, linguistic discrimination can impact educational experiences. Students who speak a non-standard dialect may face biases from teachers and peers (Labov, 1972). According to Page, C. (2023) linguistic discrimination in academia can lead to academic disadvantage and psychological impacts. Therefore, linguistic discrimination can affect anxiety, attitudes, motivation and willingness to participate.

Additionally, the relationship between linguistic discrimination and language learning anxiety is intertwined with broader issues of identity, belonging, and societal attitudes toward linguistic diversity (Norton, 2000). Learners who feel that their language abilities are not accepted or valued may internalize negative attitudes, impacting their confidence and motivation to engage in language learning activities. Therefore, linguistic discrimination can have psychological effects on individuals, leading to feelings of inferiority, stress, and a sense of cultural alienation (Ryan, Giles, & Hewstone, 1988). Understanding the psychological aspects is crucial for addressing the wider implications of linguistic discrimination and its consequences. As revealed by Dovchin's (2020) research on international students in Australian tertiary education institutions, linguistic discrimination can lead to enduring feelings of inadequacy and a lack of belonging.

In regard to this context, both Bosnians and Arabs may experience foreign language anxiety when navigating new linguistic environments, especially in contexts of migration or education. For Bosnians, this might be relevant in the process of integrating into the European Union or other English-speaking contexts. Individuals with Bosnian or Slavic accents may experience challenges in social integration, where their accent becomes a marker of being “the other” in the host society which can lead to social exclusion and impact individuals’ sense of belonging and identity (Lippi-Green, 2012). Arabs, on the other hand, facing stereotypes and intense security concerns in post-9/11 Western contexts, might experience added layers of anxiety related to language use and identity. Therefore, linguistic discrimination can occur in contexts where Arabic language and its various dialects are stigmatized, or where speakers face prejudice based on their accent or proficiency in the dominant language of their host country (Suleiman, 2004). Arabic accents are often stigmatized and subjected to mockery in Western societies (Lippi-Green, 2012).

Understanding the interplay between cultural factors, linguistic discrimination, and EFL learning anxiety is essential for creating inclusive and effective language learning environments. By addressing this research gap, educators and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to alleviate anxiety, promote cultural sensitivity, and foster positive language learning experiences for diverse groups of learners. To address the identified gap in the literature, this research employs a qualitative method approach to explore the intricate connections between cultural expectations and differences, linguistic discrimination, and EFL learning anxiety. Qualitative methods, through interviews are aimed to offer a nuanced understanding of learners’ experiences, perceptions, and coping strategies.

The current study

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative research design to explore the impact of cultural differences and linguistic discrimination on language learning anxiety.

Participants

The sample comprised 20 participants, including 10 Bosnian and 10 Arabic adult (age 18-24)

students learning English as a foreign language. Participants were chosen to ensure diversity in terms of language proficiency, educational background, gender, and cultural experiences.

Participants were provided with detailed information about the study’s purpose and procedures, and consented to participating in the research. Participants’ identities were kept confidential, and data were anonymized during analysis to ensure privacy.

Participants represented various language proficiency levels, educational backgrounds, and both genders, offering a comprehensive perspective on the research topic. Table 1. indicates the characteristics of the participants (nationality, gender, and level of proficiency (A1 (Beginner), A2 (Elementary), and B1 (Intermediate))).

Table 1.
Participants’ Information

Participants	Nationality	Gender	Level of Proficiency
Participant 1	Bosnian	F	B1
Participant 2	Bosnian	F	A1
Participant 3	Bosnian	F	A2
Participant 4	Bosnian	F	A2
Participant 5	Bosnian	F	B1
Participant 6	Bosnian	M	A1
Participant 7	Bosnian	M	A2
Participant 8	Bosnian	M	A1
Participant 9	Bosnian	M	A2
Participant 10	Bosnian	M	B1
Participant 11	Arabic	F	B1
Participant 12	Arabic	F	A1
Participant 13	Arabic	F	A2
Participant 14	Arabic	F	B1
Participant 15	Arabic	F	A1
Participant 16	Arabic	M	B1
Participant 17	Arabic	M	A1
Participant 18	Arabic	M	A1
Participant 19	Arabic	M	B1
Participant 20	Arabic	M	A2

Research Questions

The presented study was guided by four research questions. These questions acted as a compass, guiding the research through the investigation. In this section, those questions will be introduced, helping unravel the complexities of the topic.

