The effectiveness of electronic discussions on foreign language anxiety levels of adult Egyptian EFL learners

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The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

The effectiveness of electronic discussions on foreign language anxiety levels of adult Egyptian EFL learners

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Applied Linguistics
Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

By
Dina Abul Magd

Under the supervision of Dr. Marilyn Plumlee

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of electronic discussions on adult Egyptian EFL learners’ Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) levels. It also aims at investigating learners’ perceptions of FLA and the effectiveness of e-discussions with regards to reducing their FLA. Finally, the current study attempts to look into the effect of gender on FLA. For this purpose, a total of 45 learners participated in a pre- and post-online discussion intervention. Students completed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) before and after involvement in the online discussion. Observations also took place before and after the online intervention. Finally, eight participants were interviewed to provide an in-depth analysis of the issue under discussion. Data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively to answer the research questions. Findings indicated that e-discussions helped reduce learners’ FLA levels. Furthermore, learners were aware of their FLA, even though their levels of FLA were different. Gender, however, was not found to be a significant variable in the study since there was no significant difference in male and female FLA pre- and post-online discussion.

Building on the findings of the study, it is recommended that teachers integrate e-discussions in classes where students suffer from high levels of FLA. Students are also advised to be open to language classes where Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is integrated. Future studies might employ a larger number of participants for more accurate results with regards to gender, as other studies have found gender differences in reported FLA levels.
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List of Abbreviations

CAI: Computer Assisted Instruction

CALL: Computer Assisted Language Learning

CMC: Computer Mediated Communication

CEFR: Common European Framework of Reference

CP: Critical Period

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

FB: Facebook

FL: Foreign Language

FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

FLCAS: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

IRB: Institutional Review Board

MCQ: Multiple Choice Questions

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SLWAI: Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory

TI: Traditional Instruction
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Chapter I. Introduction

The phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is unequivocally important within different language learning contexts. FLA is defined as a "distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors... arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope, 1989, p. 128). FLA sometimes creates barriers to language learning and might lead to learners' withdrawal from language classes, as they gradually start skipping class attendance (Occhipinti, 2009). According to Krashen (1982), affective filter is defined as “the amount of comprehensible input the acquirer receives and understands, and the strength of the affective filter, or the degree to which the acquirer is "open" to the input” (p. 9). FLA can have several negative effects on learners' acquisition of second languages. The negative feelings learners feel when they suffer from high FLA levels lead to having difficulty processing meaningful input and as a result, the output becomes less responsive (Krashen, 1982). Some learners assert that a "mental block" mainly occurs in language classrooms, as they do not usually encounter anxiety symptoms in other subjects (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986). Understanding the impact of FLA on language learners could facilitate finding solutions that help reduce levels of FLA (Kondo, 2010). However, in order to identify effective solutions for combating FLA, both the symptoms and the reasons for FLA's existence need to be explored first (Kondo, 2010).

FLA has been a critical area of concern in Egyptian EFL classrooms, especially among adults. Egyptians who are now adults would have learned English through traditional methods, for the most part. These methods consisted of memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary items without practicing what they learn in context. As a result, when they needed to use the language in their work places or in daily activities, they realized that their previous
English classes have not prepared them sufficiently for the demands of actual communicative situations. Their low English proficiency motivates them to take English classes outside the school and university context to learn in a more communicative way; however, giving the opportunity to these students to communicate leads to high levels of FLA. The above-mentioned case could be one reason why adults suffer from FLA. Other suggested reasons are fear of negative evaluation from peers (Stroud & Wee, 2006), recognizing the important role of English in job requirements (Trang, Baldauf & Moni, 2013), or learners' lack of flexibility in terms of making mistakes in class. Such lack of flexibility is increased especially after attempting to participate several times before in order to acquire the language (Occhipinti, 2009).

The relationship between FLA and gender has been an area of controversy, as most researchers suggest that female FLA is higher than that of males (Ezzi, 2012; Mesri, 2012; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013; Park & French, 2013). On the other hand, Cupan and Simsek (2012) found that male anxiety is higher than female's when it comes to second language learning. However, two studies conducted by Aida (1994) and Vorhees (1994) suggested that there are no gender effects with respect to FLA.

Before the integration of technology in language classrooms, researchers suggested different strategies to reduce learners' FLA, such as providing teachers with techniques for reducing anxiety as part of their professional development and also learner strategies including hypnosis. However, such solutions are not very practical, since they require considerable teacher training and plenty of time (Foss & Reitzel, 1988). Other strategies and models that have been suggested and implemented in classrooms include the language learning strategies and the "relational competence model" (Mohammadi, Biria, Koosha & Shahsavari, 2013; Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). The former method suggests techniques that students can use as an aid for their language acquisition and information storage and retrieval.
Integrating computers in language classrooms has been shown to be effective and interactive in many classes where English is being taught as a second language (Altun, 2005; Jee & O'Connor, 2014; Jia et al., 2013; Kao, 2006; Shih, 2013). CALL has been used through its three different phases: behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL and integrative CALL. In the behavioristic CALL, computers were the tutors and they offered several programs covering vocabulary, grammar, and translation explanation and exercises (Warschauer, 1996). The communicative CALL's main focus, however, was integrating more than one skill in the exercises offered. In addition, grammar was implicitly taught (Warschauer, 1996). Finally, the integrative CALL witnessed the intervention of the Internet, so that learners could communicate with interlocutors from all over the world. This also facilitated the communication between learners and their teachers. E-discussions are considered one of the sub-categories of integrative CALL, which are used nowadays and have been suggested to have positive effects on learners' academic achievement, motivation and FLA (Akour, 2006; Chiu, 2012; Jia et al., 2013; Warschauer, 1996).

1.1 Research problem

The problem that has been identified is that learners who suffer from high levels of FLA find difficulties to smoothly acquire the FL skills and thus, researchers have been attempting to find solutions that could reduce such high levels of FLA. As a result, four main gaps have
been identified in the literature review with regards to the relationship between FLA and CALL. First, little attention has been given to the effect of online discussions on FLA specifically, with most of the studies being more concerned with the acquisition of specific language skills, such as reading or speaking, and using applications with activities that focus on these skills only. As a result, to most of the researchers, the acquisition of the language was a bigger concern than what hinders the acquisition process like FLA (Tanduklangi, Alberth & Amri, 2014; Chiu, 2013; Wijayanto & Hum, 2011; Warschauer, 1996). Second, there have been no previous studies conducted in Egypt to examine learners' attitudes toward e-discussions and their effects on FLA. Third, most of the studies focused on students' perspectives and the possibility of reducing anxiety levels in the actual process of contributing in online discussions, without testing whether the e-discussions had further effects such as reducing students' FLA levels upon their reconvening to their actual in-class classroom discussions (Arnold, 2007; Tallon, 2009; Warschauer, 1996). Finally, participants of previous studies were either undergraduate or graduate students enrolled in a university and took English classes as part of their degree program. Participants of the current study, however, are adult EFL learners who decided to take further English courses (outside their BA or MA context) to enhance their English proficiency levels.

1.2 Aim of the study

The first aim of the present study is to examine whether e-discussions affect learners’ levels of FLA. The researcher anticipates that holding online discussions among learners during the semester will reduce their FLA levels when they reconvene in the classroom. The reason for that is during online discussions students would have more opportunity to express themselves without worrying about receiving negative evaluations in class. The second aim of the current study is to examine the learners' perceptions of integrating online discussions in language classrooms and whether or not it motivates them. Finally, this study strived to
determine if there is a difference in FLA levels among male and female EFL learners and also which gender was more affected by the implementation of e-discussions.

1.3 Research questions

This study focuses on adult Egyptian English learners with low proficiency levels, placed in levels two and three out of 16 according to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), who take English courses at one of the language programs in a private university. The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. What is the effect of e-discussions on the FLA levels of in-class discussions among adult Egyptian EFL learners?
2. What are the learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of e-discussions with regards to their FLA?
3. Are there any differences between male and female learners regarding the FLA level before and after the e-discussions?

1.4 Definitions of constructs

The following constructs are the operational definitions to be referred to throughout the study:

**Foreign Language Anxiety:** is the feeling of stress, worry, and tenseness that arrives whenever a learner enters a language classroom (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope, 1986). In the current study, FLA was identified using the FLCAS questionnaire developed by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz and Cope (1986), in addition to classroom observations that record learners’ FLA signs.
**Computer Assisted Language Learning**: is the process of integrating computers into language classes, to include all functions of the computer in learning a language (Levy, 2007, as cited in Tabassum & Parven, 2013). In this study, a sub-category of CALL – electronic discussions – was experimented with.

**E-discussions**: is Computer Mediated Communication (CMC), which brings learners together from different places for collaborative learning. CMC can be either synchronous (where all learners have to be online at the same time) or asynchronous (where learners can log on to the internet at different times to participate in the discussion) (Warschauer et al., 1996). In this study, learners participated in an asynchronous online discussion.

**Perception**: in the current study, perception reflects learners’ points of view and awareness of their FLA and the effectiveness of e-discussions on their different levels of FLA. A list of interview questions was developed to determine learners’ perceptions.
Chapter II. Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of e-discussions on adult Egyptian EFL learners' FLA and to determine whether male and female FLA is different. A further aim is to investigate learners' perceptions of their FLA and how it might be positively affected by e-discussions. This chapter provides an overview of previous research on categories of FLA, its symptoms, reasons, effects and suggested strategies to minimize such a phenomenon.

2.1 FLA definition and categories

The feeling of anxiety in general can be defined as the personal, internal feeling of worry, apprehension, and tension that arises in the nervous system (Cubukcu, 2007). These different feelings occur when a person realizes the "threat" they are facing, while also having some self-doubts regarding their coping ability. One of these threats could be a language classroom where a learner is trying to lessen the feeling of anxiety. FLA can be defined as “the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284).

