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Abstract

Oral communication is a large part of the language learning process. The learning curve may be steep and challenging for young learners who are beginning their language learning journeys, and the process of becoming a proficient speaker in a foreign language may therefore provoke a sense of anxiety among a number of learners. The present study is interested in foreign language speaking anxiety, specifically among Norwegian 7th grade learners who are learning English as a foreign language in school, and sets out to discover whether this form of anxiety is present among such young learners. It additionally lays focus on the three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), namely test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, and wishes to discover which of these three anxieties is most pronounced among the participants. The possibility of gender differences within foreign language speaking anxiety is also researched.

Participants were 186 Norwegian 7th grade learners from 9 different schools across Norway. They were all in their 7th year of learning English as a foreign language. An adapted and translated version of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was utilized to collect data from the participants. Findings revealed that young learners experience moderate levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, and test anxiety was the performance anxiety that was most pronounced. Furthermore, female learners experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to their male peers.

The present study aims to fill the research gap that exists on foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners, as well as provide information about the topic for both present and future language teachers. Many teachers may use these findings to adapt their foreign language classes to alleviate or prevent anxiety among their learners, as this form of anxiety may hinder the language learning process.

Sammendrag

Muntlig kommunikasjon utgjør en stor del av fremmedspråksopplæringen. Læringskurven er gjerne bratt og utfordrende blant unge elever som begynner på sin fremmedspråksreise, og prosessen som inngår i å bli en dreven taler i et fremmed språk kan derfor provosere engstelige følelser blant flere elever. Denne studien fokuserer på muntlig fremmedspråksangst, spesifikt blant norske syvendeklassinger som lærer engelsk som

fremmedspråk i skolen, og ønsker videre å avdekke om denne typen angst eksisterer blant så unge elever. Studien legger i tillegg et fokus på de tre ulike prestasjonsangstene presentert av Horwitz, Horwitz og Cope (Horwitz et al., 1986), kjent som test angst, frykt for negative evaluering og kommunikasjonsangst, og ønsker å avdekke hvilken av disse tre typene angst som er mest markant blant deltagerne. Muligheten for kjønnsforskjeller blant elevenes fremmedspråksangst er også undersøkt.

Deltagerne bestod av 186 norske syvendeklassinger fordelt på 9 forskjellige skoler på kryss av Norge. Alle var på sitt syvende år i engelskopplæringen. En tilpasset og oversatt versjon av Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) ble benyttet for å samle inn data fra deltagerne. Resultatene viste at unge elever opplever et moderat nivå av muntlig fremmedspråksangst, og at test angst var mest utpreget. I tillegg viser den at jentene opplever høyere nivåer av fremmedspråksangst sammenlignet med guttene.

Formålet med studien er å bidra til å fylle gapet som eksisterer på muntlig fremmedspråksangst blant unge elever, i tillegg til å tilføre informasjon til både eksisterende og fremtidige språklærere. Lærere kan benytte informasjonen fra resultatene i studien til å tilpasse opplæringen med et mål om å lette eller forebygge angst blant elevene, da denne form for angst kan hindre læringsprosessen.

Table of contents

Abstract	4
1. Introduction	9
2. Theory and literature review	13
2.1 Anxiety	13
2.2 Perspectives on anxiety	13
2.3 Speaking as a skill	15
2.3 Foreign language speaking anxiety	16
2.3.1 Facilitating and debilitating anxiety	18
2.3.2 Factors that can affect foreign language speaking anxiety	20
2.3.3 Performance anxieties	23
2.3.4 Young learners' foreign language speaking anxiety	24
2.3.5 Gender differences in foreign language speaking anxiety	25
3. Methods	28
3.1 Finding participants	28
3.2 The questionnaire: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale	29
3.3 Translating the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale	31
3.4 Pilot testing	33
3.5 Data collection procedures	34
3.6 Data analysis procedures	35
3.7 Validity and reliability	38
3.7.1 Validity	38
3.7.2 Reliability	39
3.8 Ethics	41
4. Results	43
4.1 RQ1	43
4.2 RQ2	49
4.3 Summary of main findings	52

5.	Discussion	54
5.1	Foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners (RQ1).....	54
5.2	Gender and foreign language speaking anxiety (RQ2)	55
5.3	Performance anxieties.....	57
5.4	Anxiety perspectives.....	59
5.5	Factors that may affect foreign language speaking anxiety	61
5.6	Reflections on the data collection process.....	68
6.	Conclusion.....	69
6.1	RQ1.....	70
6.2	RQ2.....	71
6.4	Limitations and propositions for future research.....	71
6.5	Implications for teaching	73
7.	References	75
8.	Appendices	80
8.1	Appendix A – Original FLCAS	80
8.2	Appendix B – Adapted and translated version of FLCAS	83
8.3	Appendix C – Initial invitation letter.....	86
8.4	Appendix D – In-depth information letter	88
8.5	Appendix E – Mean score and standard deviation between genders.....	90
8.6	Appendix F – Percentages of each response to the questionnaire	93

List of tables

Table 1. The kinds of learner's self anxiety (Page 19)

Table 2. Number of items in each performance anxiety in the original FLCAS (Page 30)

Table 3. Screenshot of results in Excel document (Page 36)

Table 4. Extract from results from the present survey in SPSS (Page 36)

Table 5. Separate results for males and females in SPSS (Page 37)

Table 6. Mean scores and standard deviation for each item for all participants combined (Page 44)

Table 7. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within each performance anxiety (Page 46)

Table 8. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within test anxiety (Page 46)

Table 9. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within fear of negative evaluation (Page 47)

Table 10. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within communication apprehension (Page 48)

Table 11. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for males and females (page 49)

Table 12. Separate mean scores of each performance anxiety for males and females (Page 50)

Table 13. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within test anxiety for males and females (Page 50)

Table 14. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within fear of negative evaluation for males and females (Page 51)

Table 15. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within communication apprehension for males and females (Page 52)

Table 16. Distribution of items within Hanifa's (2018) three factor model (Page 61)

Table 17. Mean score and standard deviation for each of Hanifa's (2018) three factors (Page 66)

1. Introduction

The majority of young learners who attend school in Norway have English as an obligatory subject and the learners undergo a long, complicated and at times difficult process of becoming proficient English speakers, which may lead to anxiety in the classroom. Foreign language speaking anxiety, viewed here as anxiety caused by speaking a foreign language, is a phenomenon that has attained a lot of focus in recent years, and a number of researchers have studied the topic since the 1960's (Jing & Junying, 2016). This form of anxiety entails a language learner's experience of anxiety in situations that involves communicating in a foreign language, whether that be through reading, writing or speaking with interlocutors.

In the present study the focus is laid on speaking. Several of studies on this topic have concluded that foreign language speaking anxiety indeed poses a threat among learners who aim to become proficient in a new language (Luo, 2014). The anxiety is provoked by factors such as constantly being under evaluation, feeling judged by teachers or peers, or fear of failure, and in turn these factors may affect the learner's confidence negatively. Campbell and Ortiz (1991) reported that as many as half of all foreign language learners endure an overwhelming level of anxiety in a language learning context. On a global basis these numbers are exceptionally high, and the probability that one has family members, friends or acquaintances who have or still are experiencing foreign language speaking anxiety is quite high. According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), some language learners insist they have a mental barrier that prevents them from assimilating any newly acquired knowledge and therefore hindering their language learning process. These individuals may be excellent learners in other subjects such as mathematics or social studies and may even have a sincere interest in and motivation for foreign language learning, but still encounter waves of anxiety that obstruct their paths towards becoming proficient English speakers. As foreign language speaking anxiety has grown to become a phenomenon that affects many language learners, research on the topic may aid both present and future teachers who wish to help alleviate anxiety among their learners. The research may help teachers recognize certain behaviour among the learners that resemble anxiety, as well as provide a guide on how the teacher can be supportive and help alleviate anxiety levels.

Gaining an understanding of what foreign language speaking anxiety entails may prove helpful for many language teachers as they may meet a vast number of learners who experience anxiety throughout their teaching careers. By being able to recognize learners who

exhibit avoidance behaviour or physiological symptoms that are congruent with a person who might experience anxiety, the teacher may be able to provide help to alleviate the anxiety and make the language learning process easier and more enjoyable for the learner (Wörde, 2003).

The majority of existing research on the topic of foreign language speaking anxiety has been conducted on learners who attend high school, university, or older adults (Aida, 1994; Al-Nouh et al., 2015; Çağatay, 2015; Horwitz et al., 1986; Jing & Junying, 2016; Luo, 2014; Occhipinti, 2009; Oda, 2011; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). A rather small number of studies has focused on younger learners (Čiček, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021). The present study attempts to fill the research gap that is foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners by conducting a quantitative study on Norwegian 7th grade learners who attend English classes in schools across the country. Additionally, the present study is interested to investigate whether there are any differences between male and female language learners. Several prior studies have asked the same question. However, researchers have not come to an agreement as to which gender experiences higher levels of anxiety (Aida, 1994; Çağatay, 2015; Čiček, 2014; Luo, 2014; Occhipinti, 2009; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Due to these different conclusions the researcher finds it exciting to investigate whether any differences exist among the present participant sample. By examining this issue, the present study hopes to aid in filling the research gap that exists.

Although anxiety may be experienced through speaking, writing or reading, the present study chooses to focus only on speaking. Speaking abilities play a large part of language learning, as much of the classroom evaluation is based on oral performances. Learning a new language involves a highly complex mental processing, and the learner must become familiar with the prosody of speech. By the end of the learner's 7th year in a Norwegian school, it is expected that they should be able to orally communicate about simple and familiar topics such as hobbies and family background. Speaking abilities at this level is, according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), a level A2. A2 is the second level out of 6 that are presented in the scale (Council of Europe, 2001).

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Does speaking anxiety occur with EFL learners in Norwegian 7th grade classrooms? If so, which of Horwitz et al.'s three performance anxieties is most pronounced?

2. Does gender have an impact on foreign language speaking anxiety levels among 7th grade learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?

The present study utilizes a translated and adapted version of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) questionnaire called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which is designed to measure the foreign language speaking anxiety experienced by language learners and has been utilized in a large number of studies. Horwitz et al. (1986) also presented three performance anxieties labelled test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, which involve a learner's experience of anxiety during test situations, evaluative situations as well as communicative situations. The present study is interested in investigating whether any one of these anxieties is more pronounced than the other two, as this will aid in discovering what part of the language learning process, if any, learners find most anxiety-provoking.

The present study includes 186 Norwegian 7th grade learners from 9 different schools across the country. Each individual responded anonymously online to a questionnaire with 32 items involving foreign language speaking anxiety and used a 5-point Likert scale to rate each item according to their own feelings and experiences. Each participant was assumed to have finished 6 years of English starting in 1st grade, and were halfway through their 7th year when the survey was conducted.

This thesis is divided into several chapters. Chapter 2 "Theory and literature review" explains terms and concepts that are relevant for the study. Among these concepts are *anxiety* as a general term, *speaking* as a skill taught in English lessons in Norwegian schools, and *foreign language speaking anxiety*, which will hold the main focus of the thesis.

Chapter 3 "Methods" describes all steps that were included in the study. This includes how participants were located and recruited, how the final questionnaire was created and pilot tested, how the data was collected and analysed, the level of validity and reliability of the study, followed by ethical considerations.

Chapter 4 "Results" presents the collected data related to both research questions first by presenting data related to the presence of foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners, followed by data related to the three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986).

Chapter 5 “Discussion” includes discussions around the finding related to the research questions as well as findings from previous studies on foreign language speaking anxiety. Additionally, findings from the present study are discussed in relation to the three anxiety perspectives presented by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), and the three factors that may affect foreign language speaking anxiety, introduced by Hanifa (2018).

Lastly, Chapter 6 “Conclusion” introduces the final conclusions that are made based on the analysed data, as well as reflections on the data collection methods, limitations and propositions for future research on the topic, and implications for teaching.

2. Theory and literature review

2.1 Anxiety

In order to understand what anxiety entails with regard to foreign language learning, one must gain an understanding of what the term means in general. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries define anxiety as "the state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen" and "a mental health problem that causes somebody to worry so much that it has a very negative effect on their daily life» (Oxford University Press, n.d). A similar definition has been proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope in their study: "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 125). Anxiety can affect any person regardless of race, gender or age and can be a barrier for success (Čiček, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986). Additionally, a vast amount of research has shown evidence of the extensive influence anxiety may have on emotional, cognitive and behavioural functioning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Anxiety does not appear in one singular form nor does it occur based on one singular cause. One individual may experience that certain situations trigger high levels of anxiety in situations where other individuals may only experience uneasiness or no worry at all (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) introduce three perspectives related to research on anxiety, namely trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation specific anxiety.

2.2 Perspectives on anxiety

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found it useful to provide an outline of three perspectives that have been relevant when researching different areas of anxiety, including the language learning context. These three perspectives were given the names state, trait and situation specific anxiety.

The term trait anxiety entails a sense of anxiety in any given circumstance (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). A person with trait anxiety does not experience anxiety only in situations such as when speaking to native speakers of a language they are learning but might also experience it when speaking to non-native speakers of the same foreign language or when trying to write a word in the foreign language on the blackboard in front of class. It is a trait that is ingrained in the person's nature and personality. Research suggests that trait anxiety has some psychological consequences such as interfering with memory, hindering cognitive

functioning, and provoking avoidance behaviour (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Any person with trait anxiety will be asked by the researcher to consider factors they find to be anxiety provoking and ascribe these factors to specific situations after the trait anxiety has been identified (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). One individual's anxiety trigger may not correspond to another individual and it might be perceived as useful to detect situations that trigger anxiety when working with a learner to reduce their high anxiety levels.

In contrast to trait anxiety, state anxiety is only experienced in a precise moment in time, for example before an oral presentation, before reading out loud in class, or while speaking a foreign language to teachers or peers. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), state anxiety is a "blend of the trait and situational approaches" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p.90). It can be thought of as an "emotional state related to the here and now experience" (Occhipinti, 2009, p. 14). If a person shows high levels of trait anxiety, it is possible that they will show even higher levels of state anxiety in situations that are perceived as demanding (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). MacIntyre explains that "state anxiety is the reaction, and trait anxiety represents the tendency to react in an anxious manner" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 93). Unlike trait anxiety, the person who is experiencing state anxiety will not be asked by the researcher to ascribe their anxiety to any specific situations that they perceive as triggering (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

The third and final perspective on anxiety is situation specific anxiety. A person who experiences situation specific anxiety will encounter this sense of apprehension, nervousness and worry consistently over time within specific situations. In contrast to trait anxiety, which is a long-term form of anxiety, situation specific anxiety is triggered by experiences in the moment and often short-termed. When exploring a person's situation specific anxiety, one aims to understand the source of the anxiety reaction. However, as MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) point out, a *situation* can be difficult to define as it is quite a broad term. For some, the situation might be shyness in general, and for others it might be something specific such as stage fright. When researching the topic, it is the researcher's obligation to define the situation and ensure that it is relevant for their specific purpose, while simultaneously making sure that it is general enough to permit some universality (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explain that some researchers who have studied anxiety have opted for one of these perspectives. However, they suggest that the situation specific perspective is the one that have contributed to achieving consistent and significant results.

Zhao Na (2007) agrees that the situation specific anxiety is the perspective that is most relevant to foreign language speaking anxiety as it “refers to the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient” (Zhao, 2007, p. 23), and can therefore be related to the foreign language classroom.

2.3 Speaking as a skill

Speaking is a major part of foreign language learning, and a lot of the assessment a teacher does is based on the learners’ speaking abilities. It has been asserted that many learners of foreign languages, for example English, decide to learn the language with the intention of learning to communicate fluently in it, both orally and in writing (Hanifa, 2018). Research has revealed that speaking the foreign language is the language skill that provokes the highest levels of anxiety, meaning it is one of the main sources for anxiety in a foreign language classroom (Horwitz et al., 1986; Luo, 2014; Phillips, 1992).

Speaking is a skill that, although might sound simple to learn, involves a variety of components that a learner must acquire. According to *Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet 2020*, (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020), communication is one of the three core elements in a learner’s English education. Language learning is the second core element. These elements state that children shall develop communicative skills in English and be able to use these skills in practical and authentic situations, both orally and by writing. “Learning the pronunciation of phonemes, and learning vocabulary, word structure, syntax and text composition gives the pupils choices and possibilities in their communication and interaction” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 2) They will develop the ability to employ various language learning strategies as a means to further improve their own competence within these skills. LK20 further states that a language learner should encounter situations in which the ability to speak multiple languages can be seen as a resource.

LK20 states that one of the central values of English teaching is to work with the learners and help them develop themselves into confident users of English who can use the language to “learn, communicate and connect with others” (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020, p. 2), which means that the focus has shifted from learning to speak like a native to simply speaking understandably.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) might act as a helpful tool for teachers when assessing how far a learner has come in their language learning

process. The CEFR is an international standard that is employed when describing the language abilities of foreign language learners and uses a 6-point scale ranging from A1 for beginners, up to C2 for the most advanced learners (Council of Europe, 2001). According to *Utdanningsdirektoratet* (2020), most young learners master level B1 during their years in junior high school, which ranges from 8th to 10th grade in Norway. This suggests that learners in 7th grade who learn English as a foreign language in Norwegian schools should be around level A2. At the A2 level a learner should be able to communicate about topics that are familiar such as family background, shopping and interests by using frequently used sentences and expressions (Council of Europe, 2001).