1. What are the attitudes and motivations of Bosnian and Arab students towards English language learning, considering the cultural expectations within their respective communities?
2. In what ways does linguistic discrimination affect language learning anxiety among Bosnian and Arab students?
3. How do Bosnian and Arab students perceive and react to linguistic discrimination in the context of learning English?
4. What are the gender-based variations in language learning anxiety among Bosnian and Arab students?

Interview Structure

The interviews were semi-structured, providing a balance between flexibility and consistency. While the interview guide included open-ended questions to encourage participants to express their thoughts freely, closed-ended questions were also incorporated to gather specific information. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses, and follow-up questions were posed to delve deeper into their experiences. Each interview lasted a minimum of 30 minutes, allowing for detailed exploration of participant responses.

The questions were made by the researcher after a thorough analysis of famous scales such as FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), BALLI (Oxford, 1990), and the related researches mentioned in the literature review. The questions were modified to fit within a cultural perspective and many questions were added to test linguistic discrimination and cultural attitudes. A set of 37 questions, including both open-ended and closed-ended questions, was designed to explore participants' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions regarding cultural differences, linguistic discrimination, and language learning anxiety. The participants were asked to elaborate on their answers and were asked follow-up questions to investigate the matter in more depth.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a thematic approach. The interviews were recorded and analyzed to identify recurring themes related to cultural differences, linguistic discrimination, and language learning anxiety.

Results and discussion

The comparative analysis of EFL learning anxiety between Arabs and Bosnians in Bosnian educational institutions revealed noteworthy distinctions in cultural expectations and linguistic discrimination. Table 2. provides an overview of the general results of the participants in regards to EFL learning anxiety and experiencing linguistic discrimination.

Table 2.
Participants' General Results

Participants	(EFL) learning anxiety	Linguistic discrimination experienced
Participant 1	No	no
Participant 2	Yes	yes
Participant 3	Yes	no
Participant 4	No	no
Participant 5	Yes	no
Participant 6	Yes	yes
Participant 7	Yes	yes
Participant 8	No	no
Participant 9	Yes	no
Participant 10	No	no
Participant 11	No	yes
Participant 12	Yes	yes
Participant 13	Yes	yes
Participant 14	Yes	yes
Participant 15	yes	yes
Participant 16	No	yes
Participant 17	Yes	no
Participant 18	No	yes
Participant 19	No	no
Participant 20	Yes	yes

Among 20 participants, 12 (60%) reported experiencing EFL learning anxiety, while 8 (40%) did not report experiencing such anxiety revealing that a majority of participants experienced anxiety.

ety while learning English as a foreign language. Among them, 11 (55%) reported experiencing linguistic discrimination, while 9 (45%) did not report experiencing such discrimination. Among the participants who reported experiencing EFL learning anxiety, 8 out of 12 (66.6%) also reported experiencing linguistic discrimination. This suggests a possible association between EFL learning anxiety and the experience of linguistic discrimination. However, it is important to note that not all participants who experienced linguistic discrimination reported EFL learning anxiety, indicating that other factors have also contributed to their anxiety in language learning.

- ❖ Attitudes and motivations of Bosnian and Arab students towards English language learning, considering the cultural expectations within their respective communities:

Bosnian learners demonstrated a tendency to idealize standardized accents, often associating them with correctness and proficiency. Bosnian participants expressed a desire to conform to established pronunciation norms, aligning with the perceived linguistic ideals. Contrasting with Arabic learners who consistently reported a high cultural value placed on English learning, reflecting societal expectations that position English proficiency as a valuable skill. Many Arabic participants expressed a sense of duty to uphold cultural expectations regarding educational achievements. Bosnians acknowledged the absence of direct pressure from teachers to adopt native-like accents, and reported that the pressure is self-imposed, they reported that they do not want to sound Slavic. It is attributed to societal perceptions of certain accents, influenced by negative portrayals in Western media. The majority of Bosnian participants had a very positive attitude toward native accent and a very negative attitude toward Slavic accent.