According to MacIntyre (1995), FLA can be related to cognition and behavior, as he suggests that the relationship among the three is best viewed as recurrent and inter-related. He gives an example stating that if a student is asked to answer a question in an FL class, s/he becomes worried. This worry could lead to the decline of cognitive performance because of resulting distracted attention, which in return leads to negative self-evaluation. This is where MacIntyre (1995) focused his differentiation between trait and state anxieties. He defined trait anxiety as a stable tendency toward becoming anxious across a range of situations. State anxiety, however, is an immediate feeling that occurs, with immediate cognitive impact. Moreover, situation-specific anxiety is a trait that reappears along with the reoccurrence of a
particular situation (Woodrow, 2006). Therefore, FLA can occur as situation-specific anxiety, since it is different from being generally anxious in a wide range of situations and is inclusive of foreign language classroom situations (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope, 1989). Research conducted in different contexts has shown that this is a worldwide phenomenon that exists among learners of different English proficiency levels (Awan et al., 2010; Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Gregersen, 2007; Kim, 2009; Mohammadi et al., 2013; Pichette, 2009; Stroud & Wee, 2006; Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010; Woodrow, 2006).

With regards to the available FLA literature, Foss and Reitzel (1988) were among the first researchers who differentiated FLA from general communication anxiety. FLA is considered the outcome of the complexities that students face while learning a foreign language (Sparks and Ganschow, 1991, 1993a, 1993b, 1995, 1996 as cited in Kim, 2009). It has been argued that learning a foreign language is one of the things that frighten learners the most (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner 1991c, as cited in Dewaele & Thirtle, 2009). Looking into FLA’s definition from positive and negative perspectives, FLA can be defined both ways (Occhipinti, 2009). As an example of a positive definition, facilitating anxiety is when learners make good use of their anxiety and think of it as a motivational force to help them master the language. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety is the type of anxiety that most learners who are suffering from FLA feel, and it is considered the main barrier and impediment to language learning. Furthermore, it sometimes leads to learners' withdrawal from language classes.

According to E. Howritz, M. Horwitz and Cope (1986), FLA can be divided into three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a state of shyness where learners become afraid to speak in pairs, groups, or in public. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) argue that learners'
communication apprehension is caused by a lack of vocabulary needed to express their thoughts, even though these ideas are fully developed. This leads to a feeling of nervousness and frustration. On the other hand, test anxiety stems from the learner's fear of failure in an exam. Some learners seek perfection, which is why they are always worried. Another reason for test anxiety is the weight or difficulty of quizzes and tests in some language classes. Finally, fear of negative evaluation is defined as the learner's avoidance of situations in which they might be negatively evaluated, whether by the teacher or by their peers. Fear of negative evaluation shares some common aspects with test anxiety, but the former is broader than the latter since it involves other situations and not only tests or exams (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986).

2.2 FLA symptoms

Symptoms of FLA can be verbal or non-verbal. Some examples of verbal symptoms are learners' usage of very short, simple, and to the point replies whenever they are questioned in a FL (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986). As for the non-verbal symptoms, learners' reactions can be emotional, where they blush or stammer, or become worried (Naveh-Benjamin 1991, as cited in Woodrow, 2006; Zeidner 1998). Other non-verbal examples are "more bodily tension, self-touching, postural rigidity... leaning away, gaze aversion and indirect head orientation and less facial pleasantness, nodding and animation" (Gregersen, 2007, p. 211). These learners might also miss classes, delay assignments, have difficulties in remembering what they have previously covered, never volunteer in any activities, and consequently obtain low grades (Dewaele & Thirtle, 2009; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). According to E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz and Cope, learners who suffer from FLA reported that they “freeze” whenever they are asked to respond to a drill or participate in a role-play practice. They also mentioned that learners find it difficult to differentiate sounds and structures of the target language. In addition, when learners are being examined, they
mention that although they “know” the information they need to answer the question, they
tend to “forget” it during exam time.

2.3 Reasons for FLA

In trying to determine the reasons for FLA’s existence, it is clear that FLA does not exclusively pertain to one skill, as it can be found in speaking, writing, listening, or reading; it could also be distributed throughout the four. According to Krashen's affective filter hypothesis, there is a "mental block" that arises when a learner displays the FLA symptoms and which obstructs L2 from "getting in". So whenever the anxiety level is high, the affective filter increases as well (Huang & Hwang, 2013). Because learning a new foreign language requires studying and applying new vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, the most important attribute a learner must have is the flexibility to make mistakes in front of people and take the risk of not always being correct from the very beginning (Occhipinti, 2009). Some learners lack this flexibility and as a result, they suffer from high FLA levels. Some researchers argue that a number of FLA cases are not competence-based, but are rather due to the identity-based anxiety (Stroud & Wee, 2006).

One of the reasons for FLA could also be the uniqueness of learning a foreign language or the learner's fear of evaluation (Occhipinti, 2009). According to Stroud and Wee (2006), some students may not be afraid of committing mistakes or be evaluated by the teacher; rather, they feel uncomfortable because of their peers' reactions, as some students might call them "attention seekers" if they attempt to participate most of the time and always give correct answers. Choi (2014) also mentioned that some learners might suffer from writing anxiety because they are afraid of committing grammatical mistakes in the foreign language, which comes in addition to their lack of vocabulary and confidence, and general insufficiency in expressing their ideas in L2. Other sources of writing anxiety include the
high frequency of writing assignments (Claypool, 1980), and a fear of negative comments whether from the teacher or from their colleagues when they do peer editing (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986). Trang, Baldauf and Moni (2013) suggest that some students feel anxious because they recognize the importance of English and its role in job requirements.

2.4 FLA effects

Though the reasons postulated to be at the root of FLA differ from one researcher to another, many of them agree on the significance of the FLA phenomenon and its effect on students' attitude and language use. Indeed, most researchers believe that FLA prevents students from processing input, which retards the acquisition of the second language (Krashen, 1982). Another effect of FLA is learners' attempts to perform exercises and tasks at a faster rate, which leads to shorter and poorer answers. For example, if a learner is suffering from writing anxiety, s/he is found to write shorter pieces. Daly (1978) concluded that anxious writers are more likely to produce texts of a lower quality, with shorter and simpler structures. Hassan (2001) suggested that students with low levels of anxiety produced better quality compositions than those suffering from higher levels. The same idea applies for speaking: learners who suffer from FLA try not to involve themselves in any discussions, and if they are obliged, they speak in very short, simple sentences (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope 1986).

Elkhafaifi (2005) conducted a study on the effect of FLA on students' achievement in Arabic as a foreign language, in which he found that students suffering from FLA score very low in listening comprehension exercises. According to Pichette (2009), another possible consequence of FLA is that students who are attempting to acquire any FL might resort to
distance learning instead of face-to-face learning, as they feel more comfortable being anonymous and are not pressured by peers.

Since the effects of FLA hinder learners’ second language acquisition, as learners face many difficulties in their learning acquisition process and some of them reach the point of dropping the course, it is vital to look into possible strategies that attempt to reduce learners’ FLA levels.

2.5 Strategies for reducing FLA

While it is not possible to completely eradicate FLA from classrooms, its negative effects can be reduced to a minimum (Crookall & Oxford, 1991, as cited in Bailey et al., 1999). One of the strategies used to address FLA is hypnosis and biofeedback; however, this strategy is not practical, since it needs substantial teacher training to be implemented (Foss & Reitzel, 1988). Another suggested solution is language learning strategies, which have been utilized by Mohammadi et al. (2013) among Iranian university students. This study proposed that the more strategies are used, there will be a greater reduction in the level of FLA.

Language learning strategies have been defined as methods or techniques that students use to obtain language or knowledge (Rubin, 1975). They have also been defined as "operations used by learners to aid the acquisition, storage, and retrieval of information" (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989, p.291).

The implementation of language learning strategies led to Oxford creating a taxonomy of language learning strategies which is currently being used by many scholars due to being structured and organized with regards to acquisition, memorization, recall, and the use of new information (Mohammadi et al., 2013). Oxford (1990) divided these strategies into direct and indirect. The direct strategies involve memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, whereas indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective, and social strategies.
Another model for reducing FLA was suggested by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), called the "relational competence model". This model was proposed as an approach to specifically deal with FLA. Spitzberg and Cupach (1984) defined competence as an impression that one has of him/herself rather than an innate behavior. This model consists of five main components: motivation, knowledge, skills, outcomes, and context. These components were discussed in detail with the result being a suggestion of activities to reduce learners' anxiety levels (Foss & Reitzel, 1988). For example, the researchers recommended that teachers let their students write their fears on the blackboard and then discuss them together in class among their peers. Occhipinti (2009) suggested a related approach, where students fill out FLA questionnaires and afterwards discuss their answers, first in pairs and then in groups. According to Occhipinti (2009), this discussion will raise the students' awareness of the fact that they are not the only ones who suffer from FLA. A further suggestion was that teachers are advised to attend workshops and conferences about language teaching, to learn more language practices and methods used in FL classrooms. Having a variety of exercises for students-especially if they are interactive- would help reduce learners' FLA in classrooms.