Learning good pronunciation can be perceived as challenging and stressful for many English learners as it includes quite complex mental processing (Hanifa, 2018). However, learning the prosody of speech is something each learner will undergo. Knowledge of rhythm in words and phrases, as well as putting stress on the right syllables and using the correct intonation when speaking are all factors that contribute to good pronunciation. However, good pronunciation should not be confused with accent, but is instead regarded as being understood. Additionally, a learner must gain knowledge of the different grammatical and vocabulary structures within the English language and learn to use these (McLellan, 2019). They need to gain an understanding of the various grammatical word classes such as verb, adjectives and nouns, in addition to grammatical systems like tense and pluralization. Furthermore, the learner must acquire the knowledge needed in order to correctly employ the various patterns, word orders and rules in speaking English (Brown, 2004)). Brown (2004) introduced a list of skills that are necessary for foreign language learners to acquire when learning to speak a language, which he divided into *microskills* and *macroskills*. The macroskills include a focus on the larger elements of speaking such as fluency and discourse, while the microskills are focused on smaller components such as phonemes and collocations. He explains that although “the macroskills have the appearance of being more complex than the microskills, both contain ingredients of difficulty, depending on the stage and context” (Brown, 2004, p. 143).

2.3 Foreign language speaking anxiety

This specific study focuses on foreign language speaking anxiety among young Norwegian learners who learn English as a foreign language. Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is considered a “complex psychological construct” (Wörde, 2003, p. 1) that encompasses many variables which makes the term difficult to precisely define. However, it has been reported

that foreign language speaking anxiety is a concept that regularly appears in testing situations among language learners in which learners report feelings of nervousness and worry which cause them to produce errors both orally and in writing during foreign language classes (Horwitz et al., 1986). Foreign language anxiety related to oral communication is usually referred to as foreign language speaking anxiety.

Any student in a foreign language classroom will have personal experiences from their language learning course and might experience language speaking anxiety quite differently. Even a group of learners in the same classroom may have different views on the experience and personal achievement in the education and how anxiety may have affected their learning. Factors such as intelligence, gender, age, desire to learn, ability to communicate, and learning approach can affect an individual's success in the foreign language classroom (Djigunović, 2009). When relating anxiety to language learning situations, Horwitz et al. (1986) explain that the foreign language speaking anxiety is known as a *specific anxiety reaction*. They further explain that this term is utilized by psychologists in order to “differentiate people who are generally anxious in a variety of situations from those who are anxious only in specific situations» (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 125), in this case these situations include the foreign language learning environment.

Foreign language speaking anxiety can initially appear as brief experiences of dread in a performance setting in the foreign language classroom and simply be viewed as a passing state of apprehension. However, in some cases, this dread lingers over time and if a learner associates the foreign language classroom with feelings of anxiety, it could potentially go from a passing state to a permanent trait which might affect foreign language learning (Oxford, 1998). According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) foreign language speaking anxiety can indeed affect the various stages of the language learning process, namely input, retrieval and output. In the input stage, the experience of anxiety can create some form of fear or apprehension when listening to new words or phrases in a foreign language. Distressing encounters with a foreign language can provoke anxiety which in turn can negatively impact the learners' capability to obtain new knowledge or to concentrate (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oda, 2011). During the retrieval stages of foreign language learning, the learner attempts to organise and store the information that was provided during the input stage. Anxiety may cause the learner to struggle with this organisation which in turn might result in an incapability to understand the given information or to learn new vocabulary (Oda, 2011). The final stage in this learning process is the output stage. During this stage the learner will

demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge. However, if a learner struggles with a sense of anxiety at this stage, the anxiety “might inhibit the learner's ability to speak or write in the foreign language” (Oda, 2011, p. 6). This experience may be perceived as quite debilitating for the learner.

The terms state, trait and situation specific anxiety can all be related to anxiety in a language learning context as they all represent various ways in which a language learner might experience anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Some learners might experience the foreign language classroom as a setting that provokes a sense of anxiety, which could imply that they have a situation specific anxiety. Other learners might feel anxious before having an oral presentation in the foreign language classroom, which could make it a state anxiety. Learners with trait anxiety might endure loss of memory of previously attained knowledge from prior foreign language lessons. This could in turn provoke avoidance behaviour and further anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Foreign language speaking anxiety seems to be a largely known phenomenon that has been studied by various well known and respected researchers (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Back in the 1980's there seemed to be a sense of disagreement in finding a universal definition of this term, but as of lately many researchers have chosen to introduce and/or employ Horwitz et al.'s definition (Çağatay, 2015; Čiček, 2014; Hanifa, 2018; Jing & Junying, 2016; Liu & Hong, 2021; Luo, 2014), which was that this form of anxiety is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). This is the definition that the present study has chosen to employ.

2.3.1 Facilitating and debilitating anxiety

Many definitions of foreign language speaking anxiety have presented this form of anxiety as a phenomenon that is negative. However, Oxford Dictionaries have a contradicting definition that is much more positive: “a strong feeling of wanting to do something or of wanting something to happen” (Oxford University Press, n.d). This definition is equivalent to facilitating anxiety, a form of anxiety that might encourage learners not to give up and to achieve success despite feeling anxious. When related to English learning, one can speculate that this positively loaded anxiety definition entails a pupil's desire to achieve success in the language learning process. Zhao Na explains that “[m]uch research indicates that adequate anxiety plays a positive role and can motivate students to maintain their efforts on learning”

(Zhao Na, 2007, p. 31). She further states that although the teacher should take action to alleviate high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, it is important to ensure a low level of anxiety as a means to motivate the pupils to strive towards their goals. When the pupils experience enhanced learning and success in language class, they will adopt a successful self-image that helps motivate future language learning (Oda, 2011). According to Young (1991) learners might be able to manage anxiety-provoking situations in a better manner if they become more attentive towards factors that generate fear in language learning settings. In an effort to encourage further language learning among learners with facilitating anxiety, the teacher should establish a safe and supportive classroom environment, as well as motivate learners who struggle and give praise and positive feedback when they overcome even small obstacles (Wörde, 2003; Zhao, 2007).

Table 1. The Kinds of Learner’s self anxiety. (Bailey, 1983).

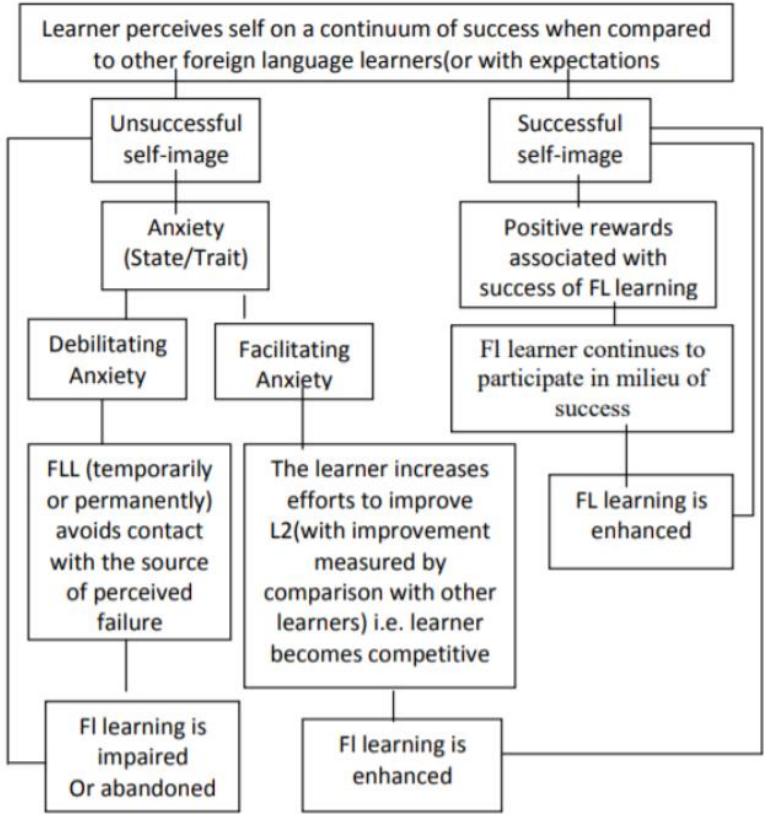


Table 1 presents a model introduced by Bailey (in Oda) on how the two different views a foreign language learner may have of themselves, a positive and successful self-image and a negative and unsuccessful self-image, and how one may deal with these views. Regardless of whether the learner starts with a positive or negative self-image of their abilities, they have

the possibility to reach a level of enhanced learning in the foreign language classroom if they find a way to follow the steps that lead toward it.

MacIntyre and Gardner explain that “anxiety poses several potential problems for the student of the foreign language because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention, and production of the new language” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 86). This statement is congruent with what is called *debilitating anxiety*, which is a negative type of anxiety that potentially could lead the learner to enter into a cycle of. The debilitating anxiety creates a barrier that hinders any language learning completely (Oda, 2011, pp. 4-5). Additionally, foreign language speaking anxiety has proven to negatively affect the learners’ performance in the foreign language classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). According to Oda (2011), the pupil must develop a competitive mentality and put great effort into learning the language. This could potentially be a large obstacle for any language learner to overcome, but when achieved, will lead to learning opportunities and a sense of accomplishment. When a learner successfully turns debilitating anxiety into facilitating anxiety, all language learning is enhanced. However, as Horwitz et al. make clear: If a learner suffers from severe anxiety, they should be referred to a specialist in order to receive the help they need (Horwitz et al., 1986).

To summarize, there are many factors that affect foreign language speaking anxiety. These include cognitive factors, affective factors, performance factors, competition and collaboration in the classroom, facilitating anxiety, and debilitating anxiety. All of these factors might pose a large issue for a 7th grade pupil, as they will have to go through several more years of school learning English as a subject every week. If a pupil with debilitating anxiety is to achieve success in English class, he or she must make a great effort to turn the debilitating anxiety into a facilitating anxiety.

2.3.2 Factors that can affect foreign language speaking anxiety

Foreign language speaking anxiety does not stem from one singular root but derives from many possible causes. Hanifa (2018) introduced three different factors that affect foreign language speaking anxiety in a literature review he did on the topic, namely cognitive factors, affective factors, and performance factors. Cognitive factors involve the learners’ thinking processes. This might include factors such as retrieving vocabulary and ability to structure sentences grammatically correctly. Additionally, when a learner communicates with others in the target language, the cognitive factors partly encompass the learner’s background knowledge as the prior knowledge a learner has about a certain topic affects language

production in the moment. The learner might face issues in producing appropriate language if they have little or no knowledge of the required topic. Furthermore, if a learner receives input that is beyond their level of comprehension, they may experience elevated levels of anxiety as they do not understand what is being spoken to them and therefore do not know how to respond (Hanifa, 2018). This is supported by Tuan and Mai (2015) as well as Kasbi and Shirvan's (2017) studies on foreign language speaking anxiety and factors that affect speaking anxiety. They concluded that learners who do not possess enough topical knowledge when speaking in a foreign language setting might experience high levels of speaking anxiety which in turn can result in avoidance behaviour. The learners might end up refraining from communicative situations or participation in the foreign language classroom (Hanifa, 2018). Al-Nouh et al. (2015) advocate for students' opportunity to choose topics of their own as this contributes to better language comprehension and therefore lower levels of speaking anxiety.

The second category, affective factors, regard the learners' feelings and personality as focal points. The learners' feelings towards both interlocutor and the current topic they are learning, as well as their own self-consciousness, can affect their ability to perform confidently. Kasbi and Shirvan (2017) explain that lack of interest in the given topic can potentially discourage the learners from searching for further information, leading to added levels of speaking anxiety as they do not know of what to discuss with their peers when they are requested to answer a question (Hanifa, 2018). Additionally, if the learner experiences the relationship with their interlocutors or teachers as uncomfortable, this could add as an anxiety provoking factor, as explained by Alsowat (2016) and Mouhoubi-Messadh (2017). Some learners might fear their teacher's negative reaction if they answer questions or pronounce words incorrectly, or they might experience worry that their peers will negatively judge any mistakes they make (Hanifa, 2018). Additionally, learners might also lose confidence and courage to initiate conversations as well as avoid participating in class if their teachers or peers appear to be too intimidating. Research supports the importance of creating a supporting and encouraging classroom environment to promote good development of the learners' speaking abilities (Al-Nouh et al., 2015; Hanifa, 2018).

Finally, Hanifa (2018) introduces a third category labelled performance factors. Performance factor is the common denominator for any classroom activity that involves speaking in front of others. According to Singh (2012), many learners who show average performance abilities in the foreign language classroom have had to overcome the obstacle of communication fright in order to achieve their educational goals in the foreign language. These learners found that

speaking in front of class was a fear-inducing experience, and a difficult hinderance to overcome. Hanifa (2018) states that collaborating with peers when having an oral presentation might help reduce some anxiety levels, as presenting alone can be experienced as quite intimidating. Furthermore, he weighs planning and rehearsing as important steps to include in order to ensure the learners an opportunity to feel more comfortable and confident with both fluency and accuracy when speaking. Brooks and Wilson (2015) conducted a study on benefits and challenges with utilizing presentations in classrooms with English as a foreign language and discovered that providing the learners with time to practice before speaking was beneficial in terms of anxiety levels. By removing the opportunity for practicing the language before presenting, the learners might become more apprehensive when speaking (Hanifa, 2018).

Competition in the classroom has been viewed as a negative factor that generates anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Hanifa, 2018; Oda, 2011). Hanifa (2018) suggests that competition is an anxiety-provoking factor in an educational setting. His justification is based on the supposed judgement a learner receives from their peers and how this judgement might be perceived as important for the individual. Consequently, if a learner feels as if they have fallen behind their peers in regard to academic achievement, this might generate feelings of shame, fear, helplessness and pain (Hanifa, 2018). Bailey (1983) supports this view on competitiveness, explaining that an individual might compare themselves to other learners, underestimate their own language abilities, and think too much about the possibility of failure. This mindset might stem from personality traits such as competitiveness, the desire to achieve better than others, or eagerness to surmount their own expectations in the foreign language classroom (Bailey, 1983; Occhipinti, 2009).

In contrast to competition, collaboration is a factor that has been viewed as a positive aid for learners of a foreign language. Hanifa (2018) states that learners might perceive speaking activities as more difficult when performing alone as opposed to when they have the opportunity to do it in groups. Producing language spontaneously in small groups with peers may not cause the same sense of nervousness as it would if a learner were to speak in front of a whole classroom (Ellis, 2012). Research has found that supportive and suitable feedback presented by peers might assist a learners language development (Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017).

2.3.3 Performance anxieties

Language learning entails performing orally in a foreign language classroom, which could potentially be an anxiety-provoking situation for many language learners. Horwitz et al. (1986) have therefore presented three performance anxieties that are relevant in a language learning context. The categories were named communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation.

Test anxiety involves a learner's experience of anxiety in scenarios where their abilities are being tested and was the form of anxiety that most participants in Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study struggled with. The learner might have too high demands for their own performance and expect perfection, and therefore a fear of failure can promote a sense of anxiety. For a 7th grader, a relevant scenario could be an oral presentation. Wörde (2003) reports a student who would experience severe anxiety prior to an oral presentation. He felt very upset and was both sweating and shaking. However, there has been discussions as to whether test anxiety is relevant for the language learning setting or not. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found that test anxiety is a general anxiety issue and not related to communicative anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Contrary to this belief, Horwitz et al. (1986) claim that it indeed *is* relevant for foreign language learning as evaluating learners' performance is an ongoing process in the foreign language classroom.

Fear of negative evaluation could, similar to test anxiety, also be connected to oral presentations. However, this category focuses on the evaluation alone. While test anxiety is limited to a test-taking situation, fear of negative evaluation occurs in any situation where one is being evaluated by others, such as in an interview, during an oral presentation or while speaking aloud in the classroom. Essentially, a learner might experience a sense of anxiety when he or she fears their speaking abilities will be evaluated negatively. Learners with fear of negative evaluation can be seen avoiding contributions in discussions or conversations, and only offering small nods in agreement (Aida, 1994).

Lastly, communication apprehension is related to a pupil's fear and shyness of communicating with other people, whether that be in groups or in public. It also includes situations where the learner listens to a spoken message (Horwitz et al., 1986). René von Wörde (2003) conducted a study on learners' perceptions on foreign language speaking anxiety and revealed that the factor that provoked the highest levels of anxiety among her participants was any activity that involved speaking and/or listening (Wörde, 2003).

Considering the fact that oral presentations as well as plenary readings and discussions are widely used in the foreign language classroom, one might understand how communication apprehension can pose as an issue for many learners.

For a 7th grader learning English in Norway, all of these categories are very relevant. Although assessment in 7th grade is still only formative, a child will have to face oral presentations, tests that assess their progress such as glossary tests, and communication settings during English lessons, as evaluating performances is a crucial and ongoing feature of most foreign language lessons (Horwitz et al., 1986).