- Participant 5: "like I don't know I think my accent is really good, I work a lot on it. Sometimes my Slavic accent slips but I manage the situation (laughs). I try my best to not sound Bosnian"
- Participant 7: "Bosnian accent is similar to Russian, you know at movies they are always the bad person. So I try not to sound like that even though I don't agree with this image"

Additionally, some had a strong believe that one should sound as native as possible and used strong words such as respect to the language.

- Participant 1: "People should do their best to sound great, it makes other speakers perceive you as smart and a good speaker, accent should be number one"
- Participant 9: "Like people should respect the language, this is the way it should be spoken so you must do your best to sound it"
- Participant 2: "I don't know ... like you should sound American or British to respect the language, it sounds weird if you don't"

However, it is important to note that these participants also reported a high level of anxiety and fear of making mistakes, and expecting to be mocked for it. Therefore, this idealization results in an increase in EFL learning anxiety. Therefore, native speaker idealization and belief in a standardized form of English affects non-native students' self-concept and emotional well-being (Rojas et al., 2016).

- Participant 5: "I don't like when my Slavic accent slips, I just think that I am not that good at English"

Conversely, Arabs reported a sense of pride in their distinct accents. They indicated that external influences, such as mockery from peers and media representation, prompted consideration of accent modification.

- Participant 14: "I feel like if I try to sound more European then I am saying that they are better than me, and they are absolutely not (laughs). I try to focus on being understood instead of not sounding Arabic, I am proud of my origin"

Arab participants emphasized the significance placed by their culture and parents on English language acquisition, driven by the statues of English as a global language and the importance of English knowledge in both professional and educational contexts. In contrast, Bosnians reported a varied parental stance, with some emphasizing the importance of learning English and others displaying indifference or resistance.

- Participant 1: "My parents don't care about English, I feel like Bosnian parents are two

kinds some don't like English and say why should we learn it we have our own language and some think it is very important and put a pressure"

Bosnians reported that their anxiety depends more on the teachers' attitude, while Arabs showed more concern toward other students. Both Bosnians and Arabs showed high anxiety regarding communicating with natives. They said that they are afraid of making mistakes with them and that they would call them out for them, and some reported instances of that happening

- Participant 7: "Native English speakers are very pretentious especially in social media comments, if someone makes a mistake they are very very very quick to correct you"
- Participant 9: "I am a gamer so I sometimes play with natives, and it makes me really anxious because they make fun of my accent, someone once kept saying that I sound like a Russian spy. Ahhh ... I mean those are games so it doesn't really matter but I get afraid to get similar comments at work since I want to work abroad hopefully"
- Participant 6 "I am pretty anxious that, since I want to leave the country, employers will notice mistakes in my accent and not get the job because of it"
- Participant 12: "Like you know how people think about Arabic accent, I feel like they will choose the better accents to work for them"

When it comes to coping techniques, both Bosnian and Arabic learners employed various coping mechanisms in response to language learning anxiety rooted in cultural expectations. Strategies included seeking social support, engaging in self-reflection, and, in some cases, actively challenging discriminatory attitudes. The shared coping mechanisms suggest that cultural expectations not only contribute to anxiety but also influence how learners navigate and mitigate these anxieties. The strategies employed reflect a nuanced understanding of the role of culture in shaping adaptive responses.

In considering strategies to make language classrooms less anxiety inducing, participants highlighted the importance of communication activities and language use within the classroom. Both Arabs and Bosnians stressed the importance of

communication activities and using the language as ways to make language learning less stressful as when students see they are capable of using the language it gets them motivated. However, the students with anxiety stressed the importance of building a positive classroom environment where making mistakes is okay, and student who mock others mistakes are punished.