All of the above-mentioned strategies are various attempts to reduce FLA levels from a time before computers became part of language classrooms. Nowadays, people use technology in almost all aspects of life. Integrating technology in classrooms and within the language learning process provides opportunities for interaction between the teacher and the students, and also among the students themselves, unlike the traditional methods. Thus, this study's main focus is on the effect of CALL implementation on learners' FLA.
2.5.1 CALL and FLA

Integrating technology in English classrooms has become widespread in countries where English is being taught as a second/foreign language (Shih, 2013; Tanduklangi, Alberth & Amri, 2014; Walia, 2009; Wang & Young; 2012; Warschauer, Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2014; Warschauer, 1996; Wijayanto & Hum, 2011). The present study focuses on the value of using CALL as a strategy to reduce learners’ FLA. Since language usage is one of the techniques by which a student learns a new language, teaching a language in a communicative way is the ultimate technique to apply. FLA has been referred to as one of the more common deterrents toward second language acquisition (Chiu, 2013; Huang & Hwang, 2013; Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Kao, 2006). CALL can help learners interact more while providing a more motivating environment and teaching learners how to be autonomous, all of which reduce the levels of FLA (Huang & Hwang, 2013). This is because CALL involves using computers as a tool in the language learning process. The learning process involves presentations, answering online exercises, watching videos, or extra practice exercises (Al-Awidi & Ismail, 2014). CALL is also used by students to send in their assignments or obtain some information from different websites. Computers serve as a communication tool and as a source of information. Indeed, giving learners the opportunity to include computers in the learning process may change their attitudes toward second language learning (Tanduklangi, Alberth & Amri, 2014).

CALL has often been suggested in L2 classrooms due to its efficacy on both students and teachers in different contexts, with focus on various skills like speaking, reading, writing, or listening. According to Kao (2006), CALL integration is a good option for low-proficiency students, as it reduces anxiety reactions and promotes more self-confidence. Since each English course has its own needs, several kinds of CALL applications and exercises have been created to facilitate the learning process. Having examined the effect of CALL, and in
particular blended learning where students attend regular classes and practice some exercises online on students with a high level of FLA, different researchers have stressed the importance of CALL integration in the language learning process (Altun, 2005; Bae Son, 2006; Genç & Aydin, 2010; Jee & O’Connor, 2014; Tsai, 2012; Turbee & Roberts, 1996; Wang & Young; 2012; Warschauer, 1996; Wijayanto & Hum, 2011).

According to Warschauer (1996), CALL can be categorized into three phases, as per its gradual development: behavioristic CALL, communicative CALL, and integrative CALL. Behavioristic CALL originated in the 1950s and was actually implemented in the 1960s. In this phase, the computer is the tutor, which is why this phase is called ”drill and kill”. A well-known program used at the time of this phase's implementation was PLATO, which contains vocabulary drills, grammar explanations and translation exercises. This phase was crucial during its time period, as computers could offer educational exercises on an individualized basis, allowing learners with different paces and learning styles to make good use of it.

Toward the end of the 1970s, the behavioristic CALL phase was rejected on both theoretical and pedagogical levels and a new phase was introduced: communicative CALL. This phase became prominent in the 1980s and had many advocates, one of which was Underwood (1984). According to Underwood (1984), there are thirteen premises for communicative CALL: 1) it focuses on acquisition practice rather than learning practice; 2) it encourages learners to utter original sentences rather than ”prefabricated” utterances; 3) it does not evaluate every single thing learners do; 4) grammar is always implicit; 5) it models the correct answer or gives learners a clue instead of telling them they are ”wrong”; 6) because success is a sufficient reward for learners, it does not try to reward learners with ”congratulatory messages”; 7) it does not try to be over nice to learners in terms of comments or having learners' names on the screen; 8) it uses L2 only; 9) it is flexible when dealing with many mistakes; 10) it helps learners explore more, so they can play with the language and see
how things might match together; 11) it creates a natural environment when learning L2; 12) it does not try to do what regular books do or say, as its main aim is to add something to what students learn from books; 13) and finally, it reduces students' feelings of anxiety and creates an innovative and interesting environment. Software programs in communicative CALL no longer depend on drilling; rather, they provide practice with regards to different skills. So, in addition to having a computer as a tutor, it became a stimulus as well, providing games, paced reading, stimulating discussions, and critical thinking. Computers were also referred to in this phase as a tool or "workhorse", like the word processor, concordances, or the spelling checker. Having a computer as a tool does not only supply language material, but also helps the learner use the language.

By the end of the 1980s, critics believed that computers could do more than what they did at this time; this is when the integrative CALL phase began. Integrative CALL included two stages, multimedia or hypermedia, and using the Internet. Multimedia in the language learning environment helps with the integration of all skills, while also providing an authentic learning environment. An example of a software program used in the integrative phase is *Dustin*. It is a simulation of a learner arriving at an airport in the U.S. and having to go through all the airport procedures until s/he reaches the hotel. If the learner's responses were incorrect, the program showed examples of the correct answers. Using Internet includes all these options in addition to being able to communicate with anyone, anytime, and in any place in the world; that is why it is referred to as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) or electronic discussions (e-discussions). CMC allows learners to communicate with each other, whether synchronously, where all learners need to be online at the same time, or asynchronously, where a message can be sent and each learner is to reply at a different time. It also provides one-to-one communication or one-to-many, so it can be used for both
academic and non-academic purposes (Warschauer, 1996). In the early years of the use of CMC, Warschauer & Healey (1998) lauded its merits as follows:

As our focus of attention gradually shifts from the computer itself to the natural integration of computers into the language learning process, we will know that computer technology has taken its rightful place as an important element of language learning and teaching (p.67).

Some more recent studies have indicated that e-discussions and online programs develop students' progress and academic achievement in learning English as a foreign language (Altun, 2005; Jia et al., 2013; Shih, 2013; Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin, 2010; Genç & Aydun, 2010). However, very few studies have focused on the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels (Kao, 2006; Jee & O'Connor, 2014; Huang & Hwang, 2013). Hence, this study's main aim is to determine whether e-discussions positively affect students' FLA when they are back to the in-class discussions.

2.5.2 E-discussions and academic achievement and motivation

Shedding light on the effect of e-discussions on academic achievement, Tanduklangi, Alberth and Amri (2014) conducted a study in which 57 university students in Indonesia underwent pre- and post-tests on their writing skills, to indicate if hybrid learning affected their writing abilities. The researchers used the Edmodo LMS website to implement the online writing assignment, which was a descriptive paragraph of 200-250 words. The findings showed that integrating Edmodo in the students' learning process had a positive effect on their writing skills. The researchers concluded that hybrid instruction can improve learners' writing abilities.

To examine the effect of blended learning on students' academic achievement, and vocabulary acquisition in particular, Jia et al. (2013) conducted a study on four middle schools in China. The main aim of this study was to determine whether long-term CALL
integration would have a positive effect on their learning performance. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and cloze quizzes were created online with automatic feedback to the students. The results showed how effective the online quizzes were to the students' academic achievement.

A meta-analysis was conducted by Chiu (2012), which analyzed 16 research papers from different countries, i.e. Taiwan, Turkey, Spain, France, Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, China and Saudi Arabia. Chiu (2012) reached the general conclusion that using CALL to assist in the acquisition of L2 vocabulary has a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition. However, the researcher suggested that focusing on one language skill, such as vocabulary acquisition, would lead to more concrete results.

Another study was conducted in Taiwan by Shih (2013), in which 111 students were divided into three groups. Group one included English major undergraduate students, group two included postgraduates of management majors, and group three was comprised of postgraduates of business administration. Each group had a separate Facebook (FB) group that was used for peer assessment, exchanging opinions and ideas, and receiving feedback on their writing assignments. The students had a pre- and post-test, to determine the significance of their English levels before and after FB implementation. The researcher also used the mixed-method approach, where students filled out two questionnaires about their self-efficacy and learning satisfaction, in addition to personal interviews with five volunteer students. According to the results, the total average of the students' scores in the pre-test was 48.04 out of 100. However, after the FB implementation, average result for the post-test was 85.73, which showed a significant improvement in the students' proficiency levels. The two questionnaires and the interview results indicated that the majority of learners were satisfied with their progress, as they believed that incorporating FB into their course work could be very useful.
Examining the effect of learners' motivation using CALL for academic purposes, especially academic writing, Warschauer (1996) investigated learners' attitudes toward CALL at 12 different universities in the U.S, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. With 167 students filling out a survey concerning their feelings towards computer usage, the findings indicated that a wide range of students had positive attitudes toward using computers, even though some of them were unskilled with computers.

Akour (2006) conducted a study at a public Jordanian university that examined the effect of using Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI) along with Traditional Instruction (TI), as opposed to using only TI. The 92 participants were divided into two groups, a control group in which students received only TI, and an experimental group in which students are taught via TI and CAI methods. Each group received the same amount of instruction throughout the 16 weeks. The results suggested that students who were in the TI-CAI class performed significantly better than those who received just TI, in terms of the results of their pre- and post-test scores.

In the research conducted by Wijayanto and Hum (2011), the focus was only on speaking despite the participants being enrolled in classes for the four core English skills, as speaking is the only skill where these students became hesitant when they participate in class. The participating students suffered from anxiety and were de-motivated to practice speaking. The researchers decided to integrate CALL to see if it would make any difference in the students' competency and motivation. The researchers conducted their study by applying three cycles. In the first cycle, learners received instruction and practiced speaking without any CALL interference. In the second cycle, a CALL intervention took place, where students responded to online applications. Cycle three was similar to the second one, but with an increase in the role of learning speaking. In each cycle, students were asked to perform a speaking activity for which they would be evaluated. The participants were 29 students in the
Department of Information and Technology at Telkom Polytechnic Bandung University, Indonesia. Observations took place in classrooms, to evaluate the progress of learners. Based on the findings, very few students participated in cycle one - the traditional instruction - and they only produced a few words, and rarely combined them into a full sentence. In the second cycle, much progress was noticed with the majority of students producing full sentences, expressing new ideas, and using their own words and expressions. In cycle three, the participation of students was significant, as they were more involved and engaged in participation.

The majority of the research conducted to examine the effects of e-discussions has focused on learners' academic achievement, motivation or a specific skill acquisition. Very few studies have focused specifically on FLA. Consequently, one of the current study's aims is to examine the effect of e-discussions on FLA in particular.