2.3.4 Young learners' foreign language speaking anxiety

The majority of research done on foreign language speaking anxiety has been conducted with older learners such as students at high school or university level (Aida, 1994; Al-Nouh et al., 2015; Çağatay, 2015; Horwitz et al., 1986; Jing & Junying, 2016; Luo, 2014; Occhipinti, 2009; Oda, 2011; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). The reason behind why most studies do not involve young learners might be based on claims that young learners experience little to no anxiety in regard to language learning (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This was postulated by MacIntyre and Gardner and was based on the claim that younger learners focus more on motivation and aptitude, and that foreign language speaking anxiety only appears in later years depending on whether or not the learners have negative encounters with language learning (Oda, 2011). Several researchers who have conducted studies on young learners support this claim, and state that foreign language speaking anxiety does not pose too much of an issue in contrast to the older learners (Čiček, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021).

One of the few studies that examined young learner's foreign language speaking anxiety, conducted by Liu and Hong (2021), included 709 young learners in China aged nine to sixteen. They utilized several questionnaires in their research, namely English Speaking Anxiety Scale (ESAS), and English Language Classroom Enjoyment Scale (ELCES) in addition to four open-ended questions. Analysis of the retrieved data revealed that one third of the youngest participants experienced different levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, and half of them experienced joy in the classroom while learning English as a foreign language. However, these results changed gradually as the focus was shifted to older learners. Compared to grade 4, grade 5 experienced higher levels of anxiety and lower levels of enjoyment. The same results appeared when grade 5 was compared to grade 6, grade 6 to

grade 7 and so forth. What is evident from this particular study is that foreign language speaking anxiety levels increase as the learner grows older. This might be due to the increase in demanding obligations in the classroom as well as the number of new experiences that are faced as a learner grows older (Liu & Hong, 2021). However, it is imperative to keep in mind that these results do not represent all young foreign language learners as the quantity of participants was far too few, in addition to the sample being exclusively selected from one school in China.

Even though much research suggests that young learners enter the world of foreign language learning with positive attitudes and low levels of anxiety (Djigunović, 2009), it has still been stated that foreign language learners require secure surroundings where they are given time to become comfortable with the language before they are required to speak out loud.

Simultaneously, it is important that they are still inspired to be bold and take risks in the language learning process in order to evolve into characters that do not experience a sense of fear, worry of nervousness in their classroom community (McKay, 2006). Oda (2011) reports that during a child's growth in foreign language education the anxiety can develop into a negative self-image which promotes higher levels of anxiety that might impair learning or evolve into a positive self-image where the learner is met with encouragement and support that helps enhance foreign language learning. The latter is what one hopes transpires among all learners.

2.3.5 Gender differences in foreign language speaking anxiety

Not many studies on foreign language speaking anxiety have focused solely on gender, but many have included this as a subsection of their research (Aida, 1994; Çağatay, 2015; Čiček, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021; Luo, 2014; Occhipinti, 2009; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Zhao, 2007). Based on many of these studies, there is no overall agreement on whether boys or girls are more affected by speaking anxiety. Causes behind this disagreement are not clear, but there are several possibilities that might come to play. Among other factors, age is one that might come into play when researching gender differences in foreign language speaking anxiety. Older students might experience a higher level of speaking anxiety than younger students and considering the fact that so many studies have been conducted on older learners, the gender differences might be more pronounced. Size of the selected group of participants might also be an element that can affect the results, as well as cultural differences between countries and cities across the world. Keeping these possible factors in mind, it is easier to understand how

some researchers conclude that females struggle more than males (Çağatay, 2015; Çiçek, 2014; Luo, 2014; Occhipinti, 2009; Park & French, 2013; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013), how others claim the opposite (Pae & Misieng, 2012; Zhao, 2007), and how some conclude that there are no differences between the two genders (Aida, 1994).

In Öztürk and Gürbüz's (2012) study on the topic of whether there were any pronounced differences between genders and their motivational levels as well as foreign language speaking anxiety levels, 338 participants consisting of 225 females and 158 males answered a questionnaire on foreign language speaking anxiety. These participants were located in Turkey and studied English in a preparatory program at a university, and the conclusion of this study was that females experienced higher levels of anxiety than males. Zhao Na (2007) conducted a similar study where she examined differences between male and female learners studying Chinese as a foreign language. She concluded that males experienced higher levels of anxiety than females. Her study was based in the Shandong province with 115 participants, 56 males and 59 females. This sample of participants had five to eight years of experience learning English as a foreign language. Lastly, Aida's (1994) study on foreign language speaking anxiety using Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) as a tool concluded that there were no significant differences between the two genders. Aida's (1994) study consisted of 96 participants based at the University in Texas, 56 of whom were male and 40 were female. What is self-evident in these different studies is the fact that none of them were conducted in the same country, nor did they involve exceptionally large numbers of participants which might limit the representativeness of these samples.

Considering how the current study is conducted on younger learners around the age of 12, it was interesting to conceptualize whether there were any differences in foreign language speaking anxiety-levels between the genders of the participants, if there were any anxiety at all. Discovering the foreign language speaking anxiety levels among this sample of young participants could provide further information to other already existing studies conducted on foreign language learners of the same age in similar situations.

Based on much research in the field that has been conducted on learners experiencing foreign language speaking anxiety, we have gained an understanding of the various ways in which this form of anxiety might be experienced. Despite the fact that there still is no universal agreement among researchers as to which gender suffers most from high levels of anxiety, the

present study attempt to fill this research gap by also investigating gender differences among foreign language learners.

Additionally, the present study attempts to fill another research gap within this field which is to explore foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners. Much of the previous research conclude that young learners do not experience much anxiety in the foreign language classroom, and that this anxiety starts appearing when the learners grow older (Liu & Hong, 2021). However, due to the lack of research on learners of this age, this conclusion is not generalizable. The present study also attempts to discover which of the three performance anxieties is most pronounced among this sample of participants. Thus, the present study could be beneficial for both pre- and in-service teachers because it provides an insight into what many young learners experience during their foreign language classes. This insight might equip teachers with ideas on how to alleviate some of the anxiety among the learners who struggle.

3. Methods

The current study set out to answer the two following research questions:

1. Does speaking anxiety occur with EFL learners in Norwegian 7th grade classrooms? If so, which of Horwitz et al.'s three performance anxieties is most pronounced?
2. Does gender have an impact on foreign language speaking anxiety levels among 7th grade learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?

As a means to add to the already existing research on foreign language speaking anxiety, the researcher decided to opt for a translated and adapted version of the FLCAS for the selected participants. A decision was made to employ a quantitative method rather than a qualitative method. This choice was made as a means to include as many participants as possible which in turn would aid in filling the research gap that exists on younger learners' foreign language speaking anxiety. By using an already existing and validated questionnaire, there was big opportunity to compare my findings with those of other researchers, and hence adding more to this field of research.

3.1 Finding participants

186 participants (88 females and 98 males) from nine English classes across Norway aged 12-13 took part in this study. All learners were recruited through their English teachers and were in their 7th year of learning English as a foreign language. Prior to reaching out to possible volunteering participants, two different texts were drafted. The first text was an initial invitation to teachers who might be interested in volunteering with their group of pupils, henceforth referred to as the initial invitation letter (see appendix C). It included some information about the researcher and their education as well as providing the teachers with a general understanding of what the study entails and how the data-collection was to be conducted. The second text that was drafted included more in-depth information about the study that each volunteering participant would receive after accepting the initial request and is henceforth referred to as the in-depth information letter (See appendix D). Information about what foreign language speaking anxiety means for learners in foreign language classes, and how it can affect their ability to achieve their foreign language goals was provided. Some ethical considerations were also mentioned. It was important to explain that none of the learners could be forced to participate, but that each individual could decide for themselves. Additionally, it was pointed out that each participant would be completely anonymous, and no answers could be traced back to any individuals. Lastly, information about how to follow

through with the activity as well as a hyperlink to the questionnaire was added as each teacher would have to conduct the survey without the presence of the researcher due to Covid 19-restrictions as well as restrictions based on travelling distance from the researcher to each school. Both drafts were discussed with a supervisor before the texts were sent out.

Teachers from across the country were approached in the beginning of January 2022 through a widely known Facebook-group for teachers called “Undervisningsopplegg” by posting the general invitation to which any volunteers could reply. Each volunteering teacher could send an e-mail or personal message through Facebook if they wanted to participate. The in-depth information letter that contained further information about the study as a whole, as well as a guide on how to follow through with the survey and a hyperlink to the online questionnaire was sent to the 11 teachers who replied to the invitation. Both an e-mail address as well as a phone number was provided in the event that they experienced any trouble with the questionnaire or had any other queries.

3.2 The questionnaire: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Until Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) created The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (See appendix A) in the 1980s, henceforth called FLCAS, there has been a limited selection of reliable measuring tools to be utilized in the research on foreign language speaking anxiety. The FLCAS was created by Horwitz and her colleagues when they saw the need for an accurate tool to measure foreign language speaking anxiety levels among language learners, as the only relevant tool they found to exist prior to the FLCAS was one created by Gardner, Clement, Smythe and Smythe in their study on motivation and attitudes (Gardner et al., 1979; Horwitz et al., 1986). Gardner et al.’s (1979) measurement tool gave way for a new age for the research on foreign language speaking anxiety (Park & French, 2013). Gardner et al.’s (1979) tool included five items aimed toward measuring only French class anxiety. The FLCAS on the other hand, includes 33 items related to foreign language speaking anxiety, and each item is answered using a five-point Likert scale that includes the answers “strongly agree”, “agree”, “neither agree nor disagree”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree”, where the learner can answer each item in a way that best represents their own experience. The participants received points from the Likert scale which range from one point for “strongly disagree” to five points for “strongly agree”. This entails a minimum score of 33 points and a maximum score of 165 points after the questionnaire is completed (Horwitz et al., 1986).

The three aforementioned performance anxieties *test anxiety*, *communication apprehension* and *fear of negative evaluation* are components of the FLCAS. Of the 33 items that make the questionnaire, 15 belong to *test anxiety*. The statements “I am usually at ease during tests in my language class” and “The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get” are examples of items that belong within this performance anxiety. The second anxiety, *communication apprehension*, includes 11 questionnaire items. Statements such as “I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class” and “I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says” make up this section of the performance anxieties. The third and final performance anxiety, namely *fear of negative evaluation* includes the final 7 items. Among these are the statements “I don't worry about making mistakes in language class” and “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language” (Pae & Misieng, 2012).

Table 2. Number of items in each performance anxiety in the original FLCAS.

Performance anxieties:	Items in each anxiety:
Test anxiety	3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28
Communication apprehension	1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 24, 27, 29, 30, 32
Fear of negative evaluation	2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 31, 33

Quite a few researchers have utilized the FLCAS in their own studies, whether that be the original version or adapted versions of it (Aida, 1994; Çağatay, 2015; Jing & Junying, 2016; Luo, 2014; Oda, 2011; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Würde, 2003; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). The original version of the questionnaire has had a reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .83, which implies a quite high internal reliability (Horwitz et al., 1986). Other researchers who have employed a translated and/or adapted version of the FLCAS have reported Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .80 (Aida, 1994) and .84 (Hajizadeh, 2013). These results suggest that the FLCAS is a highly reliable tool used to measure foreign language speaking anxiety, which is why it has been selected as the data elicitation instrument in the present study.

3.3 Translating the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

The FLCAS was adapted for this specific target group and was translated following Thompson and Dooley's (2020) guide on how to ensure translation fidelity. The questionnaire was systematically translated, using both forward-translation and back-translation, and it was pilot-tested and compared to the original questionnaire with help from bilingual individuals. When forward-translating the questionnaire, it was translated from the original language to the target language, which in this case was Norwegian. The forward-translation was conducted by the researcher. When starting the translation-process from English to Norwegian, it was not only important to keep the semantic equivalence in mind, which involves making sure that instead of focusing on precisely translating each term and the grammatical structures, the focus is to keep the equivalence of meaning. Additionally, it was important to keep the empirical and conceptual equivalence, remembering the participants' age, experiences and framework of reference (Thompson & Dooley, 2020). When considering empirical equivalence, it is important to keep in mind that the different expressions in the questionnaire might have to be reworded to match the understandings and use of language within the specific group of participants. Conceptual equivalence also regards the terms that are used in the questionnaire. It "entails making sure that terms used in the translation have the same framework of reference in the source and target cultures" (Thompson & Dooley, 2020, p. 65). If the items in the questionnaire represents any cultural attitudes, the translator must ensure that the target language captures the same attitude. Once the questionnaire was translated, the forward-translated questionnaire was shared with two pre-service English teachers, who were both native Norwegian speakers and proficient English users, would then conduct a back-translation of the items. The back-translation involved translating the items from Norwegian and back to the source language, which was English. This is done by people outside of the research team which helps to provide an unbiased translation (Thompson & Dooley, 2020). Despite Thompson and Dooley's (2020) tip to have the same number of forward-translators as back-translators, this questionnaire had only one forward-translator and two back-translators, due to limited time and resources for this project.

The back-translations were compared to each other as well as the Norwegian and original version, and some discrepancies were identified in items number 4, 5, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18, 22, 23, 25, 27 and 30. These were minor errors that could affect the semantic equivalency (Thompson & Dooley, 2020). Item number 5 stated "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes" (See appendix A). After the forward-translation the phrase read

“Det hadde ikke gjort meg noe å lære flere fremmedspråk» (See appendix B). When the two pre-service teachers who conducted the back-translation had finished translating, the two phrases read “I would not mind learning more foreign languages” and “I would not mind learning other foreign languages”. Although these two sentences might make sense to the 7th grade participants, they did not correspond with the original questionnaire as the original stated *It wouldn't bother me* and both back-translations stated *I would not mind*. This provided the researcher with the clue that they had not been translated correctly with regard to the semantic equivalency. The Norwegian translation was changed from “Det hadde ikke gjort meg noe å lære flere fremmedspråk» to «Det ville ikke brydd meg i det hele tatt å lære flere fremmedspråk».

Another discrepancy that was discovered was in item number 11. In the original questionnaire, this item stated, “I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes” (See appendix A). When forward-translating this item, the word *upset* was translated to *lei seg/redd*. When this item was back-translated, the same word was translated back to *sad/scared* by both pre-service teachers. Similar to item number 5, this provided the researcher with the information that they once again had translated incorrectly with regard to the semantic equivalency (Thompson & Dooley, 2020). When going back to the Norwegian translation, the words *lei seg/redd* was replaced with *opprørt*.

Items number 16 and 22 in the original questionnaire stated, “Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it” and “I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class” (See appendix A). These were translated to “Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i fremmedspråkundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig” and “Jeg kjenner ikke noe press på å forberede meg godt til en presentasjon i fremmedspråkundervisningen”. As can be seen in the two aforementioned items, the word *presentasjon*, in English *presentation*, has been added to both items. The reason behind this decision was that the most frequent scenario in which a 7th grader in Norway need to be prepared for English class is when they are carrying out a presentation. By shifting the focus to English presentations instead of English class in general, the researcher was able to follow the empirical equivalence for this specific participant sample (Thompson & Dooley, 2020).

In an attempt to resolve these discrepancies, a third back-translation was conducted by a new pre-service teacher. The third back-translation only included the twelve aforementioned items

that were found to be conflicting with the original questionnaire. Following the third back-translation all versions were once again compared, and no new discrepancies were identified.

The FLCAS was originally made for any foreign language class, but following the empirical equivalence, any item with the phrase “foreign language class” was changed to involve “English class”, or “Engelskundervisning” for the young Norwegian participants (Thompson & Dooley, 2020).

After the translation process was finished, a read-through was conducted in order to identify any items that were unrelated to speaking performance in the classroom. Item number 10 stated: “I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class” and was removed from the questionnaire due to lack of relevance for the Norwegian school system. In Norway, it is not possible to fail a class in 7th grade and having to re-take it, as differentiated instruction is a learners’ right by law (The Education Act, 1998) and should ensure that each learner is able to finish their education in the same expected number of years as any other learner. Removing item number 10 resulted in items 11 to 33 being shifted one notch. This entails that item number 11 in the original version of the questionnaire would become item number 10 in the adapted version, item 12 in the original would become item 11, and so forth. Furthermore, this change resulted in the category *test anxiety* having 14 items instead of 15, as well as the maximum score point now being reduced from 165 to 160, and the minimum score being reduced from 33 to 32. The remaining 32 items were all deemed appropriate for this study (See appendix B). A 33rd item that asked for the participants’ gender was added, before the final questionnaire was constructed and pilot tested.

3.4 Pilot testing

Prior to distributing the questionnaire to the participating classes, a pilot testing was conducted with a group consisting of three 7th graders that were recruited through family and acquaintances. Piloting the data elicitation instrument provided an opportunity to ensure that it functioned the way it was intended to (Mackey & Gass, 2011). The three learners who piloted the questionnaire were chosen because they belong to the target population for the survey. That meant the researcher would gain a good understanding of how the participant sample would perform on the questionnaire and interpret the items, as well as provide information in terms of “the reliability of the assessment” (Mackey & Gass, 2011, p. 70). The process of how to follow through with the questionnaire was explained to the group prior to them answering the questionnaire, clarifying the need to be honest in their answers. Furthermore, they were

reminded to remember or write down any questions they thought were difficult to comprehend, or other thoughts they had about the questionnaire and the items. After completing the questionnaire, the group provided the researcher with feedback on how they perceived the questionnaire. The feedback consisted of their impression of the questionnaire as a whole, in addition to any words or phrases they did not fully understand. This group of children did not report having any issues with the phrasing of any items, nor did they struggle to complete the questionnaire. This indicated that there was no need to make any changes before sharing the questionnaire with the participants.