Using games and interactive activities were also emphasized as it lowers the anxiety levels

- Participant 5: "games are great, because I am anxious when I start then I have fun and forget anxiety"
- Participant 13: "Teachers should use more games like Kahoot it is so fun and we learn just like that"

Cultural differences were identified, with some Arabic students perceiving limited teacher influence on classroom dynamics, reflecting the teacher-centered nature of education in certain Arabic countries.

Some Arabic students reported that they believe that the teacher has no say in making the classroom less anxiety provoking. And this might be traced to cultural differences as in some Arabic countries teaching is still teacher centered and not much awareness of the teachers' responsibility and influence over building a positive classroom environment is spread.

- Participant 14: "I don't think teachers can do anything, I mean it is not their job, they come to teach, there is nothing they can do to help".

To sum it up, this research has been able to identify cultural difference between those two groups. Bosnian students want to sound native like as a result of idealization of the native accents, while Arabic students want to sound native to avoid mockery and potential discrimination in work and educational environment, both idealization and fear of mockery resulted in increase in EFL learning anxiety. These findings are significant as they align with Rojas et al., (2016), Al-Saraj (2014), Al-Shboul et al. (2013), Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010), and Norton (2000) results about the impact of culture on EFL learning anxiety. Additionally, both groups expressed fear of communicating with natives due to fear of potential discrimination.

- ❖ The effect of linguistic discrimination on language learning anxiety among Bosnian and Arab students, and their perception and reactions to this discrimination.

Linguistic discrimination emerged as a significant factor affecting participants' anxiety levels. Arabic students reported more instances of discrimination, correlating with heightened anxiety and diminished motivation. Interestingly, even students who typically respond positively to pressure reported that the detrimental impact of linguistic discrimination on their willingness to communicate, citing it as a debilitating source of motivation. This aligns with Rojas et al. (2016) who claimed that mockery and judgment of foreign students' language use and pressure to conform to native speaker norms hinder class participation and motivation. Therefore, although some reported that it motivates them in the sense that they want to prove the discriminators wrong, they said that it is a bad source of motivation and it is so depilating.

- Participant 20: "I felt so angry, I want make him feel bad when I learn, but ah it is exhausting"
- Participant 17: "I don't think it is a good motivation, like they shouldn't be reason for me to learn English"

An interesting source of anxiety and linguistic discrimination that two Arabic female students reported are the parents of some other Bosnian students. They said that some Bosnian parents are so involved in their children's education, and they have been angry if the Arabic students gets a higher grade than their children and they would bully them because of that, which resulted in a fear of potential future linguistic discrimination

- Participant 12: "The parent was speaking to the teacher and I am there, she said how the colored student have more grades than my son, and she ... the teacher looked at me like the parent has the right to say it. I felt that I don't deserve my grade"
- Participant 15: "The dad was like why do you give her extra attention, but I just moved her and I don't know Bosnian so I don't understand what are they saying, so I need extra practice and translation to follow"

The language of instruction emerged as a significant source of anxiety for Arabic students.

Many students reported that even though English was supposed to be the only language of instruction, Bosnian was still used as the language of instruction contributing to confusion due to exposure to two foreign languages. Thus, even though the course is said to be completely in English, the teachers still used Bosnian a lot. Concerns were raised about the unequal treatment of Arabic and Bosnian languages, their main complaint was that if you going to translate for them then translate for us too, and some teachers did that buy using google translate to clarify for Arabic students, however the Arabic students reported that Bosnian students and their parents reacted negatively to the use of Arabic in the class but so the use of Bosnian as okay.

- Participant 15: "like if you will use Bosnian then you have to translate for us too at least in English, but some students act like they are entitled to Bosnian but if we ask for something we are just wasting everyone's time"

However, while Arabic students reported instances of discrimination in the classroom, there was a lack of awareness among Bosnians regarding discrimination against Arabs. Only two Bosnian students reported noticing it, and only one of them spoke up against it.

- Participant 10: "some teachers keep switching to Bosnian, so I always keep reminding them to go back to English or translate, because it isn't fair"

Interestingly, students who were aware of the concept of linguistic discrimination reported that their anxiety were lessened as they realized that everyone has an accent and that no accent is inferior, the focus should be on intelligibility.