2.5.3 Perceptions of E-discussions

Bae Son (2006) examined learners' perceptions of e-discussions by conducting a study of 26 international MA students who were taking a CALL course at the University of Southern Queensland, Australia. The aim of this study was to evaluate three points: the learners' use of e-discussions, their perceptions of the e-discussions' importance, and to analyze patterns of online interaction. Learners were of a number of different nationalities, i.e. French, Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Turkish, Thai, Taiwanese, and Singaporean. During the semester, the students met at the regular classroom time in addition to participating in several online discussions. Toward the end of the semester, the students were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to analyze their perceptions of the e-discussions integration. The results showed that 70% of the posts were fully task-focused; while 24% were partially task-focused and only 6% were off-task. Furthermore, most students
considered the e-discussions enjoyable and constructive and reported that it facilitated collaborative learning.

To examine the effect of FB on students' learning process, a study was conducted in Malaysia on 300 undergraduate students (Kabilan, Ahmed & Abidin, 2010). The students completed a questionnaire that determined whether they used FB for academic purposes and how it was useful for them. The findings suggested that students' academic improvement, motivation, and self-confidence were positively related to using FB for academic purposes.

As the previously mentioned studies indicate that e-discussions have a positive impact on learners' motivation, the current study also looks into learners' perceptions of having e-discussions in language classrooms. However, the current study attempted to delve deeper to evaluate their perceptions of both their FLA awareness and the effect of e-discussions on their FLA.

2.5.4 E-discussions and FLA

In his 1996 study, Warschauer compared face-to-face discussions with e-discussions with regards to the equality of participation and complexity of language. The study involved 16 undergraduate students at a community college in Hawaii, who first participated in face-to-face discussions and then in an e-discussion in a computer lab, using the Daedlaus Inter Change software program. This program allows students to be online at the same time, type, and press "enter", with the option of being able to scroll back and forth to read all posted messages. Messages were recorded chronologically, and the name of the writer appeared on the screen. Regarding the face-to-face discussions, they were all audiotaped for purposes of comparison. The findings indicated that the students were able to express themselves more freely in the e-discussion, which helped in decreasing their stress levels and enhancing their thinking competencies. With regards to equality of participation, the results showed that
twice as many students participated in the e-discussion as in the face-to-face discussions. The study also indicated that students used more formal and complex language in the e-discussion, on both the syntactic and lexical levels.

Testing the effect of CMC on FLA, and in particular communication apprehension, Arnold (2007) conducted a study in an American university where 56 students were enrolled in German language classes. Participants were divided into three groups: a control group that completed six face-to-face discussions in a regular classroom, an experimental group that met in the computer lab for a synchronous discussion through Blackboard, and the third group was also experimental; however, learners completed the six oral discussions outside the classroom, so as to communicate asynchronously. Learners had one week to complete their six discussions. The researcher used Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to measure the students' FLA levels before and after the six discussions. The results indicated that CMC positively affected learners' communication apprehension, especially the ones who had low levels of FLA.

To determine the effect of asynchronous voice conferencing on FLA, Poza (2011) evaluated 48 undergraduate students whose first language was English and who were learning Spanish as a second language. The researcher used the Wimba program for the online communication, with the participants filling out the Wimba anxiety scale to make sure that FLA was not affected by program anxiety. The students also completed an edited version of the FLCAS, as some questions that were irrelevant to the purpose of the study had been removed. Both questionnaires were filled out before and after the students participated in the online discussions. The researcher also interviewed four participants, to support the questionnaire results. The findings of the quantitative data showed that anxiety did not significantly decrease after the Wimba application; however, the qualitative results contradicted those of the questionnaires. During interviews, participants indicated that they
had gained more confidence using *Wimba*, but they explained that the conditions through which they accessed the online discussion on campus had exposed them to other anxiety factors, such as the presence of others, the closeness of the computers to each other and the possibility of technical errors occurring.

Tallon (2009) conducted a study for two main purposes: to determine if heritage students of Spanish face FLA, and to compare heritage and non-heritage students of Spanish with regards to the effect of CMC on their FLA levels. The researcher defined heritage students as those who are raised in a country where Spanish is their second language and have at least one parent who is a Spanish speaker. Non-heritage students were referred to those who have no ethnic or family connection to the target language, and are learning a foreign language but are not living in a country where this language is spoken. Nineteen students of a private American university participated in the study. They were divided into three groups: a face-to-face conversation control group, small groups of asynchronous CMC (experimental group A), and one large group of asynchronous CMC (experimental group B). Experimental groups A and B participated in online Blackboard discussion, talking about childhood activities and using the past tense in Spanish. The control group performed the same tasks, but they participated in regular classroom discussions. The three groups completed the FLCAS pre- and post-their online discussion. The results indicated that the non-heritage students had higher FLA levels than the heritage students. The results also suggested that there was no significant change in the control group's anxiety scores, unlike the experimental groups, which showed a drop of about five points in their FLA scores. The sizes of the experimental groups did not produce any differences with regards to the effect of CMC on FLA.

Although very few studies have examined the effect of e-discussions on FLA, most of them have revealed that e-discussions contribute to reducing learners' FLA levels. The
current study has thus implemented the same notion, checking the students' FLA levels before and after the e-discussion. However, it did not conclude at the e-discussion level only. Learners had another in-class discussion post-online discussion intervention, to determine if the anxiety became less upon their return to classrooms. Furthermore, some attention was given to comparing learners' equality of participation and complexity of language used in both in-class discussions.

2.6 FLA and gender

The relationship between gender and FLA has been an area of investigation in L2 classrooms. Some studies show that there is a significant difference between male and female FLA levels, while other studies have refuted this argument. Among those who advocate that females’ FLA is higher than that of males, Park and French (2013) examined the gender difference with regards to FLA with their study of 948 undergraduate students who were learning English as a second language in South Korea. The total number of males was 368 and the number of females was 580. After the students filled out the FLCAS, the findings revealed that females had higher FLA levels than males. However, despite their high anxiety level, the females performed better and obtained higher grades than their male counterparts. Another study conducted by Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013) to compare male and female anxiety and their motivation levels while speaking in a FL. A total number of 225 females and 158 males, all undergraduates at a Turkish university participated in the study. The results showed that the female students had a higher level of motivation than the males. Regarding FLA, females reported that they felt more anxious than males when it came to practicing speaking skills in class.

Ezzi (2012) examined the same relationship between FLA and gender among Yemeni undergraduate students at Hodeidah University. After having 151 males and 12 females fill
out the FLCAS, the findings showed that female FLA was higher than male FLA. A similar study was conducted among Iranian undergraduate students who were learning English at Salmas Azad University (Mesri, 2012). A total of 52 participants took part in this study (20 males and 32 females). Using the same questionnaire as Ezzi (2012), the results suggested that males have less anxiety than females. The female Iranian learners scored higher levels in FLA in all the categories on the FLCAS.

On the other hand, Voorhees (1994) conducted a study at Iowa State University with students who were learning three different foreign languages, i.e. French, German, and Spanish. Based on the FLCAS scores and follow-up interviews with 15 males and 18 females, there was no significant difference found in the FLA levels between the male and female learners. In a similar context and with similar results, Aida (1994) conducted his study on American students learning Japanese at the University of Texas, Austin. A total of 56 males and 40 females participated in the study. The researcher used FLCAS to measure the learners’ FLA. The results also showed no difference in FLA levels among male and female learners.

A related study conducted by Capan and Simsek (2012) investigated the same relationship between FLA and gender among 131 university students majoring in English at a Turkish university. Using FLCAS among 65 females and 66 males, unlike the above-mentioned studies, the results showed that male learners had a higher FLA level than females.

2.7 Critical overview of the literature

In Egypt, speaking English as a foreign language is considered a fundamental skill for individuals, whether for their future careers or due to the standard, socio-economic requirements. That is why many international schools are now opening for young learners, so that they may acquire the language as early as possible. However, adults, who have passed
the Critical Period (CP) still need help with lowering their fear of learning English as well as more encouragement, particularly since most of them learned English with no technology and have no realization as to how FLA can negatively affect their language acquisition. Thus, the main motivation for this study is to observe the learners' levels of FLA before and after integrating CALL in their English classes, using electronic discussions.

Based on the literature review, the researcher identified five main gaps. The first gap is that the majority of studies focused mainly on the skill acquisition rather than the process of such acquisition. In other words, they used to test whether learners were able to acquire a grammatical rule or a specific amount of vocabulary, without focusing on what might hinder the process of acquisition like suffering from FLA or demotivation. Second, no previous studies in Egypt tackled the issue of examining the effect of CALL on learners' FLA. Third, all studies examined the previously mentioned effect by comparing the in-class discussion to the e-discussion. In this study the researcher had two in-class discussions, pre- and post-online intervention, to compare their FLA levels inside the classroom context and not what they feel at home on their computers. Finally, participants of the present study were not taking these English courses as part of their university graduation requirements. These students were taking English courses for career, family, and travel reasons; so they are not obliged to be enrolled in such classes. As a result, their age groups and educational backgrounds are different from what have been discussed in previous research studies.

The aim of this study is to examine students' levels of FLA before and after participating in e-discussions. The second aim is to examine the learners' perceptions of integrating online discussions in language classrooms and whether or not the e-discussions motivated them. Finally, this study aimed to determine if there is a difference in the FLA levels among male and female EFL learners.
Chapter III. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The current was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, since data collected from the three instruments were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. This study is also quasi-experimental, as participants were not randomly selected. The study had no hypotheses and is of confirmatory nature with regard to the first two research questions as the majority of previous studies concluded the effectiveness of e-discussions on learners’ FLA. Further, they also reported learners’ perceptions of their FLA and how CALL positively affected their FLA. However, the current study has an exploratory nature when it comes to the third research question that discusses the relationship between FLA and gender as according to the literature review there is no clear cut correlation between the two.