One 7th grader from the piloting group had noticed how some items seemed similar to each other, namely items number 7: “*Jeg tenker hele tiden på at de andre er flinkere i fremmedspråket enn meg*” (“I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am”) and 22: “*Jeg føler alltid at de andre elevene prater fremmedspråket bedre enn meg*” (“I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do”). After clarifying to them that these items were made similar merely as a means to check if each learner was paying attention when reading, they seemed more at ease as well as proud to have noticed this small fact. All three 7th graders had paid good attention when reading and answering the questionnaire, which was evident when reviewing their answers. On the two items that one learner had pointed out looked similar, they had all crossed of the same point on the Likert scale on item number 7 as they did on item number 22. A similar situation occurred in items number 3 and 19 in the adapted version of the questionnaire. These items stated, “*Jeg blir skjelveen når jeg vet at jeg skal bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen*” (“I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class”) and “*Jeg kjenner hjertet dunker når jeg er i ferd med å bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen.*” (“I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class”). During the pilot testing each learner crossed of the same answer on the Likert scale in item number 3 as they did in item number 20. This provided the researcher with the conclusion that they all understood the assignment and were able to understand the phrases that were employed.

3.5 Data collection procedures

After the initial invitation was posted on the Facebook group “Undervisningsopplegg” there were 11 teachers that responded to the invitation, explaining that they wished to participate in the study. Each of the 11 teachers who reached out and wanted to participate were contacted one by one. The in-depth information letter was distributed. Each class received their own

individual hyperlink to the questionnaire on SurveyXact, meaning a total of 11 different hyperlinks were distributed to the participating classes. By distributing a different hyperlink to each class, the researcher was able to analyse data from one particular class and send it back to the class teacher. Each participant was given the opportunity to ask any further questions after receiving the information. Among these 11 teachers there were none who had additional questions with regard to conducting the survey. Considering how most classes only have 1-2 English lessons per class per week, the teachers were given 2-3 weeks to follow through with the survey. None of the teachers seemed to have an issue with the time limit. Some teachers ended up with slight issues when distributing the links to their classes, but these issues were quickly dealt with, and the surveys could be completed. Over a period of three weeks, 7 teachers had completed the survey, and a reminder was sent to the last 4 teachers. 2 of these teachers were able to conduct the survey by the end of the 4th week, while the remaining 2 did not respond to any e-mails that were sent by the researcher and were therefore excluded from the survey.

SurveyXact provided a great opportunity to look through and process results from each individual class. This is an online tool that is utilized by The University of Stavanger, and all students who attend the university have free access to this website. By employing a stacked bar chart and adding split frequencies, the researcher was able to cross-reference each of the 32 items from the questionnaire with the variable that asked learners for their gender and could in turn see what each gender had replied to each of the items, as well as how many of the learners of each gender had responded. SurveyXact did not save any background data, it provided the participants with the anonymity they were promised, while simultaneously being a helpful tool for preliminary data analysis.

3.6 Data analysis procedures

In conjunction with analysis of the received results, other tools were utilized supplementary to SurveyXact in order to get an overview of the results from each participating class as well as the sample of participants as a whole. Firstly, the results from each individual class were put into separate tables in an Excel document in order to gain an overview of the number of participants in each class and their answers to each item. The results from the individual classes were then sent out to the teacher belonging to each class. After this, a table presenting the participant sample as a whole was created. The table included all 32 items as well as the 5 points of the Likert scale. Furthermore, columns displaying both genders within each of the 5

points were added. This made it possible to view the participants' answers to each item, as well as presenting the distribution between both genders.

Table 3. Screenshot of results in Excel document

Items	Strongly agree		Agree		Neither agree nor disagree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Q1	8	12	16	28	41	26	22	18	9	6
Q2	11	11	34	18	26	29	19	23	8	7
Q3	6	15	15	27	19	15	32	18	26	13
Q4	0	2	6	12	22	27	29	27	37	24
Q5	21	16	24	24	30	25	13	9	10	14

Subsequently, the analytical software Statistical Product and Service Solutions, also known as “SPSS”, was utilized to analyse all data collected from the survey. SPSS has been used by several researchers (Liu & Hong, 2021; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013) and has been regarded as the most commonly used statistical tool in social sciences (Mackey & Gass, 2011). The software was employed as a means to gain a more detailed overview of the collected data, by calculating mean scores, standard deviations and the Chronbach Alpha coefficient. When inputting data into SPSS, all answers from each individual participant was entered. For the Likert scale, each possible response was given a number. “Strongly agree” was input as “1”, “Agree” was input as “2” and so forth for all 5 responses. This would result in one participant receiving a total score between 32 and 160 that represented their levels of anxiety. Additionally, the genders of the participant sample were input as digits, with “1” representing males and “2” representing females. This was done in order for SPSS to easily calculate the data input. A table presenting the mean scores and standard deviations for both genders combined, for each of the 32 items, was created (see table 4).

Table 4. Extract from results from the present survey in SPSS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item1	186	1,00	5,00	3,09	1,10
Item2	186	1,00	5,00	2,86	1,13
Item3	186	1,00	5,00	2,79	1,32

A high score in the questionnaire would suggest high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety. A low score would suggest the opposite. Among the 32 items in the questionnaire, 9 were positively worded and the remaining 23 items were negatively worded. This implies that

the response “Strongly agree” to a statement such as “Jeg føler alltid at de andre elevene prater Engelsk bedre enn meg» (“I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do”), would receive a score of 5, whereas the same response to the statement “Jeg føler meg selvsikker når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen” (“I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class”) would receive a score of 1. Keeping this consideration in mind has been crucial during the analytic process.

Additionally, a second table presenting the mean scores and standard deviations for each item was created, but for each gender separately (See appendix E). Among the 32 items in the questionnaire, 9 items were positively worded and the remaining 23 were negatively worded. The positively worded items were number 2, 5, 8, 10, 13, 17, 21, 27 and 31, and the negatively worded group included the remaining items.

Table 5. Separate results for males and females in SPSS

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item1	Male	98	2,88	1,08
	Female	88	3,33	1,09
Item2	Male	98	2,79	1,13
	Female	88	2,94	1,12
Item3	Male	98	2,42	1,21
	Female	88	3,20	1,31

The first research question asked: “Does speaking anxiety occur with EFL learners in Norwegian 7th grade classrooms? If so, which of Horwitz et al.’s three performance anxieties is most pronounced?”. In order to provide an answer to this question the items belonging in each of Horwitz et al.’s three performance anxieties were combined, and mean scores were calculated. The scores within the three anxieties were then compared.

The level of anxiety was categorized following Alsowat’s (2016) five degrees. A mean score from 1 to less than 1.8 would suggest very low anxiety levels, 1.8 to less than 2.6 suggested low anxiety levels, from 2.6 to less than 3.4 suggested moderate anxiety levels, 3.4 to less than 4.2 suggested high anxiety levels, and lastly, 4.2 to 5 suggested very high anxiety levels.

3.7 Validity and reliability

3.7.1 Validity

In order to minimize any errors in the employed data elicitation instrument, along with an evaluation of its quality, both validity and reliability have been acknowledged. The term validity regards the data collection and refers to the design of the data collection method and whether or not it measures the intended data precisely. In the present study validity has been ensured in several ways. The questionnaire is the translated version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which for years has been employed, either as an original or as an adapted version, by researchers due to its high relevance within the field (Aida, 1994; Çağatay, 2015; Hajizadeh, 2013; Jing & Junying, 2016; Luo, 2014; Oda, 2011; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Würde, 2003; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014; Zhao, 2007; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). The original questionnaire measures what was intended by its creators and is, according to the Cronbach's Alpha it received, a reliable instrument for measuring foreign language speaking anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). The translated version employed in the present study has been adapted and translated following Thompson and Dooley's (2020) guidelines, as well as been supported by an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha score, which suggests it is indeed a reliable instrument for measuring foreign language speaking anxiety as well.

Thompson and Dooley (2020) suggested that there should be an equal number of independent forward-translators as well as back-translators in order to ensure validity in the best possible manner. However, due to the present study being a small-scale project, only one forward-translator and three back-translators were involved in the translation process. Additionally, the forward-translator was not an independent individual but was instead the researcher conducting the present study. Everyone involved in the translation process was highly fluent in both the target language as well as the source language to prevent poor or inaccurate translations (Thompson & Dooley, 2020).

Validity can be divided into two categories, namely *internal* and *external* validity. External validity refers to whether or not the data might be generalisable and be representative for other language learners. The scope of this questionnaire is wide enough to provide a useful image of the participants' foreign language speaking anxiety levels and narrow enough to not capture unnecessary components (Horwitz et al., 1986; Mackey & Gass, 2011). Furthermore, by employing an online tool like SurveyXact, it was possible to include participants from

several schools across the country which provided a better chance at achieving a more representative dataset (Middleton, 2019). However, achieving an externally valid questionnaire in this situation is quite challenging. The sample of participants in the present study is relatively small compared to the number of learners in Norway who attend 7th in 2021-2022, which is at a staggering 66 500 according to Statistics Norway (2021). This questionnaire is therefore not necessarily externally valid. For this questionnaire to be externally valid for this age group there is a need for a much larger sample of participants.

Furthermore, internal validity encompasses methodological procedures and questions whether or not these procedures aid in answering the research questions (Campbell, 1957). By employing both forward- and back-translation to avoid any discrepancies between the original questionnaire and the translated version, internal validity was ensured as each item was translated as closely as possible to the original (Horwitz et al., 1986), while simultaneously taking the participants' age into consideration when choosing vocabulary for the translation.

When considering the validity of the research methods there are two concepts that might act as threats, namely *construct underrepresentation* and *construct-irrelevant variance* (Mackey & Gass, 2011). Construct underrepresentation entails a situation in which an evaluation falls short in providing a full picture that includes all aspects of the construct. Subsequently, this is a result of the evaluation being too narrow in range in addition to “failing to encapsulate some relevant dimensions associated with its proposed conceptual domain” (Mackey & Gass, 2011, p. 204). When creating the FLCAS, Horwitz et al. (1986) conducted group meetings with a sample of language learners, where a discussion based on their concerns and difficulties in the language learning environment was conducted. Based on the feedback they received, the 33 items that makes the FLCAS were created. This group meeting would ensure that the FLCAS indeed covers any dimension relevant to foreign language speaking anxiety.

Construct-irrelevant variance involves a measurement tool that is too broad in scope and captures additional unnecessary components (Mackey & Gass, 2011). Essentially, construct underrepresentation does not measure enough for the results to be relevant and construct-irrelevant variance measures too much, meaning the results can be skewed or not precise enough for the research questions.

3.7.2 Reliability

When discussing the reliability of a research method, one is interested in whether or not the tool used to collect data would provide the same results from the same sample of participants

if it were to be repeated multiple times (Lyngstad-Alderfer, 2016). The process of assessing the reliability of a research method consists of repeatedly examining the consistency of achieved results.

The question of reliability is also implemented when examining the coding process of the collected data. Mackey and Gass (2011) explain that when discussing the reliability of coding, one essentially works with the question of “If a particular dataset were coded repeatedly using the same procedure, would one consistently arrive at the same categorizations?” (Mackey & Gass, 2011, p. 204). Researchers who study topics such as foreign language speaking anxiety might wish for other researchers to contribute further to the field by copying the same research methods. In order for anyone to be able to pursue the same goals, the methods need not only to be valid but also reliable (Mackey & Gass, 2011).

There are three types of reliability, namely *test-retest*, *interrater* and *internal consistency* (Middleton, 2019). *Test-retest* concerns whether a researcher is able to achieve the same results by employing the same measurement repeatedly over time with the same participant sample. By producing the same results over a longer period of time, the measurement is perceived as more reliable. There was no opportunity to evaluate test-retest reliability as each participating class only responded to the questionnaire once.

The second type of reliability, *interrater*, is quite similar to test-retest, but rather than having one researcher conduct the measurement repeatedly over a period of time with a participant sample, interrater reliability implies various researchers employing the same measurement, or several researchers coding the same data. Considering how various versions of the FLCAS have been employed numerous times across the globe with participants of various ages, interrater reliability might be perceived as slightly low as results of foreign language speaking anxiety studies have been divided with regard to anxiety-levels among participants of all ages as well as gender differences (Aida, 1994; Čiček, 2014; Pae & Misieng, 2012; Park & French, 2013; Zhao, 2007).

Lastly, *internal consistency* concerns whether the researcher achieves the same results from various parts of the test that are designed to measure identical elements. By for example splitting a questionnaire in half, the results achieved from both halves should have a strong correlation in order for the measurement to be perceived as reliable (Middleton, 2019). With a Cronbach’s Alpha of .94, the present study provides a reliable instrument for measuring foreign language speaking anxiety. The Cronbach’s Alpha suggests that there are items in the

employed questionnaire that measure identical concepts which have strong correlations to each other.

3.8 Ethics

Before conducting any part of this research, several precautions had to be made in order to ensure that it was conducted in accordance with ethical research requirements and regulations. *Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata*, also known as NSD, was contacted prior to distributing the survey. This institution must be contacted whenever a researcher wishes to collect data that might contain sensitive information about individuals in our society. NSD ensures “that data about people and society can be collected, stored and shared, both safely and legally, today and in the future” (NSD, n.d). After contacting NSD it was determined that there was no need for a formal application prior to distributing the questionnaire. The decision was based upon the fact that no personal information about the participants were to be gathered, in addition to an online tool named SurveyXact being used as a tool to gather data anonymously. However, it was still necessary to provide the participants with proper information about the study, and the questionnaire could not be distributed to the participants without their consent.

All consent for participation was given freely and none of the participants were forced to answer the questionnaire. Every learner was given the opportunity to refrain from answering, and instead do something else while those who wanted to answer the questionnaire could finish their task. Furthermore, each teacher was given in-depth information about the research that they would give to the learners as well. Every participant would know who the researcher was and that they were writing an MA thesis, as well as the same in-depth information about the study that the teachers were given. Due to the limitations in terms of the researcher’s attendance at each school, each teacher would have to collect consent from the 7th grade learners. Each teacher was given written instruction from the researcher that they would collect the consent from each learner on behalf of the researcher, and then provide a written confirmation containing the number of learners who wished to participate. Each learner would not need to sign anything as it was preferred to keep them as anonymous as possible, instead they would accept orally to their teacher. The consent that was given from each learner to their teachers would have to be clear before proceeding with the survey. *Den Nasjonale Forskningsetiske Komité for Samfunnsvitenskap og Humaniora* (NESH), also known as NESH, is a committee which ensures that all conducted research is in accordance with ethical

guidelines (Find more information about NESH on <https://www.forskningsetikk.no/en/>).

According to section 8 in these guidelines, written consent by parents or other guardians does not necessarily have to be given in situations where the researcher is not in direct contact with the participants, or if the researcher collects any data that can not be traced back to any specific individual, in addition to the benefits of the participation exceeding any disadvantages the participants might experience from the study.

SurveyXact does not require any participant to log in to an account, nor does it gather information about the participants. The questionnaire was distributed via a hyperlink. When clicking on the hyperlink, the questionnaire would pop up immediately. As soon as a participant completed the survey, the webpage would close to prevent any person to view the final results from the array of participants.

Every teacher who volunteered to participate with their English class were given the offer of receiving the results from their own class. This was offered so that each teacher would have the opportunity to gain an insight into their students' perception of speaking in the English classroom. If anxiety-levels were high in one class, the teacher could choose to adapt their lessons accordingly, or implement anxiety-reducing activities in their classroom. Section 46 in NESH's guidelines for research ethics explain that anyone who chooses to participate in a survey or other type of study has the right to receive the results from the research, and the researcher has an obligation to ensure that the results are given in a logical and comprehensible manner. Each teacher from the participating classes received their results in the form of an Excel document via e-mail. This document included a table presenting the results of each of the 32 items divided between genders, as well as a bar chart from each item that showed the same results only in percentages as well as providing a better visual of each result.

4. Results

When analysing the results from the questionnaire, the first step was to employ SPSS to calculate the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. Subsequently, the mean score and standard deviation within each item was calculated using descriptive statistics, which in turn provided a partial answer to the first research question: "Does speaking anxiety occur with EFL learners in Norwegian 7th grade classrooms? If so, which of Horwitz et al.'s three performance anxieties is most pronounced?". In order to provide an answer to the second part of the first research question, the items were sorted into the three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz et al. (1986), and the mean score within each of the three anxieties was calculated. Following the analysis of both genders combined, a table presenting mean scores and standard deviations for each item separated into the two genders was created. This table would aid in providing an answer to the second research question: "Does gender have an impact on foreign language speaking anxiety levels among 7th grade learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?". A calculation that provided an answer as to which of the three performance anxieties was most pronounced between the two genders followed thereafter.

By use of SPSS, the questionnaire received an Alpha Coefficient of .94, which suggests high internal reliability. Compared to the original FLCAS, which received a score of .93 (Horwitz et al., 1986), these results suggest that the adapted and translated version indeed is similar to its original source, despite having one item removed from the questionnaire.