- Participant 16: "we all actually have accent, some think they don't, but they have actually. I just care to be understood"
- Participant 18: "even when they laugh I don't care, like you also have accent, and this people are small honestly, who cares man".

In conclusion regarding linguistic discrimination, it was revealed that it has a negative impact on students' willingness to communicate. Interestingly but expectedly, even the students who thrive under stress reported that stress as a result of linguistic discrimination is draining source of motivation and has more negative consequences than

positive. This aligns with Lev-Ari and Keysar's (2010) suggestion that linguistic discrimination will contribute to self-consciousness and anxiety in language learners, and with Ryan, Giles, and Hewstone (1988) who claimed that linguistic discrimination can have psychological effects on individuals, leading to feelings of inferiority, stress, and a sense of cultural alienation. The research findings also align with Page (2023), Dovchin (2020) and Rojas et al. (2016) on the harmful emotional and psychological impact of linguistic discrimination. The research found that there should be awareness of linguistic discrimination and its impact, and that knowledge that everyone has an accent and that there is no inferior accent is essential to resolve this kind of anxiety.

- ❖ Gender-based variations in language learning anxiety among Bosnian and Arab students:

When it comes to gender, Bosnian students' anxiety is observed to be more linked to other factors such as teacher attitude, perfectionism, and fear of making mistakes. However, when it came to Arabs, females showed higher levels of anxiety depending on opinions of others and they showed higher levels of this anxiety having negative effects on their language learning such as the loss of willingness to participate, which can be the result of the Arabic culture where women are taught to be quiet and to focus on what others think of them, which resonate with findings by Al-Saraj's (2014) research on Saudi females EFL learning anxiety. While men showed higher levels of this anxiety resulting in motivation. Men reported more reacting to accent mocking as a joke while women reported that it has actually affected their confidence and motivation. However, it is important to say that Arabic women reported more instances of harmful linguistic discrimination. In short regarding gender, only Arabic students showed difference according to gender, with females being more likely to have negative reaction to anxiety.

Conclusions and implications

In conclusion, this research delved into the complex interplay between cultural expectations, linguistic discrimination, and English language learning anxiety within the distinct contexts of Bosnian and Arab communities. The findings shed light on the multifaceted dynamics that shape language learning outcomes in diverse cultural settings. The study uncovered variations in the idealization of standardized accents, with Bosnian learners lean-

ing towards conformity and Arabic learners embracing linguistic diversity.

Instances of linguistic discrimination were reported by both Bosnian and Arabic learners, highlighting the universal impact of discriminatory encounters on language learning anxiety. Cultural expectations played a crucial role in shaping how learners perceived and responded to these instances, demonstrating the need for a culturally sensitive framework in understanding and addressing language-related challenges.

Gender differences in anxiety responses were observed only among Arabic learners, which could be the result of the traditional Arabic culture. These differences underscore the intricate interplay between cultural expectations and societal gender norms, emphasizing the importance of considering gender dynamics in language learning research.

Coping mechanisms employed by learners, such as seeking social support and challenging discriminatory attitudes, reflect the nuanced ways in which individuals deal with language learning anxiety rooted in cultural expectations. However, cultural differences were found in the perception of the teacher's role in building a positive learning environment,

Educational implications of this research underscore the importance of cultural sensitivity training for educators, clear language policies, and inclusive teaching practices. Strategies to alleviate language learning anxiety should prioritize communication activities and language use within the classroom, with a particular emphasis on interactive games. Creating engaging and dynamic learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students is essential for fostering positive language learning experiences. The research emphasizes the need for spreading awareness among teachers and students about linguistic discrimination and its impact.

The study's findings carry implications for educators, policymakers, and institutions aiming to create more inclusive language learning environments. Recognizing and addressing cultural differences in attitudes toward accents and languages is crucial for fostering positive learning experiences. Educators should be mindful of the impact of linguistic discrimination on students' motivation and communication willingness, employing strategies to alleviate its negative effects.