3.2 Participants

The present study focused on adult Egyptian EFL learners who take English courses (general English and/or conversation) outside the school/university context at a language program in a private institution in Cairo, where English is taught as a foreign language. Some of these learners take English courses for career reasons; they sometimes meet with native speakers at their workplaces, so they seek fluency; while others need it for promotion. The majority of females take these courses to help their children with their studies. Finally, few undergraduate students take such courses along with their university studies to enhance their proficiency levels. According to the language program website, the English curriculum is aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for languages. The available levels are from the very beginning where learners first take "survival English" courses to the end of the B2 stage. The main focus is on language learning through activities
that offer contextualized situations where learners practice the target language using the four English-language skills. Learners not only listen to and read authentic material; they also speak and write about a variety of topics in real-life situations.

Participants were of both genders, and their ages varied from the mid-20s to the mid-40s. Participants take a placement test that is administered by the language program to determine their proficiency levels. The participants’ levels were two and three out of 16 levels. According to the CEFR labeling for levels, these two levels fall right after A1A and A1B, which are referred to as "survival English" levels. As a result, these two levels can be considered as low-proficiency levels. The researcher chose these participants as it was predicted that learners with lower proficiency levels would have higher levels of FLA (Kondo, 2010). The curriculum is designed where they study simple grammar rules like the present and past simple and modal verbs. In addition, the four language skills are covered; however, they are all integrated tackling a variety of topics that reflect everyday situations. A demographic information section was added to the FLCAS so as to determine the participants’ gender, age, and their reasons for taking English classes. Table 1, below, shows the participants' distribution across different age cohorts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From 18-20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 20-29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 30-39</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From 40-49</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. *Participants' age groups*
3.3 Instruments

The main aim of this study is to answer three main questions, which examine the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels, their perceptions of their FLA, and also if gender is a determinant factor in terms of measuring learners' FLA levels before and after e-discussions. The current study conducted a triangulation of data collection to provide multiple types of evidence and to avoid dependence on self-reported data only. The triangulation of data collection could present a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The three instruments adopted in this study were an observation checklist (see Appendix A), the FLCAS (see Appendices B and C) and interview questions (see Appendix D). Since this study involved human participants, the researcher designed a participant consent form and applied for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before collecting any data.

3.3.1 Observation checklist

An observation checklist was developed to record FLA signs during the in-class discussions and before and after the e-discussion. The rationale behind starting with the observations was to naturally record potential FLA symptoms, before learners had access to the FLCAS and could therefore anticipate what the observers might be looking for. Through these observations, the researcher recorded both the verbal and non-verbal anxiety symptoms that appeared in learners' body language or in how they responded to the teacher's questions. Moreover, learners were observed to note any potential differences in how they participated in the in-class discussions before and after the implementation of the e-discussion. The observation checklist thus had two main sections; the first section is quantitative as it counted the frequency of learners’ FLA signs, and the second section was qualitative where the observer recorded excerpts of learners’ utterances to record the equality of participation in
both in-class discussions and the complexity of language pre- and post-electronic discussions. The observation checklist is important in that it helped the researcher not to depend solely on self-reported data. An observer was present to fill out the observation checklist while the researcher was teaching the classes. Before implementing the e-discussion, the observer monitored the in-class discussions one time or twice if needed, and then did the same after the completion of the e-discussion.

3.3.2 The FLCAS

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz and Cope (1986) was adapted and translated into Arabic, and was given to participants twice, once at the beginning of the course and again near the end after the students had completed the e-discussion and had begun participating again in the in-class discussions. The FLCAS questionnaire was analyzed according to three main factors: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (E. Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope, 1986). The answers to the questionnaire are ranked on a Likert scale where learners have the option to choose between strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. It consists of 33 items that examine the participants' feelings in EFL classrooms. Each factor is measured by responses to several items. The researcher chose this scale because it has been used worldwide over many years in places where different languages are taught as a second/foreign language (Aida, 1994; Voorhees, 1994; Arnold, 2007; Tallon, 2009; Poza, 2011; Ezzi, 2012; Mesri, 2012; Capan & Simsek, 2012; Huang & Hwang, 2013; Park & French, 2013; Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013).

Examining the reliability of the FLCAS, the scale shows internal consistency, "achieving an alpha coefficient of .93 with all items producing significant corrected item-total scale correlations. Test- retest reliability over eight weeks yielded an r = .83 (p <.001)" (E.
Horwitz, M. Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p. 129). In addition, Aida (1994) validated an adapted FLCAS, but for the purpose of testing FLA on American students learning Japanese. Having given 96 participants the questionnaire, "the results of this study suggest that FLCAS is a reliable tool regardless of whether the language is a European Western language" (p.158). Further, the researcher ran a reliability analysis for the FLCAS. Using Chronbach alpha, the results yielded a reliability coefficient for the questionnaire pre-test of .80 and .87 for the post-test, which shows relatively high reliability.

Some items were deleted from the questionnaire, such as those that questioned learners' perceptions of communicating with native English speakers since they are not relevant to the research questions. Some items were added to address writing anxiety, since communication apprehension can be oral or written. The same idea of replacing items was implemented for fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Items related to writing anxiety were adapted from Cheng's (2004) Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) (see Appendices B and C). Table 2 below shows the division of the FLCAS items according to the previously mentioned factors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Total Items</th>
<th>No. of Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication apprehension</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test anxiety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8, 10, 19, 20, 22, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of negative evaluation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2, 18, 28, 32, 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.3 Interview questions

Immediately after the second in-class discussion, some participants were interviewed to obtain their feedback regarding online discussions being a part of the language learning process, and to determine if they were aware of the existence of FLA. A further reason for creating the interview questions was to examine learners’ perception of the effectiveness of e-discussions with regards to their levels of FLA. The interview questions tackled different issues like: asking the students to describe their feelings when they are attending English classes, if they have the same feelings in other classes that are not related to language learning, whether they attempted to do anything to reduce such feelings, their feedback on having online discussions while learning English as a second language, and finally if they have the option to choose between regular in-class language learning and classes that blend in-class and online discussions (see Appendix D). Selected participants were of equal gender distribution (four males and four females). Further, the researcher chose learners with different FLA levels according to their FLCAS results. Some of these learners are undergraduate students while others have been working for several years, so that the investigator would have access to different learners with different motivational forces to learn English. The interviews were conducted in Arabic, the participants’ native language, in order for them to feel comfortable with expressing their feelings and not to worry about second-language complexities. All interviews were audio recorded and each interview lasted for about 15 minutes. This triangulation of instruments helped in understanding the participants’ beliefs throughout the duration of the study.

3.4 Data collection procedures

The duration of the course was six weeks, with two sessions per week and each session lasting for two hours and 45 minutes, for a total of 12 sessions per level and a total of
28 instructed language teaching hours (excluding the final session where the students had their final exam). The researcher conducted the study in three classes. Each class consisted of 15-19 students, which made a total number of 49 participants. However, some of the participants were excluded for different reasons such as dropping the course before completion or participating in only one or two of the study's three stages. One student was a non-technology user and another one was not Egyptian. The total number of participants who contributed in the current study is 45.

Learners had two quizzes throughout the course where their listening and speaking skills were assessed. They listened to a conversation, took notes, and answered some true or false and MCQs, and then they did a role-play where they spoke about a real-life situation. In the final exam, learners had similar types of questions in addition to a reading passage and one or more writing prompts to write a short paragraph about. Although reading and writing were not assessed in the quizzes, learners practiced the two skills in addition to listening and speaking during the six weeks every time they covered something new.

Both in-class discussions took place during the regular classroom schedule, where a topic was opened to learners for general discussion. The two topics were based on the lessons already covered with the teacher, so that the students would have adequate vocabulary to participate. The first in-class discussion was held at the end of the second week, after explaining the first unit and having learners solved several exercises about it. The e-discussion took place at each of the learner's homes, work places, or lab, depending on which location best suited them, since the e-discussions were asynchronous. The students had 48 hours to participate in the online discussion. Learners were expected to participate and speak about the suggested topic from their point of view as well as ask for clarifications if needed and comment on a colleague's post, much in the way they did in the in-class discussions. Instructions were given to learners before holding the e-discussion with regards to length,
using only the English language, and what the teacher expected from them. The learners voted on which website to use for holding the e-discussion-- a blog, Facebook, or any of the current academic websites-- to make sure that all of the learners could use it. The learners chose Facebook as their means of communication. Afterwards, a short demo took place in class to make sure all learners knew how to access the e-discussion page. The e-discussion took place in week four right after covering the second unit. The second in-class discussion, however, was at the beginning of week six.

Measures were taken to ensure that the level of FLA was not affected by any kind of anxiety or demotivation because of the topic itself. First, the researcher chose topics that were easy and reflected the learners' everyday interests and activities. In addition, all participants of all classes received an equal amount of preparatory vocabulary and background information about the topic before participating in the discussion.

3.5 Piloting

The main aim of piloting the study was to ensure that the instruments answered the investigator's research questions. Another aim was to check if any modifications needed to take place with regards to the instruments used before the actual data collection.

The participants who participated in the pilot study were adult Egyptian EFL learners at a language program in a private university in Cairo where English is taught as a foreign language. The level of this class was a bit higher than the actual level of the participants in this study. However, the age range and learning conditions were similar. A total of 13 learners participated, five females and eight males, and all of them were at an intermediate level. An observation took place among all learners; however, only five filled out the questionnaire with one of these five participating in the interview.
The researcher piloted the three instruments with no changes to the above-mentioned plans, except for omitting the e-discussion. As a result, the recorded interview lasted for only 10 minutes, since some questions about the e-discussion were not asked to this participant. Since only five participants filled out the questionnaire, the data analysis for the three instruments was qualitative. Further, these instruments were supposed to be administered twice, before and after the e-discussions. However, since the participants who were part of the piloting did not have e-discussions, the instruments were given only once. The main themes found in the three instruments were communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

Piloting the instruments was very vital for the researcher; the process helped to determine the appropriateness of the current study’s instruments. Learners indicated that the instructions and language used after translating the questionnaire were clear. However, one item in the FLCAS was confusing for more than one participant when translated into Arabic. The investigator amended the item to avoid any confusion. A suggested alternative of "I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes" was: "I get astonished why some people get so upset over foreign language classes". Further, all items used in the FLCAS did not focus on anxiety related to other skills, where communication apprehension exists in much the same way that speaking apprehension does. Consequently, adapted items from other questionnaires were added to address other skills rather than speaking only.