4.1 RQ1

Results deriving from descriptive analysis for each item revealed moderate anxiety levels for both genders combined, following Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling foreign language speaking anxiety levels. The mean score of all 32 items combined was calculated in order to discover the overall anxiety level among the participant group as a whole, and resulted in a mean score of 2.77, with a mean standard deviation of 1.17. This result partly answers the first research question of the present study, which is that there indeed are some levels of foreign language speaking anxiety among young EFL learners. Additionally, the mean score implies that the participants may have a moderate level of foreign language speaking anxiety, which is congruent with conclusions from some previous research that states young learners experience foreign language speaking anxiety at a significantly lower level than older language learners (Djigunović, 2009; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

Table 6. Mean scores and standard deviation for each item for all participants combined.

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item1	186	1.00	5.00	3.09	1.10
Item2	186	1.00	5.00	2.86	1.13
Item3	186	1.00	5.00	2.79	1.32
Item4	186	1.00	5.00	2.17	1.02
Item5	186	1.00	5.00	2.71	1.26
Item6	186	1.00	5.00	3.43	1.16
Item7	186	1.00	5.00	2.66	1.26
Item8	186	1.00	5.00	2.76	1.15
Item9	186	1.00	5.00	2.90	1.28
Item10	186	1.00	5.00	3.19	.94
Item11	186	1.00	5.00	2.88	1.18
Item12	186	1.00	5.00	2.47	1.13
Item13	186	1.00	5.00	2.65	1.21
Item14	186	1.00	5.00	2.72	1.11
Item15	186	1.00	5.00	3.25	1.27
Item16	186	1.00	5.00	2.31	1.26
Item17	186	1.00	5.00	2.90	1.17
Item18	186	1.00	5.00	2.61	1.15
Item19	186	1.00	5.00	2.81	1.37
Item20	186	1.00	5.00	2.65	1.17
Item21	186	1.00	5.00	2.98	1.17
Item22	186	1.00	5.00	2.85	1.22
Item23	186	1.00	5.00	2.87	1.27
Item24	186	1.00	5.00	2.62	1.15
Item25	186	1.00	5.00	2.41	1.10
Item26	186	1.00	5.00	2.63	1.15
Item27	186	1.00	5.00	2.63	1.05
Item28	186	1.00	5.00	2.55	1.04
Item29	186	1.00	5.00	2.83	1.10
Item30	186	1.00	5.00	2.75	1.33
Item31	186	1.00	5.00	2.54	1.07
Item32	186	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.23
Valid N (listwise)	186				

The lowest mean score among the 32 items was for item number 4 which received a mean score of 2.17 (See table 6). Item number 4 stated: “Det skremmer meg når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren sier på Engelsk.” (« It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language »). Only 1.1% of the participants strongly agreed with the statement, and 9.7% answered “Agree”. The low score of 2.17 suggests that the majority of the participants would not perceive situations in which they do not understand language produced by their English teacher as particularly frightening.

Item number 6 received a mean score of 3.43, which was the highest score of all 32 items in the questionnaire when both genders were combined. A total of 19.9% answered “Strongly agree” and 32.3% answered “Agree” to this statement, which declared: “I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre” (“During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course”). The mean score and percentage suggest that a surplus of the participants get distracted during their English classes.

3 of the 32 items present situations in which a learner is anxious about the lack of time for preparation prior to speaking English, namely items number 9, 19 and 32. Item number 9 stated: “Jeg får panikk når jeg må prate høyt uten å forberede meg i Engelskundervisningen” (“I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class”), and a total of 32.8% of the participants responded with either “Agree” or “Strongly agree” to the statement. 33.9% had identical responses to item number 19 and a staggering 40.8% answered identically to item number 32 which stated: “Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd” (“I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance”). These numbers suggest spontaneous oral production provokes rather high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, which may be debilitating for the young learners.

In order to answer the second part of the first research question, which was to discover which of the three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz et al. (1986) was most pronounced among the participant group, the mean scores within each performance anxiety from the participant group as a whole (see table 7) was added up and divided by the number of items within each anxiety. The performance anxiety that received the lowest mean score was communication apprehension, which received a 2.71 from the whole participant group. This suggests that the greater part of the participant sample do not experience especially high foreign language speaking anxiety levels in communicative situations. The performance anxiety that received the highest score was test anxiety, which obtained a mean score of 2.82. Fear of negative evaluation received a mean score of 2.76. Although there are some differences between the mean scores, they all belong to a moderate level of foreign language speaking anxiety, according to Alsowat’s (2016) model.

Table 7. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within each performance anxiety

Performance anxiety	Item within each performance anxiety	Mean score	Standard deviation
Test anxiety	3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27	2.82	1.18
Fear of negative evaluation	2, 7, 12, 18, 22, 30, 32	2.76	1.21
Communication apprehension	1, 4, 9, 13, 14, 17, 23, 26, 28, 29, 31	2.71	1.14

Although the majority of the mean scores suggest that none of the participants struggle with high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, there are still indications that the learners do not experience the foreign language classroom as a place of comfort that provides confidence. Only one item, item number 6, received a mean score higher than 3.4, which according to Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling anxiety is categorised as high anxiety. Item number 6 stated: "I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre" ("During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course") and belonged to the performance anxiety labelled test anxiety (See table 8). The item was, due to its relatively high mean score, the most pronounced item within the category. The item within the same performance anxiety that received the second highest mean score was item number 15, which received a mean score of 3.25. It stated: "Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig" ("Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it"). The fear of having an oral presentation in English class seems to be moderate with regard to foreign language speaking anxiety levels.

Table 8. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within test anxiety

Item number	Mean score	Standard deviation	Item text
3	2.79	1.32	"Jeg blir skjelven når jeg vet at jeg skal bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen"
5	2.71	1.26	"Det ville ikke brydd meg i det hele tatt å lære flere språk"
6	3.43	1.16	"I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre"
8	2.76	1.15	"Jeg er vanligvis avslappet når vi har prøver i Engelsk"

10	3.19	0.94	“Jeg forstår ikke hvorfor noen personer blir opprørt i Engelskundervisningen”
11	2.88	1.18	“I Engelskundervisningen kan jeg bli så nervøs at jeg glemmer ting jeg egentlig vet”
15	3.25	1.27	“Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig”
16	2.31	1.26	“Jeg føler ofte at jeg ikke vil møte opp i Engelskundervisningen”
19	2.81	1.37	“Jeg kjenner hjertet dunker når jeg er i ferd med å bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen”
20	2.65	1.12	“Jo mer jeg øver på en prøve, jo mer forvirret blir jeg”
21	2.98	1.17	“Jeg kjenner ikke noe press på å forberede meg godt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen”
24	2.62	1.15	“Undervisningen går så fort fram at jeg er redd for å henge etter”
25	2.41	1.10	“Jeg føler meg mer anspent og nervøs i Engelskundervisningen enn i andre undervisningstimer”
27	2.63	1.05	“Når jeg er på vei til Engelskundervisningen føler jeg meg sikker og avslappet”

Within fear of negative evaluation, item number 32 received the highest mean score (See table 9). The item stated: “Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd” (“I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance”) and received a mean score of 3.12. Item number 32 is the only item within fear of negative evaluation that received a mean score higher than 3. However, it is still categorised as moderate anxiety according to Alsowat’s (2016) model.

Table 9. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within fear of negative evaluation

Item number	Mean score	Standard deviation	Item text
2	2.86	1.13	“Jeg bekymrer meg ikke for å gjøre feil i Engelskundervisningen”
7	2.66	1.26	“Jeg tenker hele tiden på at de andre er flinkere i Engelsk enn meg”
12	2.47	1.13	“Jeg blir flau når jeg frivillig kommer med et svar i Engelskundervisningen”
18	2.61	1.15	“Jeg er redd for at læreren står klar for å rette alle feil jeg gjør”

22	2.85	1.22	“Jeg føler alltid at de andre elevene prater Engelsk bedre enn meg”
30	2.75	1.33	“Jeg er redd for at de andre elevene skal le av meg når jeg prater Engelsk”
32	3.12	1.23	“Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd”

Within communication apprehension, item number 1 received the highest score of 3.09 (See table 10). The item stated: “Jeg er aldri helt sikker på meg selv når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen” (“I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class”). Similar to item number 32, item number 1 was the only item within communication apprehension that received a mean score higher than 3 but was still within moderate anxiety according to Alsowat’s (2016) model.

Table 10. Mean scores and standard deviations for items within communication apprehension

Item number	Mean score	Standard deviation	Item text
1	3.09	1.10	“Jeg er aldri helt sikker på meg selv når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen”
4	2.17	1.02	“Det skremmer meg når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren sier på Engelsk”
9	2.90	1.28	“Jeg får panikk når jeg må prate høyt uten å forberede meg i Engelskundervisningen”
13	2.65	1.21	“Jeg ville ikke blitt nervøs hvis jeg pratet Engelsk med en person som har språket som morsmål”
14	2.72	1.11	“Jeg blir opprørt når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren retter på”
17	2.90	1.17	“Jeg føler meg selvsikker når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen”
23	2.87	1.27	“Jeg føler meg veldig usikker når jeg skal prate Engelsk foran andre elever”
26	2.63	1.15	“Jeg blir nervøs og forvirret når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen”
28	2.55	1.04	“Jeg blir nervøs når jeg ikke forstår alle ordene læreren sier i Engelskundervisningen”
29	2.83	1.10	“Jeg føler meg overveldet over antall regler man må lære for å kunne prate Engelsk”
31	2.54	1.07	“Jeg ville sannsynligvis følt meg komfortabel rundt personer som har Engelsk som morsmål”

Each item within the three categories have been marked with different shades of grey to show which item fell within low, moderate or high anxiety levels according to Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling anxiety. Dark grey is representative of high anxiety, medium grey represents moderate anxiety, and white represents low anxiety. None of the items received mean scores that would suggest very low levels or very high levels of anxiety, and it was therefore only necessary with 3 shades.

For the first research question, the result from the present study suggests that there indeed are learners who experience foreign language speaking anxiety in Norwegian 7th grade English classrooms, and that the levels are moderate according to Alsowat's (2016) model.

Furthermore, the results suggest that among the three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz et al. (1986), test anxiety is most pronounced among the participant sample.

4.2 RQ2

As for the second research question, the issue of whether or not gender has an impact on a learner's foreign language speaking anxiety, the mean scores for both genders for each item was calculated. The mean scores for males for each of the 32 items were added together with a result of 81.28. Subsequently, this number was divided by the total number of items, 32, which resulted in an overall mean score of 2.54, with a standard deviation of 1.12 for males. The same procedure was followed for females which resulted in a mean score of 3.02, with a standard deviation of 1.16 (See table 11). These results prove that for this specific participant sample females generally experience slightly higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety than males. This can also be seen when viewing the mean scores of each individual item between both genders (see appendix E), where one can observe that out of the 32 items in the questionnaire females report higher feelings of anxiety than males in all items.

Table 11. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for males and females.

Gender	Mean score	Standard deviation
Males	3.02	1.12
Females	2.54	1.16

As a means to discover which performance anxiety was most pronounced for each gender, the combined mean score for the items belonging to each anxiety was calculated (See table 11). The items within each performance anxiety were summarized before being divided by the number of items to discover the mean score for each performance anxiety (See table 12).

Table 12. Separate mean scores of each performance anxiety for males and females.

Performance anxieties	Mean scores for males	Mean scores for females
Test anxiety	2.60	3.05
Fear of negative evaluation	2.50	3.05
Communication apprehension	2.48	2.97

Among the three performance anxieties, the female participants generally responded similarly on the Likert scale for the items within each anxiety, which resulted in fairly similar mean scores for each performance anxiety. Communication apprehension received a mean score of 2.97, whereas test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation received mean scores of 3.054 and 3.052. Test anxiety is therefore the performance anxiety that scored highest, scoring only 0.002 higher than fear of negative evaluation. The male participants also ranked the three performance anxieties in identical order as the females with test anxiety scoring the highest mean score of 2.60, followed by fear of negative evaluation at 2.50, and lastly, communication apprehension, which received a mean score of 2.48.

Table 13. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within test anxiety for males and females.

Item number	Mean scores females	Standard deviation females	Mean scores males	Standard deviation males
3	3.20	1.31	2.42	1.21
5	2.75	1.29	2.67	1.24
6	3.47	1.16	3.40	1.16
8	2.92	1.22	2.62	1.06
10	3.42	0.85	2.98	0.97
11	3.16	1.12	2.63	1.18
15	3.74	1.16	2.81	1.22
16	2.35	1.29	2.28	1.23
19	3.32	1.36	2.35	1.22
20	2.90	1.16	2.42	1.03
21	3.27	1.15	2.71	1.13
24	2.85	1.22	2.42	1.04
25	2.63	1.12	2.21	1.05
27	2.77	1.07	2.50	1.02

Among the test anxiety items, item number 6 evidently received fairly similar results when viewing it in the light of only the male participants as it did for both genders combined, as it yet again received the highest mean score, which was 3.40 (See table 13). Item number 10 received the second highest mean score, 2.98, and stated: “Jeg forstår ikke hvorfor noen personer blir opprørt i Engelskundervisningen” (“I don't understand why some people get so

upset over foreign language classes”). This item also belonged to test anxiety and is one of the items that were positively worded and therefore received a reverse score when calculating the mean score. Additionally, it received the lowest standard deviation among both genders. The low score of 0.94 suggests that item number 10 is the statement that participants agreed on most.

According to the mean scores for females for each test anxiety item, item number 15 received the highest score of 3.74 (See table 13). This is congruent with the item that received the second highest score for both genders combined. The result suggests that the foreign language speaking anxiety levels experienced by females from this participant sample are highest in situations where they must carry out an oral presentation. Additionally, according to Alsowat’s (2016) model, this score falls under the category “high anxiety”.

Table 14. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within fear of negative evaluation for males and females.

Item number	Mean score females	Standard deviation females	Mean score males	Standard deviation males
2	2.94	1.12	2.79	1.13
7	2.83	1.28	2.51	1.23
12	2.72	1.18	2.24	1.03
18	2.93	1.09	2.33	1.14
22	3.17	1.27	2.57	1.11
30	3.30	1.22	2.27	1.23
32	3.48	1.15	2.80	1.22

Among the male participants, item number 32 received the highest mean score within fear of negative evaluation with a score of 2.80 (See table 14). The item stated: “Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd.” (“I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance”) and suggests that the male participants perceive situations in which they must produce oral language spontaneously as anxiety-provoking.

Similar to the male participants, the item with the highest mean score among females within fear of negative evaluation was item number 32 with a score of 3.48. This suggests that all the present participants find spontaneous oral production to be the most anxiety-provoking factor in evaluative situations.

Table 15. Separate mean scores and standard deviations for items within communication apprehension for males and females.

Item number	Mean score females	Standard deviation females	Mean score males	Standard deviation males
1	3.33	1.09	2.88	1.08
4	2.42	1.05	1.95	0.95
9	3.34	1.25	2.51	1.18
13	2.70	1.14	2.59	1.27
14	2.89	1.07	2.57	1.14
17	3.23	1.18	2.61	1.09
23	3.35	1.21	2.44	1.17
26	2.93	1.16	2.36	1.08
28	2.74	1.06	2.39	1.00
29	3.03	1.14	2.65	1.03
31	2.72	1.09	2.38	1.02

Within the third performance anxiety, communication apprehension, item number 1 received the highest mean score among the male participants (See table 15). The item stated “Jeg er aldri helt sikker på meg selv når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen” (“I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class” and received a mean score of 2.88. As mentioned by Oda (2011), having a low self-esteem may produce consequences for the learner’s ability to achieve their foreign language learning goals.

Item number 23 received the highest mean score within communication apprehension by the female participants, with a score of 3.35. The item stated: “Jeg føler meg veldig usikker når jeg skal prate Engelsk foran andre elever” (“I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students”). Among the three items mentioned with regard to females’ mean scores, item number 23 received the lowest score. This is congruent with the overall mean scores for females within each performance anxiety that suggest communication anxiety is the anxiety that females are least concerned with.

For the second research question, the results suggest that there are some differences between the two genders, and that females experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to their male peers.

4.3 Summary of main findings

The present study answers the first research question, which was: “Does speaking anxiety occur with EFL learners in Norwegian 7th grade classrooms? If so, which of Horwitz et al.’s three performance anxieties is most pronounced?”, by concluding that some foreign language

speaking anxiety is present among both genders of the participant sample, and that the participant sample as a whole falls within the category *moderate anxiety* according to Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling foreign language speaking anxiety levels. Additionally, *test anxiety* is the performance anxiety that is most pronounced among the participants. The present study answers the second research question, which is: "Does gender have an impact on foreign language speaking anxiety levels among 7th grade learners of English in Norwegian classrooms?" by concluding that there are some gender differences among the selected participant sample, where the female participants seem to experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety than their male peers. Using the same model presented by Alsowat (2016), male participants experience low levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, whereas females experience moderate levels.

The following section will discuss these findings, as well as findings revolving around the three anxiety perspectives presented by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991). Additionally, items from the questionnaire of the present study will be discussed in light of the three factors that can affect foreign language learning presented by Hanifa (2018) and distributed among these three categories. Findings from the present study will be compared to findings from previous studies about foreign language speaking anxiety.