Awareness about linguistic discriminations should be spread between teachers and students. There should be awareness that no accent is inferior or superior to another and that intelligibility should be the focus. Teachers should be aware of their impact on students' language acquisition and the potential consequences of their biases and discrimination. Students should be more aware of how their attitude affects the learning process of other students, and of how their behavior affects the classroom environment.

The study suggests the importance of cultural sensitivity training for instructors to understand and respond successfully to the diverse needs of students. Additionally, establishing clear language policies and promoting the use of inclusive teaching practices can contribute to a more supportive and unbiased learning atmosphere.

Strategies to alleviate language learning anxiety should focus on communication activities and language use within the classroom. The incorporation of interactive games was highlighted as a particularly effective method to lower anxiety levels. These findings underscore the significance of creating engaging and dynamic learning environments that cater to the diverse needs of students.

Limitations and further research direction:

The study employed qualitative methods, using interviews to investigate the issue at depth, which limits the generalizability of findings. Incorporating quantitative measures and mixed-methods approaches could allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between cultural expectations, linguistic discrimination, and language learning anxiety. Further research might then investigate the generalizability of these findings in those two communities. Additionally, the research focused on Bosnian and Arab communities in Bosnia, potentially limiting the transferability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Future studies should consider investigating the matter in other communities and comparing the findings, especially bearing in mind there is a huge gap in the research investigating the relationship between linguistic discrimination and language learning anxiety. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that those are self-reported data, therefore, participants might have provided responses influenced by social desirability, particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as linguistic discrimination. Thus, further research might focus on observational methods to eliminate potential biases.

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Attachment

Interview questions:

Anxiety in Language Use and Classroom Settings:

1. Do you feel anxious when you have to read aloud?
2. Do you feel anxious when you have to collaborate with others, and does it differ depending on the nationality of the others in the group?
3. Do you feel anxious when you speak in front of the class, and why do you feel that way?
4. How afraid are you of making errors, and why do you think you are afraid/not afraid?
5. Does the level of anxiety differ depending on the teacher?

Learners' Beliefs:

6. How do you think this anxiety affects your memory?
7. Do you count yourself as a confident person in general?
8. Do you feel the need to be perfect, and is it a good or a bad thing in your opinion?
9. Do you have positive beliefs about your abilities to acquire a second language?

External Pressures:

10. Is this anxiety limited to English language classes?

11. Do your family and culture pressure you to perform well?
12. Is this anxiety the result of pressure from the teachers, parents, or yourself?

Teacher and Peer Reactions:

13. How does a teacher react when you make a mistake?
14. How do teachers react when they do not understand what you said (+ attitude)?
15. How do students react when they do not understand what you said (+ attitude)?
16. How do you react to those reactions?

Linguistic Discrimination and Cultural Perspectives:

17. How do you view Standard English?
18. How do you view the Bosnian English accent?
19. How do you view the Arabic English accent?
20. Do you believe that we should aim to be native-like, and why?
21. Have you ever felt that your language abilities or accent were judged by others? Can you provide examples?
22. Have you personally experienced linguistic discrimination in any language learning or communication settings?
23. How do you think linguistic discrimination, if present, has influenced your language learning experience?
24. Do you feel that Arabic and Bosnian students are treated differently and in what way?
25. Do you feel like there should be a different treatment?

Expectations and Triggers:

26. Do you feel that teachers pressure you toward being more native-like?

27. What specific aspects of language use or communication situations trigger anxiety for you?
28. Do you think there is a connection between your anxiety and potential experiences of linguistic discrimination?

Impact of Anxiety on Studying and Performance:

29. Does anxiety stop you from performing well in the classroom or while using English? (silencing, willingness to participate)
30. Does anxiety motivate you to do better, and in what way?
31. Does anxiety affect your studying or just your performance?
32. Do you procrastinate a lot?
33. In what ways do you feel that the social context, including discrimination, has affected your confidence in using a new language?
34. How has the potential for linguistic discrimination influenced your motivation to learn a new language?

Coping Strategies and Suggestions for Improvement:

35. What strategies do you use to cope with language learning anxiety or potential discrimination?
36. What do you believe would make your language learning experience less stressful?
37. What factors have affected the decrease in your foreign language anxiety?