3.6 Data analysis

Data gathered from the observation checklist was used to answer the investigator's first research question, which addressed the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels. Collected data was categorized and coded, to evaluate the frequency of FLA signs before and
after the e-discussions. The first section in the observation checklist was analyzed quantitatively by counting the frequency of learners’ FLA signs before and after the e-discussion. In the second section, data was analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively through the Text Content Analysis Tool [http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php](http://www.usingenglish.com/resources/text-statistics.php). This tool not only compared the number of words pre- and post-online intervention, but it also measured utterance length and complexity of vocabulary and structures used.

Data gathered from the FLCAS was analyzed quantitatively, using a paired sample t-test, to compare the FLA levels before and after the e-discussion. In addition, the FLCAS data was also analyzed using a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test, to determine if gender was a variable in this study, especially that the gender distribution was imbalanced. Thus, the questionnaire answered the first and the third research questions as well. While the first research question was a general one regarding looking into the effects of e-discussion on learners' FLA, the third research question investigated the effects of gender on FLA. Some items in the FLCAS were coded reversely as they were tackling FLA in a positive way, unlike the rest of the items that describe learners' negative feelings (see Appendices B and C).

Finally, data gathered from interviews was qualitatively analyzed using a thematic line-by-line analysis and was categorized according to its themes to relate each theme with the research question it addresses, which is the second research question. The second research question deals with learners' awareness of their FLA and if the e-discussions affected them positively. The interview data was also transcribed and analyzed in Arabic, and then illustrative comments from the interviews were incorporated into the text after translating them into English.
Chapter IV. Results

The primary aim of this study is to examine the effect of e-discussions on adult Egyptian EFL learners' FLA levels. For this purpose, the researcher formulated three research questions, which were answered using a triangulation of instruments. The first research question addressed the effectiveness of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels. The second one investigated learners' perspectives of their FLA and of the e-discussion effectiveness. Finally, the third research question sought to determine if gender is a variable. The total number of actual participants in this study was 45 out of 49, with four participants excluded for various reasons. Both genders were part of the study; nonetheless, they were not equal in number. The total number of males was 35, whereas the total number of females was 10. All participants involved in the study attended both in-class discussions in addition to the e-discussion. Eight out of the 45 participants were interviewed afterwards.

4.1 Effects of e-discussions on FLA

4.1.1 FLCAS

A paired sample t-test was conducted to determine whether e-discussions have a positive effect on learners' FLA. The results showed that the e-discussion had a positive effect on participation in the post-discussion that was held in class. Results of the pre-post-FLCAS scores indicated that participants' FLA levels decreased with regards to the three main factors: communication apprehension pre-online discussion (M= 3.01, SD=.25) and post-online discussion (M= 2.04, SD=.35), test anxiety pre-online discussion (M= 2.96, SD=.38) and post-online discussion (M= 2.11, SD=.42), and finally, fear of negative evaluation pre-online discussion (M= 3.08, SD=.39), post-online discussion (M= 2.24, SD=.48). Table 3, below, shows the means, standard deviations, and number of participants pre- and post-online intervention.
Table 3. *Paired Samples Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA Pre-Post</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Pre-Post</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNE Pre-Post</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. CA= Communication Apprehension; TA= Test Anxiety; FNE= Fear of Negative Evaluation*

While the results showed that learners' FLA was reduced after the online discussion, it is also important to look at the significance of the study. Table 4 reflects the significance of each of the three factors pre- and post-online intervention.

Table 4. *Paired Samples Test*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SEM</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA Pre–Post</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>15.99</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Pre–Post</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>9.64</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNE Pre–Post</td>
<td>.83111</td>
<td>.55589</td>
<td>.08287</td>
<td>.66410</td>
<td>.99812</td>
<td>10.029</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. CA= Communication Apprehension; TA= Test Anxiety; FNE= Fear of Negative Evaluation*

Running t-test statistics to identify learners' FLA levels before and after the online discussion, the results were in the expected direction and significance. There was a significant effect on the first factor, communication apprehension, t=15.999 (44) P<.001. There was also a significant effect on the second factor, test anxiety, t=9.641 (44) P<.001. Finally, fear of negative evaluation showed significance as well, t=10.029 (44) P<.001.
Figure 1, below, also shows the FLCAS results and reflects how learners' anxiety became less with regards to the three factors after the e-discussion implementation:

![Paired samples t-test](image)

**Figure 1. FLCAS results**

### 4.1.2 Observation checklist

The first research question, dealing with the effect of e-discussions on FLA, was not only supported by the FLCAS, but also by the observation checklist. As for the observation checklist, the results indicated that the frequency of FLA signs was lessened in the second in-class discussion. Table 5, below, presents the frequency of FLA indicators before and after the e-discussion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Frequency Pre-online discussion</th>
<th>Frequency Post-online discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inability to reproduce the intonation and rhythm of the language</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>6 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Avoiding eye contact</td>
<td>6 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hiding behind a peer</td>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>0 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Speaking in a low voice</td>
<td>10 times</td>
<td>5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Forgetting information</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stammering</td>
<td>13 times</td>
<td>7 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blushing</td>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>2 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Having a shaking voice</td>
<td>5 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Postural rigidity</td>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>0 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Volunteering to participate</td>
<td>15 out of 45 participants</td>
<td>29 out of 45 participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The frequency of the FLA signs during the observations which occurred before administering the FLCAS and before the online discussion was almost double that of their frequency when students were tested after participating in the e-discussion. In item number 10, which shows the number of volunteers who participated in the in-class discussion before and after the e-discussion, only 15 participants took part in the pre-online discussion. However, after the e-discussion, the total number of volunteers was 29.

The observation checklist not only checked the frequency of FLA signs, but also recorded learners' responses regarding their participatory responses pre- and post-online discussion. The researcher chose some excerpts from the collected data where students participated in the two in-class discussions. Learners' statements were longer, more complicated, and more coherent during the post-online discussion than the pre-discussion.
During the first in-class discussion, students were asked to talk about celebrities who started fashion trends, and which trend they would like to try. Some examples of the sentences produced were:

Example 1: "he was wear pullover the other man coat to look like Amr Diab"

Example 2: "Amr Diab is on the top of the things", "I like to casual to wear"

Example 3: "he like to hair cut new. Make new haircut".

On the other hand, the post-in-class discussion was about thinking of a game they like to play. They needed to describe the steps of this game. Sentences uttered post-online intervention by the same students were:

Example 1: "only one player who responsible for distributing the cards. The goal of the game to be the only on the stand of the circle"

Example 2: "only one player who responsible for distributing the cards", " make sure there are no similar numbers finally after finishing all the boxes you will win the game"

Example 3: " in the pirate game you have a ship and you have to protect it so you enter a battle and you have to take your ship from pirates. You collect coins to buy stuff and fix the ship".

Although excerpts taken from the post-online discussion still have some grammatical and structural errors, they are longer and more complex than the first ones. The researcher used the Text Content Analysis Tool to analyze the collected data quantitatively and qualitatively. This tool calculated the total number of words, unique words, and the number of sentences, as well as the average number of words per sentence. Table 6, below, offers a calculation of all learners' pre-online discussion responses.
Table 6. Pre-online intervention text statistics of participants' utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Statistics</th>
<th>Word Length Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Word Count: 108</td>
<td>Length/word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words: 66</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences: 12</td>
<td>Graph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Sentence Length: 9.00</td>
<td>1 letter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 letters 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 letters 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 letters 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 letters 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 letters 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 letters 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 letters 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 letters 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Text Content Analysis Tool, the results indicated that learners' responses before and after the online intervention are not the same in terms of length and the complexity of their utterances. The number of general words, unique words, and sentences were double during the post-discussion. Table 7 analyzes learners' in-class utterances post-online discussion:
Table 7. Post-online intervention statistics of participants' utterances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Statistics</th>
<th>Word Length Breakdown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Length /word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Word Count:</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Words:</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sentences:</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Sentence Length:</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 letter</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 letters</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 letters</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 letters</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 letters</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 letters</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 letters</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 letters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 letters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 letters</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 letters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2 Learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of e-discussions

The researcher received various replies from interviews with some of the learners regarding how effective the e-discussion was on their FLA in terms of being able to communicate after they had returned to class discussions. In the interviews, the participants were asked whether or not they liked the online discussion and why. They were also asked if they would prefer having regular in-class discussions or a mix of in-class and online discussions. Before the participants' responses about the effectiveness of e-discussions were noted, the researcher first asked them if they were aware of their FLA. All participants said they suffered from FLA, even though their levels of FLA were not the same.
"Listening scares me. Conversations also scare me because I am afraid of pronunciation mistakes", said one of the participants who suffer from a high level of anxiety. Another participant mentioned: "I feel like my mind can't take more information. I am also afraid sometimes that other students' levels might be higher than mine, and it's scary when the teacher asks me to read something out loud because I feel like I might say something wrong". One participant said that he did not like taking English courses and that he felt nervous during the classes because he had had a very bad experience with an English teacher when he was young, which means that his FLA was related to a specific situation that happened in the past. Another learner mentioned that he felt nervous sometimes, but he also felt fine other times. Consequently, learners' feelings differed from being just "nervous" to feeling "scared".