5. Discussion

5.1 Foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners (RQ1)

Although the overall mean score for foreign language speaking anxiety among both genders combined, which was 2.77, was moderate according to Alsowat's (2016) model, there are still aspects that received both higher and lower mean scores as well as individuals among the participant sample whose responses reflected very high or very low levels of anxiety. These participants would not fit into the categories represented by the overall results. In any quantitative research one must keep in mind that the mean scores that are presented still include individuals who do not fit into the categories that are being suggested based on the mean scores from the participant sample as a whole. Additionally, due to the present study being a small scale study, the results are not generalisable for other Norwegian 7th graders who learn English as a foreign language. However, despite the few participants who may not exhibit any severe levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, the general conclusion from the present study is that there indeed are some levels of speaking anxiety among Norwegian 7th grade children who learn English as a foreign language in school, and that test anxiety is the performance anxiety that is most pronounced.

When reviewing the answers to each item in the questionnaire, some factors may have affected the participants' replies. For instance, speaking anxiety may not be the only reason as to why item number 6, which was about learners becoming distracted by their own thoughts, received the highest mean score; other factors may also come to play. When rating this item, the participants may have also considered other factors such as their contentment in the English classroom. Some learners may not find the English classes interesting, or it may be too difficult, causing them to lose focus in the classroom.

Results from questionnaire items regarding the opportunity to prepare before oral language production show that many participants experience a sense of anxiety when they are not provided enough time for preparation. Several items from the questionnaire involve situations that include time for preparation, namely items number 9, 19 and 32. Brooks and Wilson (2015) and Hanifa (2018) explain that being provided an opportunity to prepare prior to speaking the foreign language is favourable for the language learners as a means to reduce the risk of anxious feelings. All three of the aforementioned items received relatively high scores, which suggest time for preparation during class is an issue worth taking into consideration when teachers plan their English lessons. When the learners are provided with preparation

time prior to oral presentations, they are also given the opportunity to, for example, further expand their knowledge of stress and rhythm in various syllables, words and phrases, as well as intonation (Brown, 2004).

The results deriving from the descriptive analysis concluded that the mean score among the participant sample was 2.77, which, according to Alsowat (2016) is categorised as *moderate foreign language speaking anxiety* which falls between a mean score of 2.6 to less than 3.4. The result suggests that these young learners are not particularly affected by foreign language speaking anxiety and are congruent with conclusions from some prior studies about foreign language speaking anxiety in young learners (Čiček, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021). Prior conclusions have suggested that learners of a young age have not yet had to face an extensive number of new experiences that may affect the positive attitude that many young learners have in the beginning of their language learning journey, nor have they been given many demanding obligations that may affect them the same way, which they will face when they grow older in the form of tests and oral presentations with a more difficult set of requirements than the evaluations that are made at a lower grade level (Liu & Hong, 2021). However, although the majority of participants have moderate levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, there may be individuals from the present group of selected participants that experience either higher or lower levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to the mean scores.

If one is to follow conclusions made by other researchers who suggest that foreign language speaking anxiety levels increase as the learners grow older, an assumption might be that this particular group of young learners will experience more severe foreign language speaking anxiety in their educational future. If one were to redistribute the same adapted and translated questionnaire to a specific participant sample when they have grown older, the study could become a longitudinal study, which in turn may provide results that either agree or disagree with the conclusions from the present study.

5.2 Gender and foreign language speaking anxiety (RQ2)

The differences between the two genders are seemingly not too vast, which is congruent with Liu and Hong's (2021) research studying gender differences in foreign language speaking anxiety as well as foreign language enjoyment among learners in grade 4 to 9, which concluded that gender differences were fairly small. However, Liu and Hong (2021) concluded that from year 5 through 8, males experienced higher levels of anxiety, which is

not congruent with the results from the present study. The difference between the females' mean score, which was 3.02 and the males' mean score of 2.54 is 0.48, which is seemingly little. However, according to Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling the anxiety-levels, these scores are in separate categories. The female participants fall under the category *moderate foreign language speaking anxiety*, which was between 2.6 and 3.4, while the male participants fall in the upper end of *low foreign language speaking anxiety*, which fell between a mean score of 1.8 to 2.6. This implies that, following the model for labelling anxiety-levels, suggested by Alsowat (2016), the difference between the two genders' levels of foreign language speaking anxiety is visible. It is also worth noticing that the standard deviation among the male participants, which was 1.12, was fairly similar to the females' score of 1.16, which suggests that, although there may be exceptions, there were relatively few participants of either gender who responded to the items in a vastly different manner than the other participants of the same gender.

When observed separately, the mean score for male and female participants reveal that the ranking between the three performance anxieties remains the same for both genders with test anxiety being rated highest, followed by fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension (See table 12). However, as is presented in table 13, 14 and 15, the females have rated the items within each performance anxiety higher than the males, which concludes the females from the present participant sample experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety than their male peers. Among the 14 items that belonged to test anxiety, item number 6 stood out as the only item among the male participants that received a mean score higher than 3 and received a total mean score of 3.40. The item stated: "I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre" ("During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course"). With a mean score of 3.40, the foreign language speaking anxiety level qualifies as *high anxiety* according to Alsowat's (2016) model, and it suggests that a large number of the male participants find themselves losing focus or drifting off during English classes. This is a fairly common phenomenon that many people experience, some more than others, and may be due to lack of interest or energy, or it may suggest that the English classes are not captivating for a majority of the learners.

The female participants also rated item number 6 relatively high with a mean score of 3.47 which also categorises as *high anxiety* according to Alsowat (2016). However, item number 15 received the highest score among the female participants, and received a mean score of

3.74. This item belonged to test anxiety as well. The item stated “Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig” (“Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it”). Item 15 was followed by item 23, which received a mean score of 3.35. The item stated: and “Jeg føler meg veldig usikker når jeg skal prate Engelsk foran andre elever” (“I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students”). The mean scores of these two items suggest that the females have a lack of confidence when speaking in the English classroom. Anxious feelings in situations such as these are fairly familiar to many language learners, regardless of which language they are being taught. Some learners may even experience anxiety related to presentations in their first language. However, regardless of which language a learner experiences speaking anxiety in, it is an issue that may affect learning and achievement and one should aim to reduce this anxiety among learners. Additionally, the anxiety may be experienced regardless of achievements from prior oral assessments but might continuously occur prior to each oral performance. An insight into the thought processes behind why the female participants rated each item as they did is impossible with a mere quantitative study, which is why it would be important to investigate this issue using a qualitative approach in future research.

5.3 Performance anxieties

The three performance anxieties test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension all received fairly similar mean scores when both genders are taken into account. The highest rated performance anxiety was test anxiety, followed by fear of negative evaluation, while communication apprehension ended up third. The mere score of 0.11 separates test anxiety from communication apprehension, which suggests that the participants in the present study all generally experience the same level of anxiety within each situation presented in the 32 items. The standard deviation of 1.17 contributes to this assumption, and the participant sample as a whole does not seem to exhibit a worrisome level of foreign language speaking anxiety. The three items that received the highest mean scores within each performance anxiety was items number 1, 6 and 32 (See tables 13, 14 and 15). These items present situations in which the learner is nervous and very unsure of themselves when speaking spontaneously, as well as becoming distracted during lessons.

A lack of confidence has been proven to be an issue in many previous studies conducted on foreign language speaking anxiety (Al-Nouh et al., 2015; Alsowat, 2016; Brooks & Wilson,

2015; Čiček, 2014; Hajizadeh, 2013; Hanifa, 2018; Horwitz et al., 1986; Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Liu & Hong, 2021; Luo, 2014; Mouhoubi-Messadh, 2017; Occhipinti, 2009; Oda, 2011; Sadighi & Dastpak, 2017; Sardegna et al., 2018; Tuan & Mai, 2015; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Learners have been reported to feel anxious due to loss of self-confidence when peers perform better than them (Mouhoubi-Messadh, 2017), when they are required to produce language spontaneously (Alsowat, 2016), when communicating with other individuals (Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017), as well as when they were being corrected while speaking (Hanifa, 2018). Conclusions such as these are congruent with findings from the present study. Items number 7 and 22 express situations where a learner feels as though their peers perform better than themselves. These items received mean scores of 2.66 and 2.85 (See table 6), and both fall within moderate anxiety according to Alsowat's (2016) model for labelling the anxiety-levels experienced by foreign language learners. Furthermore, items number 3, 9, 12, 19, 31 and 32 all present situations where the learner must produce language spontaneously. The present results show that the majority of the aforementioned items received mean scores between 2.47 and 2.90 with the exception of item number 32, which received a mean score of 3.12 (See table 6). Item number 13 presents a situation where the learner communicates with an interlocutor who, in this scenario, is a native speaker of English. It received a mean score of 2.65 which fall under moderate anxiety according to Alsowat's (2016) model. Lastly, items number 14 and 18 present situations that involve a teacher correcting oral language produced by the learner. The items received mean scores of 2.72 and 2.61 (See table 6) which falls under the label moderate anxiety. Item 14 involves a learner's feeling of frustration when the teacher attempts to correct an error but does so in a manner that is not understandable for the learner. Item number 18 involves a learner's worry that the teacher is constantly waiting for an opportunity to criticise the learner's language production. As is evident from results from some previous studies on the topic of foreign language speaking anxiety, the items from the questionnaire in the present study provide conclusions that are, to some extent, congruent with previous conclusions made by other researchers. Additionally, although the results from the present study conclude that the anxiety is moderate and not high, future studies conducted on young learners' foreign language speaking anxiety could be longitudinal to discover whether the foreign language speaking anxiety levels does increase over time or not, which could be congruent with findings made by Liu and Hong (2021), who conclude that foreign language speaking anxiety increases as the learners grow older.

5.4 Anxiety perspectives

Anxiety is a phenomenon that has been studied for years. The trait, state and situation specific anxieties presented by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) have aided many researchers who have studied various forms of anxiety, including anxiety related to language learning, as they provide a more specific stance from which one can view anxiety among learners of a foreign language.

When reviewing the results in the light of the three anxiety perspectives, it proved challenging to determine which perspective was most relevant for the current study due to the lack of qualitative components. All three perspectives involve the learner's thinking processes and feelings in a language learning setting. A quantitative research method does not provide the necessary insight that the researcher needs in order to accurately conclude which of the three perspectives would be most relevant in the present study. If qualitative methods were employed in addition to the quantitative questionnaire, the researcher would be able to question the participants' responses and thoughts around the language learning environment.

However, even without the opportunity to gain a better insight into the participants' thinking processes and feelings, each anxiety perspective may still be connected to the questionnaire and the results from the participants. Items number 11 and 20 are some examples that both introduce situations in which either memory impairment or avoidance behaviour is present which, as MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) expressed, are some psychological consequences that might occur among learners with trait anxiety. The items stated: "I

Engelskundervisningen kan jeg bli så nervøs at jeg glemmer ting jeg egentlig vet" ("In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know") and "Jo mer jeg øver på en prøve, jo mer forvirret blir jeg." ("The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get")

(See appendix B) and are examples of how foreign language speaking anxiety may impair memory from previously attained knowledge. Item number 11 received a mean score of 2.88, with a total of 34.4% responding either "Strongly agree" or "agree" to the statement.

Furthermore, item 20 received a mean score of 2.65 with a total of 23.7% responding either "Strongly agree" or "Agree". These results suggest that a relatively large part of the participant sample experience loss of memory due to nervousness or gain confusion from studying more.

Furthermore, examples from the questionnaire that may be related to state anxiety, which is the anxiety that revolves around the emotional state a learner experiences when feeling

anxious in a present moment, are items number 15 and 19 that state “Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig” (“Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it”) and “Jeg kjenner hjertet dunker når jeg er i ferd med å bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen” (“I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class”) (See appendix B). These items present situations in which the learners feel anxious prior to producing oral language in front of their teacher and peers. The items received mean scores of 3.25 and 2.81, with 49.5% answering either “Strongly agree” or “Agree” to statement 15, and 33.9% answering similarly to item number 19. Item number 19 had a standard deviation of 1.37, which was the highest standard deviation among all 32 items and suggests that this is a statement many participants feel differently about.

Lastly, the situation specific anxiety is a perspective that is best explored with qualitative research methods as it is a form of anxiety that appears over an extended period of time, but in short bursts. However, one can posit that, for example, item number 25 that states: “Jeg føler meg mer anspent og nervøs i Engelskundervisningen enn i andre undervisningstimer” (“I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes”) is relevant as the English learning classroom can be perceived as a situation that provokes anxiety for the learner while they are attending the English lessons, but subsides as the learner exits the classroom after the lesson. 16.7% of the participants responded with either “Strongly agree” or “Agree” to this statement, and it received a mean score of 2.41.

Although certain items from the questionnaire could be related to one of the three aforementioned perspectives, it seemed as though the situation specific anxiety was the most relevant for the majority of the 32 items as they all presented various situations in which foreign language speaking anxiety could be experienced. This is congruent with the conclusions made by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) and Zhao Na (2007), who stated situation specific was the most appropriate anxiety perspective for foreign language speaking anxiety due to its contribution in providing consistent and significant results. Trait and state anxiety have been proven to lack the ability to “capture the essence of foreign language anxiety or to satisfactorily demonstrate a role for anxiety in the language learning process” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 87), which in turn resulted in many researchers leaning towards situation specific anxiety as a perspective for their studies.

As a foreign language teacher, studies conducted on foreign language speaking anxiety in the light of situation specific anxiety may provide a good understanding of what anxiety entails, as well as provide a resourceful list of considerations that the teacher may apply in their classrooms. This is due to situation specific anxiety requiring the learners to associate their anxiety to specific triggering situations. If the teacher understands which classroom situations provoke speaking anxiety in the foreign language classroom, such as standing in the front of the classroom while speaking or reading out loud from a book, they may adapt their lessons accordingly to prevent unnecessarily elevated levels of anxiety among their learners.

5.5 Factors that may affect foreign language speaking anxiety

The following section present how each item from the employed questionnaire can be distributed to the three factors presented by Hanifa (2018), according to the present researcher. The three factors Hanifa (2018) presented that may affect a learner’s foreign language speaking anxiety, referred to as cognitive factors, affective factors and performance factors are all presented in table 16. The three factors provide an overview of the main components that may affect a learner’s language learning process, and each item from the questionnaire present more narrow situations in which anxiety may or may not be experienced. The different items in the present questionnaire all illustrate situations that may be related to the 3 main factors presented by Hanifa (2018), which include thinking processes, feelings and personality, and oral performance. Items from the questionnaire that are classified as cognitive factors all represent situations in which the learners’ thinking processes are challenged by speaking anxiety. Similarly, any items classified as affective factors present situations where the feelings and personality of the learners may be negatively affected. Any item classified as performance factors present situations where the learners’ anxiety levels are either reduced or provoked due to the learner having to perform orally in front of others. Although each of the 32 items all involve the learners’ feeling of anxiety in various situations, and therefore may all be connected to affective factors, the majority of the items also present situations with components that are related to other aspects of learning such as lack of topical knowledge, lack of preparation prior to speaking, or environmental conditions such as classroom culture. The distribution of the 32 items is presented in table 15.

Table 16. Distribution of items within Hanifa’s (2018) three factor model.

Anxiety-provoking factors	Items within the category
Cognitive factors	4, 11, 14, 16, 20, 24, 28, 29, 32
Affective factors	2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 18, 22, 25, 27, 31

Performance factors	1, 3, 8, 9, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30
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The cognitive factors revolve around the language learner's thinking processes during language learning. This may include situations in which the learner must retrieve and comprehend vocabulary, receive input, or distinguish between the various sentence structures that must be employed in the situation they find themselves in. It also involves the learner's background knowledge on the current topic which they are communicating about, and as Kasbi and Shirvan (2017) expressed: lack of topical knowledge may lead to a learner's increased anxiety in the foreign language classroom. Items such as number 29, which states "Jeg føler meg overveldet over antall regler man må lære for å kunne prate Engelsk" ("I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language") involves a learner's mental stance in which they feel as though the number of rules that must be learned in order to become a proficient English speaker is overwhelming. Rules that dictate which sentence structure is grammatically correct in a specific context are many and feeling overwhelmed by them may inhibit the learner's willingness and ability to comprehend and utilize these rules. Therefore, the decision that item number 29 belong to cognitive factors was made.

Furthermore, items number 14 and 28 present situations in which the learner experiences a sense of fear when they do not understand what the teacher is correcting or saying, which in turn causes the learner to feel anxious. The items state: "Jeg blir opprørt når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren retter på" ("I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting") and "Jeg blir nervøs når jeg ikke forstår alle ordene læreren sier i Engelskundervisningen" ("I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says"). A learner may fear that they will misunderstand given input and therefore produce errors when they respond, which may induce speaking anxiety. Additionally, when the learner is attempting to acquire new knowledge, they may experience some frustration if the teacher is unable to adapt the feedback to make it understandable for the learner. Having the desire to learn is important, but the desire might slowly vanish if the learner feels as though they are not given guidance that is adapted to their level of comprehension. The remaining items that may belong in the same category are items number 4, 11, 16, 20, 24, and 32, which all involve situations in which the language learner undergoes experiences that challenge their thinking processes, background knowledge or their apprehension around attending English classes.

Some items were found to be difficult to assign to any of the three factors, for instance item number 24, which states “Undervisningen går så fort fram at jeg er redd for å henge etter” (“Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind”). At first glance one may assume that the item exclusively concerns the learner’s emotions of worry about falling behind their peers due to the lessons moving forward too quickly, and therefore may conclude that it better fits the category of affective factors. However, the item presents a situation in which the learner is worried about falling behind academically. The learner is receiving input that is beyond their level of comprehension, and the teacher is changing topic before the learner is able to assimilate any of the newly presented knowledge, and it is therefore more appropriate to include this item within cognitive factors.

Among the items belonging to cognitive factors, item number 32 received the highest mean score, which was 3.12, followed by item number 11 which received a mean score of 2.88 (see table 6). The items stated: “Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd” (“I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven’t prepared in advance”) and “I Engelskundervisningen kan jeg bli så nervøs at jeg glemmer ting jeg egentlig vet” (“In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know”). Both items received mean scores that fall within moderate anxiety according to Alsowat’s (2016) model. Item number 32 presents a situation where the learner becomes nervous when they are asked to answer a question without being provided time for preparation. This directly affects the learner’s thinking processes when they are not provided enough time to prepare the correct sentence structure and grammar. Although a language learner may need to acquire the ability to spontaneously produce language for future realistic situations such as ordering food in a restaurant or asking for directions, the teacher should not push anxious learners to the point where the anxiety affects their ability to speak. As explained by Kasbi and Shirvan (2017), anxiety may lead to avoidance behaviour. The classroom is an excellent space where the learner may gradually build up their ability to produce spontaneous language, but each learner is different and should be provided with a path adapted to their abilities in order to reach their goals. Item number 11 presents a situation where the learner feels so nervous that the anxiety impairs their memory and leads to them forgetting previously attained knowledge. This is a cognitive factor that directly affects the learner’s ability to achieve small goals in their language learning process as memory loss prevents the learner from employing knowledge they have previously attained.

Items that belong to the second category, affective factors, are items number 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 13, 18, 22, 25, 27 and 31. The items all present situations involving a learner's confidence, sense of accomplishment and/or relationship with their peers and teachers, which is consistent with affective factors. Affective factors involve a learner's personality and feelings as well as their interest in the current topic that is being taught. Additionally, their relationship with teachers and peers in the classroom is related to affective factors. Item number 18 states: "Jeg er redd for at læreren står klar for å rette alle feil jeg gjør" ("I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make"). This item directly affects the learner's feelings and confidence in addition to revolving around the relationship they have with their English teacher. A learner's constant worry about being corrected for small errors by a teacher may affect their ability to learn and evolve as English speakers. This item, in addition to the 10 other aforementioned items that involve similar situations are therefore suitable for the category affective factors.

Similar to the cognitive factors there were items within affective factors that may have been suitable in other categories as well, namely item number 2 which states: "Jeg bekymrer meg ikke for å gjøre feil i Engelskundervisningen." ("I don't worry about making mistakes in language class"). Initially, this item involves producing errors during English class, which may cause the assumption that the item fits better as a cognitive factor. However, the core of the item revolves around the learner's feelings around producing errors, which is associated with confidence. The item is therefore more appropriate to include within the affective factors.

Among the 11 items that have been categorised as affective factors, item number 6 received the highest mean score of 3.43, followed by item number 10 which received a mean score of 3.19 (See table 6). The items stated: "I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre" ("During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course") and "Jeg forstår ikke hvorfor noen personer blir opprørt i Engelskundervisningen" ("I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes") (See appendix B). Item number 6 received a mean score which was representative of high anxiety according to Alsowat's (2016) model, and item number 10 received a mean score within moderate anxiety according to the same model. Item number 6 presents a situation where the learner loses focus and begins to think about topics that are unrelated to the language learning context. If the learner drifts off in such a way, it may be due to them not being interested enough in the topic, or that their lack of

confidence prevents them from wanting to participate, or it may be due to other factors such as limited attention span or lack of energy, i.e., sleep deprivation. Many such affective factors are possible components that may affect the learner's ability to stay focused in the language learning classroom, which in turn might provoke anxiety. The situation presented in item number 10 is a learner's inability to comprehend why other learners may feel anxious in a language learning environment. A highly confident learner may agree to such a statement, which may suggest that they do not suffer from alleviated levels of foreign language speaking anxiety or that the relationship they have with their teacher and/or peers is perceived as positive and comfortable. This affective variable may therefore not create any alleviated levels of foreign language speaking anxiety. A learner who disagrees with the statement may perceive their relationships as uncomfortable and lack confidence with their own language abilities, which may provoke anxiety.

The third and final category is performance factors. It involves any situation in which the learner must perform orally in front of others, for example item number 17, which states: "Jeg føler meg selvsikker når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen" ("I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class"). This is one of the positively worded items from the questionnaire and has the learner rate their own confidence when communicating orally in front of others by using the Likert scale in the questionnaire. Furthermore, item number 3 stated: "Jeg blir skjelve når jeg vet at jeg skal bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen" ("I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class"). The situation presented in this item suggests that the learners find situations in which they need to produce language spontaneously in front of their peers to be an anxiety-provoking situation. Beginning to tremble prior to speaking in front of other people is one of the physiological symptoms that participants in Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study experienced in addition to perspiring, becoming tense and suffering from sleep disturbances. Speaking in front of others may include situations such as oral presentations, communicating in groups or reading out loud, which are all scenarios that might be very familiar to foreign language learners, and are related to performance factors.

The items within performance factors are fairly similar to affective factors as they all involve the learner's feelings when speaking. However, in contrast to the items within the category of affective factors, the performance factors all have one concept in common, which is speaking out loud in front of others. None of the items within affective factors specifically mention speaking or performing in front of others, which is why they did not fit into the category performance factors. For example, item number 21 which states: "Jeg kjenner ikke noe press

på å forberede meg godt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen” (“I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class”) (See appendix B) presents a situation in which the learner does not experience a sense of worry, apprehension or nervousness prior to performing an oral presentation during the English class. At first glance one may assume that due to the confidence and positive feelings this item must fit the affective factors. However, the situation presented in item 21 shows a learner who feels confident and comfortable when producing language spontaneously due to their positive self-image and belief in their own speaking abilities, and therefore does not feel the need to prepare their speech in advance during their English lesson.

Among the items belonging to performance factors, item number 15 received the highest mean score of 3.25, followed by item number 1, which received a mean score of 3.09 (See table 5). Both items fall within the upper half of moderate anxiety according to Alsowat’s model, which, for this category, extended from 2.6 to 3.4. The items stated: “Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig” (“Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it”) and “Jeg er aldri helt sikker på meg selv når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen” (“I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class”). Item number 15 presents a situation where the learner experiences elevated levels of anxiety during presentations in class, regardless of their level of preparedness. This is a performance factor that might provoke speaking anxiety due to for example stage fright, fear of being negatively judged by their peers or teacher, or fear of producing errors, or being laughed at. Regardless of the reason behind the elevated anxiety levels, the learner experiences anxiety when they are performing orally in front of their class. Item number 1 also presents a situation where the learner must perform orally in front of others. In this specific situation, the learner feels self-conscious when speaking in the language learning classroom. The underlying causes behind the anxiety might be similar to the aforementioned factors, or it may be due to other factors such as lack of time for preparation prior to speaking, shyness, a sense of embarrassment when speaking, or helplessness (Hanifa, 2018).

Table 17. Mean scores and standard deviations for each of Hanifa’s (2018) three factors.

Factors	Mean scores	Standard deviation
Cognitive factors	2.65	1.13
Affective factors	2.78	1.14
Performance factors	2.85	1.23

As is presented in table 16, *performance factors* is the category that received the highest mean score, which was 2.85, followed by *affective factors* at 2.78 and *cognitive factors* at 2.65. Interestingly, performance factors also have the highest standard deviation, which suggests that although many participants rated the items within this category higher than other items, there was a larger variation among the participant sample. Additionally, the standard deviation decreases alongside the mean scores. This may suggest that many participants find situations where they must perform orally very challenging and anxiety provoking, while other participants struggle less or not at all in the same situation.

Although the participants from the present study find situations related to cognitive factors anxiety provoking, they seem to find those situations less anxiety provoking than situations related to affective factors or performance factors. This may be due to the fact that they still attend a relatively low grade in school where complicated sentence structures and difficult vocabulary is not yet taught and therefore is not a present issue among the learners. Additionally, as performance factors are a seemingly larger issue among the participants, this may be because most young learners are given assessment based on oral production. If a learner is striving towards becoming fluent in English, they may feel pressured to perform well, and being assessed based on oral production may seem intimidating to a young learner.

By dividing the items between the three factors presented by Hanifa (2018), we have been provided with a way to discover whether the participants find situations revolving around cognitive factors, affective factors or performance factors most provoking. This may be helpful as the language teachers can adapt their language lessons according to how the learners in their classroom perceive each factor. If one factor provokes very high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, the teacher can adapt the lesson and perhaps focus more on activities that relate to less anxiety-provoking factors. For the present participant sample situations that involve performance factors provoked the highest levels of foreign language speaking anxiety.

5.6 Reflections on the data collection process

When distributing the questionnaire to the present sample of participants, it was vital that all participants showed honesty in their replies. In the present study, it has proved difficult for the researcher to gain an insight into whether or not the participants' ratings were honest, as attendance was difficult due to travel distance as well as Covid-19 restrictions. By examining whether there were any questionnaires that had identical answers to all 32 items, such as "neither agree nor disagree", or if some participants had sent in a partially complete questionnaire, or if any participants answered inconsistently to items that targeted the same underlying construct but was worded differently, it was possible to somewhat distinguish any devoted participants from those who lacked the motivation or interest to insert genuine responses representative of their interpretation of each item. For the 186 participants who replied to the questionnaire, none of the completed questionnaires presented any evidence that the participants answered inconsistently on differently worded items that targeted the same underlying construct, nor did any of the participants chose the same response for all 32 items. This may suggest that each participant was interested in answering the questionnaire honestly. Additionally, it suggests that no participant was forced to complete the survey, which may imply that each teacher followed the ethical instructions provided by the researcher.

Using a questionnaire has provided this research with a great deal of usable data that has been applicable to the present research questions. However, such a quantitative method has hindered the researcher in attaining an understanding as to why the learners rated each item as they did. By not employing a qualitative method in addition to the questionnaire the researcher missed the opportunity to gain a better insight into the learners' thinking processes regarding foreign language speaking anxiety and can therefore only make assumptions as to why the gathered data demonstrated the current results. Item number 16 presents a relatively crucial situation in which a learner feels the urge to avoid the English classroom due to their sense of anxiety. The possible factors that may have influenced 18.3% of the participants to answer "Agree" or "Strongly agree" to the statement in item 16 are unknown due to the lack of an added qualitative research method. Including a qualitative method may aid the researcher in receiving more insightful feedback that they may follow up on. Additionally, this feedback could be helpful for the participating teachers who may intend to work to alleviate foreign language speaking anxiety among their pupils, because they might need an understanding of the underlying causes in order to create a strategy best suited for their class. The present study is one of the first steps in examining foreign language speaking anxiety

among a much younger population compared to previous studies, and qualitative components should be added to future studies on the same topic.

6. Conclusion

The present study set out to research foreign language speaking anxiety among young learners, specifically Norwegian 7th graders who learn English as a foreign language. By utilizing a questionnaire, the researcher could discover whether foreign language speaking anxiety was present among the participant sample, as well as discover which of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) three performance anxieties were most pronounced. Additionally, gender differences in foreign language speaking anxiety were researched to discover which gender experienced the highest level of anxiety, or if there were any differences at all. The participant sample consisted of 186 Norwegian 7th graders from 9 different schools across the country, who responded anonymously online to an adapted and translated version of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) questionnaire known as FLCAS. Results showed moderate levels of foreign language speaking anxiety among the participants, with test anxiety being the performance anxiety that provoked the highest levels of anxiety. Females were found to have higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to their male peers.

Even though there might remain a lot of necessary research on the topic of foreign language speaking anxiety, we have gained an insight into what it entails. There are many forms of anxiety that can be related to different aspects of learning a foreign language, and all language learners perceive their language learning experience differently than others. Factors such as cognitive, affective and performance factors that might generate anxiety among young foreign language learners, as well as the different perspectives in which foreign language speaking anxiety can be viewed such as trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation specific anxiety supplies us with ways in which we can explore foreign language speaking anxiety among individual learners of all ages. For teachers who have anxious pupils in their foreign language classroom, this research provides some general insight into foreign language speaking anxiety levels among young learners in 7th grade.

Some individuals might suffer from trait anxiety that can cause them to forget newly acquired knowledge from foreign language class, while others may experience short-termed situation specific anxiety provoked by them having to read out loud in front of class. Additionally, there are a number of factors that may affect a learner's success in a foreign language classroom. These factors include intelligence, age and gender, their desire to learn, their

ability to communicate, as well as their learning approach (Djigunović, 2009). Although each of the three anxiety perspectives presented by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) may relate to some of the items in the questionnaire, the situation specific perspective seems to be, as concluded by some previous research (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Zhao, 2007), the perspective that is most appropriate for the 32 items presented in the present version of the FCLAS. This is due to situation specific anxiety including various definitions of a situation, which each item from the questionnaire presents. Additionally, trait anxiety and state anxiety, as MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) suggested, do not have the ability to successfully provide a role for anxiety within the language learning process, nor are they able to capture the core elements of what foreign language speaking anxiety entails.

6.1 RQ1

Analysis of the collected data concluded that foreign language speaking anxiety is present among the present participant sample, although not at an exceptionally high level. As can be seen from table 6, none of the 32 items received a mean score lower than 1.8, nor higher than 4.2, which suggests that, according to Alsowat's (2016) five categories for labelling anxiety, none of the learners experienced very high levels of anxiety, nor do they experience very low level of anxiety. The level of foreign language speaking anxiety is proven to be at a moderate level. The conclusion for the present study is therefore that Norwegian 7th graders who learn English as a foreign language typically experience moderate levels of speaking anxiety in the English classroom.

Results from descriptive analysis showed that for the present participant sample test anxiety was the performance anxiety that yielded the highest levels of foreign language speaking anxiety. Test anxiety received a mean score of 2.82 and a standard deviation of 1.18 from the participant sample as a whole. Test anxiety involves any situation where the learner's speaking abilities are being tested, such as an oral presentation or when they are being called upon in class and required to produce language spontaneously. The performance anxiety that received the second highest mean score was fear of negative evaluation. It received a mean score of 2.76 and a standard deviation of 1.21. Fear of negative evaluation appears whenever the learner's speaking abilities are being evaluated by the teacher or peers. This may include a learner's fear that their peers will mock them or laugh whenever they speak in a plenary setting, or fear that the language teacher is awaiting moments to correct any small errors that may be produced by the learner. The third and last performance anxiety is communication

apprehension, which received the lowest mean score of 2.71 with a standard deviation of 1.14. Communication apprehension involves communicative situations where the learner experiences elevated levels of foreign language speaking anxiety, for example when they do not understand what the teacher is telling them, or when they are speaking to native speakers of the foreign language.

6.2 RQ2

Based on the descriptive statistics, females from the present participant sample experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to the males. Female participants received a mean score of 3.02, with a standard deviation of 1.16 (See table 11). The mean score is categorised as moderate foreign language speaking anxiety. The male participants received a mean score of 2.54 with a standard deviation of 1.12, which categorises as low foreign language speaking anxiety according to Alsowat's (2016), which labels mean scores between 1.8 to less than 2.6 as low levels of anxiety. This suggests that males from this participant sample generally report experiencing less speaking anxiety in the English classroom compared to their female peers and do so consistently for each questionnaire item.

6.4 Limitations and propositions for future research

As the research was carried out, some limitations were discovered and reflected upon. The present study was a small scale study that involved 186 7th graders from 9 different schools across Norway. The results and conclusions from the present study are not representative for all Norwegian 7th grade learners across the country, as the sample is too small. Additionally, no personal information was collected from any participants so it is unknown whether some learners were native English speakers or not, nor if any participants have any learning disabilities, which are factors that might have affected some learners' responses to the questionnaire.

Another limitation was the lack of qualitative research methods. The present study was limited to assumptions based on learners' self-reports from each questionnaire and adding a qualitative component to the research methods was not feasible due to time limitations and lack of resources. A qualitative method would have been an excellent addition to this study, as it would have provided the researcher with better insight into the participant's responses to the questionnaire. If the researcher of the present study would conduct a similar study in the

future, they would attempt to include a qualitative method in addition to the quantitative questionnaire.

Subsequent reflections following this study has provided the researcher with some propositions for any future research on the topic of foreign language speaking anxiety. The first suggestion is to include a larger number of participants when distributing the questionnaire. By conducting a larger scale study, any findings may be more representative compared to those of the present study. Additionally, it may be interesting to add participants of even younger ages. A study with a large sample of younger learners may contribute with results that help fill the research gap that exists on younger learners, as well as answer questions regarding whether the youngest learners experience less foreign language speaking anxiety compared to their older peers who attend 7th grade. This would also contribute to discovering whether foreign language speaking anxiety levels gradually increase as the learner grows older, as is suspected by some researchers (Čiček, 2014; Liu & Hong, 2021). Additionally, a future study on the topic of foreign language speaking anxiety on young learners should be conducted as a longitudinal study. By distributing an identical questionnaire to the same participants on several occasions over a period of time may be an excellent way of discovering whether a specific group of learners experience elevated levels of foreign language speaking anxiety over the course of several years, which may or may not correspond to conclusions made in previous research. Furthermore, future research could attempt to involve young learner from a variety of countries, as opposed to the present study which only included learners from Norway. By including several countries, the study would contribute to making the research more representative for all foreign language learners.

The present study indicates that although foreign language speaking anxiety levels are fairly low among the learners in the participant sample, there are still learners who experience higher levels than their peers, which in turn has the possibility to affect their language learning achievement negatively in addition to acting as a hinderance for their contentment during their years in the lower grades (Oda, 2011). Therefore, the topic should be researched further in order to get a better overview of the possible issues as well as provide teachers with an insight into their own English classes so that they can adapt their lessons as well as help to alleviate foreign language speaking anxiety levels among learners who struggle and experience it as a hinderance for their success in the language learning classroom.

6.5 Implications for teaching

The results from the present study have provided the researcher with some implications for foreign language teaching, both for experienced teachers in the field and any future language teachers. Foreign language teachers who have learners that experience anxiety related to speaking in the language classroom may first and foremost find it useful to understand what foreign language speaking anxiety entails. By understanding the concept of this anxiety, the teacher is able to better adapt their teaching to fit the many needs an anxious learner may have. Some learners may feel the need to be in smaller groups with supportive peers with whom they are comfortable with, others may wish to conduct oral presentations in front of their teacher alone, and some may wish to be provided with time to rehearse their answers prior to presenting them in front of the class. The research that has been conducted on foreign language speaking anxiety, both previous studies and the present study, should allow teachers to understand that wishes such as these may be necessary to grant in order to help build a learner's confidence in the foreign language classroom.

Additionally, as the present study has concluded, young learners of English experience moderate levels of foreign language speaking anxiety. These results may provide the teacher with useful information that can be incorporated in the classroom in an attempt to prevent the anxiety from increasing as the learners grow older, by preventing the anxiety from turning into a debilitating form which can hinder future language learning success, and by building the learner's confidence in the classroom.

Furthermore, as the present study has shown, females experience higher levels of foreign language speaking anxiety compared to their male peers. Knowing that females have consistently reported higher anxiety levels is a factor that can be taken into consideration in the classroom. The teacher, based on their knowledge about each individual's personality in the classroom as well as the relationships they have with their peers, can adapt the classroom learning environment accordingly. Perhaps one way to coordinate a classroom with larger differences between the two genders is to divide them into two groups, one for each gender, or perhaps attempt to divide the learners into groups with individuals that they feel comfortable and confident with. The information provided by research on foreign language speaking anxiety combined with the teacher's knowledge about their learners, may act as guidelines when planning a language lesson.

The three performance anxieties presented by Horwitz et al. (1986), namely test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, all present different aspects of foreign language speaking anxiety that a teacher may find useful to attain information about. In the present study test anxiety received the highest mean score, and it is therefore concluded that learners from the present participant sample find situations where their speaking abilities are being tested as the most anxiety provoking situations. Information such as this can aid a language teacher who is attempting to create a language lesson that is enjoyable, comfortable and safe, while still providing the learners with new knowledge. A 7th grade English teacher in a Norwegian school utilizes oral production as one of the main ways to test a learner's growing speaking abilities in the classroom. When learners experience testing situations as anxiety provoking, the teacher needs to adapt and discover ways to test the learner's abilities that does not lead to elevated anxiety levels.

The questionnaire itself may also provide guidelines for foreign language teachers as each item presents a specific situation that the learners rate by utilizing the Likert scale. A teacher can analyse each item in order to discover any specific aspects of the foreign language learning process that their learners experience as anxiety provoking and can, based on the received results, adapt their lessons accordingly.

Another implication stemming from results from the present study, is the importance of including preparation time into classroom activities aiming to promote speaking skills. This may be important both for spontaneous and rehearsed oral production, as the participants from the present study reported high levels of foreign language speaking anxiety for both these types of speaking.

7. References

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix A – Original FLCAS

The original questionnaire by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986)

*SA = Strongly agree; A = Agree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly disagree

Items	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class					
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class					
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class					
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language					
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes					
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course					
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am					
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class					
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class					

10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class					
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes					
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know					
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class					
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers					
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.					
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.					
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class					
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.					
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class					
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get					
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class					

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.					
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students					
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind					
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes					
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class					
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed					
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says					
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language					
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language					
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language					
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.					

8.2 Appendix B – Adapted and translated version of FLCAS

Adapted and translated version of Horwitz et al.'s questionnaire

*SE = Svært enig; E = Enig; H = Hverken enig eller uenig; U = Uenig; SU = Svært uenig

Items	SE	E	H	U	SU
1. Jeg er aldri helt sikker på meg selv når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen					
2. Jeg bekymrer meg ikke for å gjøre feil i Engelskundervisningen.					
3. Jeg blir skjelven når jeg vet at jeg skal bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen.					
4. Det skremmer meg når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren sier på Engelsk.					
5. Det ville ikke brydd meg i det hele tatt å lære flere språk					
6. I Engelskundervisningen begynner jeg plutselig å tenke på ting som ikke har med undervisningen å gjøre					
7. Jeg tenker hele tiden på at de andre er flinkere i Engelsk enn meg					
8. Jeg er vanligvis avslappet når vi har prøver i Engelsk					
9. Jeg får panikk når jeg må prate høyt uten å forberede meg i Engelskundervisningen					
10. Jeg forstår ikke hvorfor noen personer blir opprørt i Engelskundervisningen					
11. I Engelskundervisningen kan jeg bli så nervøs at jeg glemmer ting jeg egentlig vet					

12. Jeg blir flau når jeg frivillig kommer med et svar i Engelskundervisningen					
13. Jeg ville ikke blitt nervøs hvis jeg pratet Engelsk med en person som har språket som morsmål					
14. Jeg blir opprørt når jeg ikke forstår hva læreren retter på					
15. Selv om jeg er godt forberedt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen, så blir jeg engstelig					
16. Jeg føler ofte at jeg ikke vil møte opp i Engelskundervisningen					
17. Jeg føler meg selvsikker når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen					
18. Jeg er redd for at læreren står klar for å rette alle feil jeg gjør					
19. Jeg kjenner hjertet dunker når jeg er i ferd med å bli ropt opp i Engelskundervisningen					
20. Jo mer jeg øver på en prøve, jo mer forvirret blir jeg					
21. Jeg kjenner ikke noe press på å forberede meg godt til en presentasjon i Engelskundervisningen					
22. Jeg føler alltid at de andre elevene prater Engelsk bedre enn meg					
23. Jeg føler meg veldig usikker når jeg skal prate Engelsk foran andre elever					
24. Undervisningen går så fort fram at jeg er redd for å henge etter					

25. Jeg føler meg mer anspent og nervøs i Engelskundervisningen enn i andre undervisningstimer					
26. Jeg blir nervøs og forvirret når jeg prater i Engelskundervisningen					
27. Når jeg er på vei til Engelskundervisningen føler jeg meg sikker og avslappet					
28. Jeg blir nervøs når jeg ikke forstår alle ordene læreren sier i Engelskundervisningen					
29. Jeg føler meg overveldet over antall regler man må lære for å kunne prate Engelsk					
30. Jeg er redd for at de andre elevene skal le av meg når jeg prater Engelsk					
31. Jeg ville sannsynligvis følt meg komfortabel rundt personer som har Engelsk som morsmål					
32. Jeg blir nervøs når læreren stiller meg spørsmål jeg ikke har forberedt meg på på forhånd.					

8.3 Appendix C – Initial invitation letter

Mitt navn er Jannike Grindvik Todal og jeg er student ved Universitetet i Stavanger. Jeg går Grunnskolelærerutdanningen 1-7, og er nå på mitt femte og siste år. I dette øyeblikk har jeg begynt å skrive på min masteroppgave som omhandler temaet "Speaking anxiety in English". Jeg undersøker altså hvorvidt det finnes vegring for å prate engelsk i klasserommet blant elever som, i dette tilfellet, går i 7. klasse ved norske skoler, samt i hvor stor grad denne angsten eventuelt oppleves.

Speaking anxiety kan påvirke både motivasjon, trivsel og mestringsnivå. Jeg er meget interessert i å finne ut hvorvidt denne angsten forekommer blandt 7. klassinger som lærer engelsk i norske skoler, da det finnes lite til ingen forskning på denne målgruppen. De fleste undersøkelser på dette temaet omhandler for det meste eldre elever og studenter, og nettopp derfor synes jeg det ville være interessant å undersøke de yngre elevgruppene.

I den sammenheng sender jeg ut en forespørsel til alle lærere som underviser engelsk for 7. trinn i norske skoler, og ber dere om å delta i denne undersøkelsen. Undersøkelsen innebærer et spørreskjema bestående av 33 påstander hvor elevene skal krysse av "svært enig", "enig", "hverken enig eller uenig", "uenig" eller "svært uenig", ut i fra hva som best passer deres egen opplevelse. Dette skjemaet fylles ut via et nettprogram kalt SurveyXact, og en link vil bli sendt ut til de deltakende klassene.

Det vil i tillegg være et spørsmål om elevens kjønn. Dette har jeg inkludert for å undersøke om det finnes kjønnsforskjeller blant elevene som sliter med speaking anxiety. Tidligere forskning har ikke kommet frem til en felles enighet på om det finnes kjønnsforskjeller eller ei, og eventuelt hvilket kjønn som sliter mest med speaking anxiety, noe som vekket interessen for meg til å utforske denne problemstillingen.

Spørreskjemaet vil som nevnt bli utført via nettsiden SurveyXact. Dette programmet sørger for anonymitet, i tillegg til at den forhindrer innsamling om skole eller bosted. Slik informasjon vil altså ikke bli brukt i denne undersøkelsen. Det er også helt valgfritt for hver enkelt elev om de ønsker å delta i undersøkelsen eller ikke.

Enhver lærer som på vegne av sine elever ønsker å delta i undersøkelsen vil også få tilbud om å motta resultatene fra sin egen klasse i etterkant. Dette har jeg valgt å tilby slik at lærere kan få innsikt i egen klasse for å eventuelt tilpasse undervisningen for dem som måtte behøve dette.

8.4 Appendix D – In-depth information letter

Hei igjen, og tusen takk for at dere ønsker å delta i undersøkelsen til min mastergradsoppgave!

Mitt navn er Jannike Grindvik Todal, og jeg går nå femte året ved Grunnskolelærerutdanningen på Universitetet i Stavanger. Jeg tar master i Engelsk, og har i den sammenheng valgt å skrive om et nokså interessant tema, nemlig "speaking anxiety", som kort fortalt innebærer at flere elever opplever en form for angst og vegring når det gjelder å bruke fremmedspråk (i dette tilfellet engelsk) i klasserommet foran lærere og medelever. Snakkevegring kan gå ut over trivsel i engelskundervisningen i tillegg til å kunne påvirke fremtidig mestring, motivasjon og karakterer. Jeg ønsker derfor å belyse dette problemet slik at det kan være mulig for lærere å finne tiltak for å bedre situasjonen til de elevene som eventuelt sliter med denne formen for angst.

Spørreskjemaet ligger ved i format av en link og fungerer som følgende:

Det er 33 påstander som omhandler opplevelsen av angst i sammenheng med prating i Engelsk undervisning. Her skal elevene krysse av én av de fem svaralternativene: 1. svært enig, 2. enig, 3. hverken enig eller uenig, 4. uenig, 5. svært uenig. Nettsiden som blir brukt til utførelse, SurveyXact, sørger for en enkel utførelse, i tillegg til å sørge for anonymitet blant elevene.

Det er viktig at elevene forstår at deres personlige informasjon IKKE vil bli brukt i undersøkelsen, annet enn hvilket kjønn de er og at de går på 7. trinn et sted i Norge.

Elevene oppfordres til å svare ærlig og det legges vekt på at ingen elever skal tvinges til å delta i undersøkelsen, men at det er valgfritt.

Etter at alle svarene har blitt mottatt, vil du som lærer få tilbud om å få resultatene fra din egen klasse. Dette tilbudet blir gitt slik at de som ønsker kan bruke resultatene til å tilpasse videre undervisning.

Takker igjen for deltakelse.

Skulle det være noe, kan jeg nås på e-post: jg.todal@stud.uis.no eller tlf: 412 69 653

Med vennlig hilsen,

Jannike Grindvik Todal

8.5 Appendix E – Mean score and standard deviation between genders

Table presenting mean score and standard deviation for each gender separately.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Item1	Male	98	2,88	1,08
	Female	88	3,33	1,09
Item2	Male	98	2,79	1,13
	Female	88	2,94	1,12
Item3	Male	98	2,42	1,21
	Female	88	3,20	1,31
Item4	Male	98	1,95	,95
	Female	88	2,42	1,05
Item5	Male	98	2,67	1,24
	Female	88	2,75	1,29
Item6	Male	98	3,40	1,16
	Female	88	3,47	1,16
Item7	Male	98	2,51	1,23
	Female	88	2,83	1,28
Item8	Male	98	2,62	1,06
	Female	88	2,92	1,22
Item9	Male	98	2,51	1,18
	Female	88	3,34	1,25
Item10	Male	98	2,98	,97
	Female	88	3,42	,85
Item11	Male	98	2,63	1,18
	Female	88	3,16	1,12
Item12	Male	98	2,24	1,03
	Female	88	2,72	1,18
Item13	Male	98	2,59	1,27
	Female	88	2,70	1,14

Item14	Male	98	2,57	1,14
	Female	88	2,89	1,07
Item15	Male	98	2,81	1,22
	Female	88	3,74	1,16
Item16	Male	98	2,28	1,23
	Female	88	2,35	1,29
Item17	Male	98	2,61	1,09
	Female	88	3,23	1,18
Item18	Male	98	2,33	1,14
	Female	88	2,93	1,09
Item19	Male	98	2,35	1,22
	Female	88	3,32	1,36
Item20	Male	98	2,42	1,03
	Female	88	2,90	1,16
Item21	Male	98	2,71	1,13
	Female	88	3,27	1,15
Item22	Male	98	2,57	1,11
	Female	88	3,17	1,27
Item23	Male	98	2,44	1,17
	Female	88	3,35	1,21
Item24	Male	98	2,42	1,04
	Female	88	2,85	1,22
Item25	Male	98	2,21	1,05
	Female	88	2,63	1,12
Item26	Male	98	2,36	1,08
	Female	88	2,93	1,16
Item27	Male	98	2,50	1,02
	Female	88	2,77	1,07
Item28	Male	98	2,39	1,00
	Female	88	2,74	1,06
Item29	Male	98	2,65	1,03
	Female	88	3,03	1,14

Item30	Male	98	2,27	1,23
	Female	88	3,30	1,22
Item31	Male	98	2,38	1,02
	Female	88	2,72	1,09
Item32	Male	98	2,80	1,22
	Female	88	3,48	1,15

8.6 Appendix F – Percentages of each response to the questionnaire

Table presenting percentages for responses for each item for both genders combined

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total percent
1	11.3	23.7	36.0	21.5	7.5	100
2	11.8	28.0	30.1	22.6	7.5	100
3	11.8	23.1	18.3	26.9	19.9	100
4	1.1	9.7	26.3	31.2	31.7	100
5	19.9	25.8	30.1	11.8	12.4	100
6	19.8	32.3	24.2	18.3	5.4	100
7	10.2	17.7	19.4	33.3	19.4	100
8	14.5	29.6	28.0	21.0	7.0	100
9	13.4	19.4	28.5	21.5	17.2	100
10	2.7	17.2	50.0	18.8	11.3	100
11	8.6	25.8	23.1	30.1	12.4	100
12	4.3	15.1	26.3	31.7	22.6	100
13	19.9	30.6	21.0	22.0	6.5	100
14	5.4	19.9	31.7	27.4	15.6	100
15	17.2	32.3	22.6	15.1	12.9	100
16	8.6	9.7	18.3	31.2	32.3	100
17	12.9	24.7	31.7	20.4	10.2	100
18	4.8	21.5	22.0	33.3	18.3	100
19	15.6	18.3	18.3	26.9	21.0	100
20	5.4	18.3	28.0	32.3	16.1	100
21	9.7	29.0	26.3	23.7	11.3	100
22	13.4	15.6	26.3	32.3	12.4	100
23	11.8	22.6	23.1	25.8	16.7	100
24	5.4	20.4	22.6	34.4	17.2	100
25	5.4	11.3	22.6	40.3	20.4	100
26	5.9	19.9	22.0	35.5	16.7	100
27	12.9	36.6	30.1	15.6	4.8	100

28	3.2	15.1	32.3	32.8	16.7	100
29	6.5	20.4	36.0	24.2	12.9	100
30	10.2	24.7	18.3	23.7	23.1	100
31	17.2	34.4	30.1	14.0	4.3	100
32	14.5	26.3	28.0	18.8	12.4	100