Based on the participants' responses, it was determined that their fears differ with regard to communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. Most of them want to prove that they are at the same level as the other students, so that would make them feel more comfortable to communicate and make language mistakes.

The eight interviewees were aware of their FLA but most of them were not sure whether or not the other learners around them had the same feelings. Most of them believed that they were the only ones who had these negative perceptions of English class attendance. Six out of the eight participants mentioned that these negative feelings only occurred in language classes (one of them was taking French courses and felt the same). Another participant said that this was a normal feeling to have in any new place with "strange people". The quotations below reflect the learners' perceptions of the effectiveness of the e-discussion on their FLA. The investigator's question to learners was whether they feel e-discussions were useful for them.
Interviewee 1: "Yes of course, because if someone says anything I don't know the meaning of, I can just search for it, so I'll know more things. Plus, because I'll get used to talking in English more, not just in class, so it's going to make me less nervous because we'll be practicing more".

Interviewee 2: "It's better because I know I wrote just like the other students did, which means our levels are close. So when we meet again in class, I know where I stand among them".

When asked about the percentage of confidence post-the online discussion, one of the interviewees said: "yes, a lot. Well, not a lot but percentage-wise, I'd say I was a 10-15% confident and now I'm a 45%".

Interviewee 3: "I felt like I'm participating; it's also easier at home, as I'm not talking in front of a lot of people and I have more time to think of responses. I'll also prove to the students when I participate that I'm okay in English and I'm not that bad".

When asked about which type of class they would choose, all of them chose having e-discussions in their future courses. Results of the interviews showed a reduction in students' anxiety post-online discussions and thus support the other collected data regarding the first and second research questions, which address the effectiveness of e-discussions on learners' FLA and what perceptions the learners had of e-discussions.

4.3 FLA and gender

A total number of 35 males participated in this study, whereas the number of females was only 10. The researcher ran a non-parametric Mann-Whitney test to determine if gender was a variable in this study. Another reason for running the Mann-Whitney test is due to the unbalanced number of male and female participants. The results indicated that there is no
significant difference between male and female FLA before and after the online discussion.

Table 8, below, shows the significance of male and female FLA differences pre- and post-online discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8. Group Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNE Pre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TA Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FNE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. CA = Communication Apprehension; TA = Test Anxiety; FNE = Fear of Negative Evaluation

Based on the data reported in Table 8, the results did not show any significance in the three factors whether before or after the online discussion. Moreover, Table 9, below, shows the insignificance with regard to male and female FLA before and after the e-discussion implementation with P>0.005.
Table 9. Gender FLA results

Although the observation checklist did not record male and female FLA signs before and after the online discussion, it recorded the total number of participants from both genders. Before the online discussion, a total number of 11 males and four females participated in the in-class discussion. Converting these numbers into percentages, 31.4% of males and 40% of females participated in the pre-online discussion. As for the post-discussion results, 22 males and seven females took part of the in-class discussion, which is converted to 62.8% for the males and 70% for the females. Numbers were converted to percentages because there is no equal distribution of gender number, as the number of male participants was 35 whereas the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis Test Summary</th>
<th>Null Hypothesis</th>
<th>Test</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The distribution of CommPOST is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The distribution of AnxietyPOST is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.220</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The distribution of FearPOST is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.443</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The distribution of CommPRE is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The distribution of AnxietyPRE is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.737</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The distribution of FearPRE is the same across categories of sex.</td>
<td>Independent Samples Mann-Whitney U Test</td>
<td>.840</td>
<td>Retain the null hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.

1Exact significance is displayed for this test.
females were only 10. These percentages show that females participated more before and after the intervention of the e-discussion; however, there are no records for their FLA signs to support or refute having a higher percentage of female participants whether before or after the e-discussion intervention.
V. Discussion and Conclusion

Three research questions were posed in the present study. The first question examined the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels. The second question looked into learners' perspectives of the effectiveness of the online discussions. Finally, question three attempted to indicate whether FLA is affected by gender differences. The findings clearly indicate that online discussions helped to reduce participants' FLA levels in terms of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

Results of the FLCAS determined that learners’ levels of FLA were reduced after the online discussion intervention with regard to the three FLA factors: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. According to the observation checklist, learners’ signs of FLA became almost half of those before the e-discussion. The observation checklist also noted learners’ utterances in both in-class discussions and it is reported that utterances’ length and complexity of structure increased in the in-class discussion that was held after they participated in the e-discussion. Finally, the eight students that were interviewed indicated that they are aware of their FLA, but were not aware that their colleagues suffer from the same phenomenon. Moreover, they said that they would choose classes that include both in-class and e-discussions if they have the option.

These results support previous research studies that investigated the same correlation between e-discussions and FLA but in different countries, with different second languages, and with different native language backgrounds (Arnold, 2007; Poza, 2011; Tallon, 2009; Warschauer, 1996). The previous studies only compared students' performances in the in-class discussions before and during e-discussions. However, the present study examined learners' FLA levels by having them re-communicate face-to-face in their classes after
participating in the e-discussion. This was done to determine if the e-discussion's effect was enduring and not temporal, from only when the students were seated in front of their computers. Consequently, the researcher's post-in-class discussion was not conducted immediately after the e-discussion, but was rather held after the second in-class discussion.

Learners in this study showed a moderate understanding of their FLA, despite their levels of anxiety varying between being extremely worried and just nervous. Several of the interviewed participants indicated that the e-discussion had positively affected their anxiety. This supports previous studies which stated that the majority of participating learners had been satisfied with the online discussion intervention, as it helped in reducing their FLA (Bae Son, 2006; Kabilan, Ahmed & Abidin, 2010). The current study's learners also mentioned that if they had the option to choose between regular in-class discussions and mixed classes that integrate online discussions, they would choose the second option.

While most of the previous research studies have concluded that gender is a variable in terms of registering different FLA levels, this study revealed the opposite to be true. The results of this study suggest that there is no significant difference between male and female FLA, which supports some other research studies such as Aida (1994) and Voorhees (1994). However, the current study contained an imbalance with regards to the number of male and female participants, since the total number of males was 35 whereas the total number of females was only 10; that is in contrast to the two previously mentioned studies. In the study conducted by Aida (1994), the number of males was 56 while the number of females was 40. In addition, in Voorhees' (1994) study, the number of males was 15 and the number of females was 18, which indicates equality in the gender ratio. Thus, the gender imbalance and the limited number of females in the current study might affect the results' accuracy when investigating the difference between male and female FLA levels before and after the online discussion.
5.1 Practical implications

The current study examined the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA levels. Since the results showed that the e-discussions had a positive effect on their FLA, this study suggests that e-discussions should be implemented in all ESL classrooms, especially for learners who suffer from FLA. The reason for this is that e-discussions not only contribute toward learners' higher levels of achievement and motivation, but they also reduce FLA with its different factors. Previous studies compared in-class discussions to electronic discussions. This study, however, determined that online discussions help maintain reduced FLA levels, even after the students reconvene in their regular in-class discussions. So it compared both in-class discussions after the electronic discussion implementation. This was clear when learners' attitudes and perceptions were observed and recorded after the e-discussion intervention for approximately three weeks. Consequently, blended learning is highly suggested.

Another practical implication is that teachers should be aware of their learners' FLA. It is very important for teachers to understand their students' fears and evaluate to what extent these fears are. This will help them select the appropriate exercises for them and decide whether they could work independently or they need to be in pairs or groups. Understanding whether students' FLA is facilitating or debilitating will be of much assistance while taking the suitable steps for teaching techniques implementation (Park & French, 2013). Teachers also need to let the students know that FLA is a common feeling that several learners might suffer from. This may help students know that they are not the only ones who suffer from FLA and thus, their feel of discomfort might be reduced.
Students who suffer from FLA should always be encouraged to know each other outside the classroom context to be able to conquer their debilitating fears. That is why electronic discussions or any other virtual communication among learners is very important where they can talk freely. This might help them easily communicate in class. In addition, their fear of negative evaluation might be reduced and the collaborative work would be more interesting for them.

Students also have a vital role with regard to dealing with their FLA. They should be honest while describing their feelings to their teachers to receive the appropriate assistance. In other words, students who claim that they do not suffer from any kind of anxiety, while they do, are not giving their teachers the floor to offer help. They also need to be part of any virtual communication offered, as some students might not believe in its effectiveness.

5.2 Limitations

The current study had some limitations that should be noted. First, the total number of participants was only 45, which is not a representative number for all Egyptian EFL learners. In addition, the sample was taken from only one location, which also does not represent all learners who take English courses outside the school/university context, since there are many other private centers. As a result, there might be educational, cultural and social background differences among learners. Further, the imbalanced number of participants when it comes to gender is another limitation that might have affected the results of the current study. Finally, this study dealt with adults only, whose ages vary from 18-49 years old; it does not focus on teenagers or on young learners.
5.3 **Recommendations for Future Research**

The current study investigated the effect of e-discussions on adult Egyptian EFL learners' FLA levels. Further research could compare learners' FLA levels before and after the online intervention, but they can be conducted recruiting larger numbers and more diverse participant population. This would lead to more accurate results that can be generalized. Gender balance is another suggestion for future research, since this study had an imbalance in terms of the number of male and female participants.

5.4 **Conclusion**

Researchers have made multiple attempts to diminish FLA in second language classrooms. Before the integration of CALL, various solutions were proposed, but they were very costly and required substantial teacher training. The integration of CALL came at different stages where computers became a vital tool in the language learning process. Later, when the Internet was introduced, integrative learning techniques were presented to help learners not only acquire the language but also reduce their FLA. CMC, whether asynchronous or synchronous, was implemented in some classrooms, with results indicating that it had a positive effect on learners FLA levels. Having implemented an e-discussion in the current study, the results show that online discussions have a positive impact on learners' communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

The current study was conducted to examine adult Egyptian EFL learners' FLA. Although they are taking English courses without obligation, i.e. not as a graduation requirement, some of them still suffer from FLA. Their reasons are different, yet their goal is the same: to freely communicate in class and outside the classroom without continually suffering from a haunting feel of anxiety. Because the effect of e-discussions on learners' FLA has not yet been deeply addressed in Egypt, it is very important to shed light on this
issue and explore what other means of CMC might help them acquire a second language with less anxiety.
References


Computer Assisted Learning, 29, 556-568. doi: 10.1111/jcal.12016


Appendix A

FLA Classroom Observation Checklist

Class name:

Date:

Time:

Observer:

Duration of Observation:

Total number of students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of males:</th>
<th>No. of females:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Inability to reproduce the intonation and rhythm of the language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Avoiding eye contact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Hiding behind a peer</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Speaking in a low voice</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Forgetting information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stammering</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Blushing</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Having a shaking voice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Volunteering to participate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Postural rigidity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. How many students participated in the discussion?

2. How many males and how many females took place in the discussion?

3. Examples of students' replies:


Appendix B

Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

Adapted from

Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )

Age: less than 20 ( ) 20-29 ( ) 30-39 ( ) 40-49 ( ) 50-59 ( )

Would you be willing to participate in an interview? Yes ( ) No ( )

If yes: Email: Cell phone number:

Statements from 1-34 refer to how you feel about learning English. For each statement, please indicate whether you Strongly Agree; Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Please give your first reaction to each statement and mark an answer for every statement. Kindly make sure to provide a response to all the statements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 I do not worry about making mistakes in English class.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3 I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4 It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 It would not bother me at all to take more English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 I do not understand why some people get so upset over English classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 In English class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I often feel like not going to my English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I feel confident when I speak in English class. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>I do not feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>English class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>When I am on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>I get nervous when I do not understand every word the English teacher says.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>While writing in English, I am not nervous at all.</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree
Appendix C

Modified Arabic Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>النوع: ذكر( ) أنثى ( )</th>
<th>السن: أقل من 20 عاما ( ) 20-29 ( ) 30-39 ( ) 40-49 ( ) 50-59 ( )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>هل ترغب في المشاركة في مقابلة؟ نعم( ) لا( )</td>
<td>إذا كانت إجابتك نعم الإيميل:------------------------------------------ رقم المحمول:------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

الجزء الثاني:

البرم: من 1-4 يعبرو عن مشاعرك تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. يرجى تحديد لكل عبارة سواء أتفقت بشدة أو أتفقت أو لا أتفقت أو لا أتفقت بشدة. برجاء تحديد رد فلك الأول و الإجابة على كل عبارة. يرجى الإجابة على جميع العبارات.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>العبارات</th>
<th>لا أتفقت بشدة</th>
<th>أتفقت بشدة</th>
<th>لا أتفقت</th>
<th>أتفقت</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالتوتر والارتباك عندما أتحدث في صف اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا أختلف من ارتكاب الأخطاء في صف اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالفزع عندما أعرف أن مدرس اللغة الإنجليزية سيقدم على أسئلة أثناء الدروس.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالخوف عندما لا أفهم ما يقوله المدرس في اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>إن أشعر بالضيق من اخذ دورات أكثر في اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>خلاص صف اللغة الإنجليزية أجد نفسى أفكر في أشياء ليس لها علاقة بالدرس.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أفكر دائما في أن الطلاب الآخرين أفضل مني في اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>دائما ما يكون هدنا خلال إمتحانات اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالذعر عندما يعجبني الحديث في صف اللغة الإنجليزية دون تحضير مسبق.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تخاف من عواقب الرسوب في مادة اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>استعجبي لماذا يشعر البعض بالإنزحاج من حرص اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>في صف اللغة الإنجليزية أشعر بتوتر شديد لدرجة أنني أنسى بعض المعلومات التي أعرفها.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالإحراج من التمتع باللعبة في صف اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالضغب عندما لا أفهم ما يحاول المدرس تصحيحه.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالقلق من درس اللغة الإنجليزية حتى عندما أكون مستعد له جيدا.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>غالبا ما أشعر بعدم الرغبة في الذهاب لصف اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بالثقة عندما أتحدث في صف اللغة الإنجليزية.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أخشى أن معلم اللغة الإنجليزية سيظهر لي كل الاخطاء التي أقع فيها.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>كلما ذكرت أكثر (استعدادا لامتحان اللغة الإنجليزية) شعرت بالإحباط.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>لا يمثل التحضير الجيد لدرس اللغة الإنجليزية مصدرًا للتوتر بالنسبة لي.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>أشعر بعدم الثقة عند التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام الطلبة الآخرين.</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>صف اللغة الإنجليزية سريع و أشعر بالقلق من عدم القدرة على مهاراتي.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

67
أوافق بشدة.

آخر صف

أي من الإنجليزية اللغة

صف في التوتر

و بالقلق أشعر.

الإنجليزية اللغة

أتحدث عندما مطلقا نفسى

فى بالثقة أشعر.

الراحة و بالإطمئنان أشعر

الإنجليزية اللغة

إلى طريقى في.

الإنجليزية اللغة

مدرس قوالي كلمة كل

أفهم لتحدث

تعلمها يجب التي القواعد عدد

بالانزعاج/بالقلق أشعر.

الإنجليزية اللغة

أقم لم أسئلة عن

الإنجليزية اللغة

مدرس يسألني على

الإنجليزية مدرس

باللغة أكتب عندما مطلقا بالتوتر أشعر

بالتفكير عن عقلي

يعجز إنشائي موضوع

كتابة على العمل في أبدأ عندما

الانجليزية. باللغة أكتب عندما مطلقا بالتوتر أشعر

الإنجليزية. باللغة أكتب عندما مطلقا بالتوتر أشعر

الانجليزية. باللغة أكتب عندما مطلقا بالتوتر أشعر

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Appendix D

Interview Questions (Post-online Intervention)

Age:

Gender:

1. How do you feel when you get into an English classroom? Could you describe your feelings?

2. Do you have the same feelings when you go to a meeting or if you take any other classes that are not related to language learning?

3. What bothers you the most in an English classroom?

4. Have you ever thought why you have such feelings?

5. Have you tried to do anything to reduce these feelings?

6. How did you find your previous learning experiences in comparison with taking a class that includes an e-discussion?

7. In your opinion, did having an e-discussion have a positive effect on your previously mentioned feelings in the classroom? If so, in what way?

8. If you have the option, would you enroll in a class where e-discussions are implemented? Or any similar technological tools
Appendix E Consent Forms

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Examining the effect of electronic discussions on the foreign language anxiety level among adult Egyptian EFL learners

Principal Investigator: Dina Abul Magd

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to examine the effect of e-discussions on Egyptian learners' foreign language anxiety levels in English classrooms, and the findings will be published as a Master's thesis at AUC. The expected duration of your participation is 10 minutes.

The procedures of the research will be as follows: Participants will complete a questionnaire and then might be selected for an interview. They will also be part of one electronic discussion throughout the semester.

*There will not be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

*There will be benefits to you from this research. You will be part of an experiment where electronic discussions might help you reduce any kind of nervousness or stress you might feel in English classes.

*The information you provide for purposes of this research is confidential. Data and recordings will be stored in a password-protected laptop.

"Questions about the research, my rights, or research-related injuries should be directed to Dina Abul Magd / Mob: 01124094449.

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature __________________________________________

Printed Name __________________________________________

Date __________________________________________

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استمارة موافقة مسبقة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية

عنوان البحث: دراسة عن تأثير المناقشات الإلكترونية على نسبة التوتر المصاحب لتعلم اللغة الأجنبية بين المصريين البالغين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الباحث الرئيسي: دينا عمرو أبو المجد
البريد الإلكتروني: dabulmagd@aucegypt.edu

انت مدعو للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية عن تأثير المناقشات الإلكترونية على نسبة التوتر المصاحب لتعلم اللغة الأجنبية بين المصريين البالغين الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

نتائج البحث ستنشر كرسالة ماجستير في الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة.

المدة المتوقعة للمشاركة في هذا البحث (عشر دقائق).

إجراءات الدراسة: سيقوم المشاركون في الدراسة بإكمال استبيان و قد يتم بعد ذلك اختيارهم للمشاركة في المقابلة الشخصية. ذلك بالإضافة إلى المشاركة في مناقشة إلكترونية واحدة فقط خلال الفصل الدراسي.

المخاطر المتوقعة من المشاركة في هذه الدراسة (لا توجد أي مخاطر مترتبة على المشاركة في هذا البحث).

الاستفادة المتوقعة من المشاركة في البحث: (ستشارك في دراسة تتضمن مناقشة إلكترونية و التي قد تساعدك على تقليل القلق و التوتر المصاحب لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية).

السرية واحترام الخصوصية: المعلومات التي ستلى بها في هذا البحث سوف تكون سرية. (ستحفظ المعلومات والبيانات وكذلك التسجيلات على حاسوب شخصي محمي بكلمة مرور سرية).

أي أسئلة متعلقة بهذه الدراسة أو حقوق المشاركين فيها أو عند حدوث أية أصابات ناتجة عن هذه المشاركة يجب أن توجه إلى (دينا عمرو أبو المجد/01124094449).

إن المشاركة في هذه الدراسة ماهي إلا عمل تطوعي. حيث أن الامتاع عن المشاركة لا يضمن أي عقوبات أو فقدان أي مزايا تحقق لك. ويمكنك أيضا التوقف عن المشاركة في أي وقت من دون عقوبة أو فقدان لهذه المزايا.

الإمضاء: .............................................

الاسم المشارك: .............................................

التاريخ: .............................................

المجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة