Investigating the Reasons behind EFL University Teachers' Use of the Language Avoidance Strategy

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ABSTRACT: In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, teachers, though primarily competent and equipped with varying levels of knowledge, abilities, and skills, resort to language avoidance for one reason or another. Language avoidance is a communication strategy that foreign language teacher and/or learners use when encountering a communicative problem or difficulty managing communication and imparting information to the required level. It forms an integral part of everyday communication at large and in foreign language classes in particular. The current paper aims at investigating the reasons behind English as a foreign language teachers' use of language avoidance. To bring about this aim, it is hypothesized that different personal, educational, and social reasons play a role in teachers' language avoidance. To validate the preceding hypothesis, a sample of 39 university teachers of English were interviewed and given a questionnaire to state their responses concerning the role of the factors mentioned above in their use of language avoidance. It has been found out that language avoidance by university teachers of English as a foreign language is differently impacted by the personal, educational, and social factors under study.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Language Avoidance, Communicative Problems, Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

1. Introduction

When teaching in a foreign language (FL), teachers frequently attempt to avoid using particular vocabulary or structures or talking about a given topic for personal, educational, and social reasons. This phenomenon, which is called language avoidance, occurs with almost all language producers and is thought to be an essential communication strategy that guides speakers to express what has to be said while avoiding the unspoken.

Broadly speaking, avoidance as a communication strategy has been recognized in a variety of forms. For instance, FL teachers at university level may develop an aversion to discuss subjects due to the lacking of the specific genre or required skills, realization that the linguistic means available to them do not satisfy the requirements for completing the topic, and a plethora of personal and social reasons that make avoidance a very common yet implicit phenomenon in their manipulation of the FL, in our case English.

As the related literature indicates, avoidance was first indirectly referred to by Duskova (1969) and Schachter (1974) under the name Avoidance, while Levenson (1971) named it low representation. These scholars state that avoidance is the procedural strategy that speakers employ when they are unable to produce the required form due to a lack of necessary linguistic resources (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). On his part, Krashen (1987) views avoidance as a language phenomenon with historical roots in applied linguistics, where it was initially discovered by pioneer Schachter (as cited in Liao and Fukuya, 2002).

In the academic setting, language avoidance occurs when teachers resort to certain strategies that are represented, in the first place, almost entirely by topic avoidance in which a whole topic of conversation (say, talking about what happened yesterday if the past tense is unfamiliar might be avoided entirely). Such strategies of topic avoidance may take the form of changing the subject, pretending not to understand (a classical means for avoiding answering a question), simply not responding at all, or noticeably

abandoning a message when a thought becomes too difficult to express. Avoidance strategies in the academic setting may also be due to a deficiency in some teachers required effective communication means that is based on the three language levels, namely vocabulary in terms of meaning and correct use, grammar as far as the use of right and required grammatical tenses, structures and constructions, and pronunciation concerning the right production of sounds, words, and combinations of words. Last but not least, while communicating verbally, teachers may also come under the pressure of social traditions and rules and hence avoid the explicit statement of specific vocabulary or discussion of certain topics.

In the academic settings, teachers, including those of FLs, have to be explicit and clear in their presentation of the teaching materials. Yet, it is noticed that English as foreign language (EFL) teachers are not always direct and precise in their statements and discussion of the material taught. This results in learners' feeling of getting lost and not understanding the material to the required level. Added to that, it has been evident from the search for the literature on avoidance that there are only a few resources that the researcher could access; a point which entails that language avoidance has not been investigated to the required level.

The current research aims to provide a practical and theoretical overview of a part of language avoidance by EFL teachers at the university level, as it attempts to identify the differences between EFL university teachers' use of language avoidance in terms of a set of reasons, namely personal, educational, and social.

It is hypothesized that there are no differences between EFL teachers' use of language avoidance in terms of personal, educational, and social reasons. This hypothesis has been enhanced by the following research question:
- Do personal, educational and social reasons play a role in EFL university teachers' use of language avoidance?

2. Literature review
2.1 The Concept of Communication

Communication is a mechanism for people, groups, and other entities to build shared understanding through information transmission and reception. The communication process must be a function of all or a subset of its components, including the sender, message encoding, message transmission through a channel, message reception, message decoding, feedback, and noise. This is on the one hand. On the other hand, Communication strategies (CSs) refer to the tools employed by speakers to get around perceived obstacles and accomplish particular communication objectives (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Poulisse (1989) states that CSs are the strategies a speaker uses to get around communication problems brought on by a lack of appropriate forms in the mental lexicon. The speaker compensates by moving on to the conceptual stage or experimenting with other linguistic formulations. Ellis (1994) contends that CSs can be seen as a group of skills that speakers use to make up for their linguistic shortcomings in the target language. Speakers must learn alternative means of communication such as code-switching, mimicking noises, or changing the subject when they cannot communicate because of their limited proficiency in the target language or to resolve the communication barriers at large.

When it comes to the classification of CSs, there have been varied classifications in this respect, such as Varadi (1973), Tarone (1977), Faerch and Kasper's (1983), Paribakht (1986), Kellerman, Bongaerts, and Poulisse (1989), and Dornyei (1995), to mention but a few. Yet, it is worth noting that the current study brings into light Tarone (1977) and Faerch and Kasper's (1983) classifications, giving them particular attention as they highlight and explicitly categorize avoidance as a CS.

Finally, despite the broad affinity between the classifications already referred to, they vary in terms of classifying and defining CSs. As mentioned above, in the following lines reference will briefly be made to Tarone (1980) and Faerch and Kasper's (1983).

Tarone (1980) examines CSs through an interactional point of view or through social interaction that contrasts Færch and Kasper's classification that views CSs as a psychological process. She classifies CSs into the following three broad categories:

1. **Avoidance**: The speaker avoids communication by using a. Topic avoidance: where the speaker or learner uses rudimentary concepts for which they lack the requisite vocabulary or other meaning structures, and b. Message abandonment: It occurs due to language barriers; speakers start a discussion but cannot finish it and end it or give up.

2. **Paraphrase**: Here the learner uses a. approximation: The intentional use of a target language vocabulary word or phrase that the speaker is aware is wrong, but that yet bears a striking resemblance to the intended word (e.g., "pipe" for "water pipe"), b. word coinage: A speaker creates a new word to convey a desired notion (e.g., "airball" for "balloon"), and c. circumlocution: Instead of using the appropriate target language structure, a speaker describes a thing or action by describing its features or components, as three strategies to make up for an unfamiliar second language (L2) word.

3. Conscious Transfer: This broad CS subsumes a. Literal translation: The speaker converts words, phrases, sentences, or idioms from their native language to the target language word for word, b. Language switch: The speaker defaults to employing words or expressions from their native tongue without having to translate, c. Appeal for assistance: The speaker automatically uses words or phrases from their native language without making an effort to translate them, and d. Mime: The speaker does not use a meaning structure but nonverbal strategies.

Faerch and Kasper's (1983) categorization has been considered the most significant of the nine classes throughout the history of communication strategy (Varadi, 1973, Tarone, 1977, Bialystok, 1983, Paribakht, 1986, Raupach, 1983, Kellerman, 1989, Poulisse, 1993, Littlemore, 2003). It views CSs strategies as a psychological process since they fix the speaker's processing issues rather than the problems that both the speaker and the hearer share. Faerch and Kasper's classification of CSs divides these strategies into two primary categories, namely **reduction strategies**, and **achievement strategies**. Due to space limitation and to avoid redundancy, we will not elaborate on these categorizations since our main point of departure is the concepts of avoidance and the strategies that are adopted by speakers of FLs to put them in practice.

2.2 The Concept of Avoidance / Avoidance Strategy

Notably, Schachter (1974) was the first to emphasize the significance of studying not only the second language (L2) forms produced by foreign language learners but also the L2 forms that they seemed to avoid using regularly. This helped to create the idea of avoidance behaviors in L learning. According to Richards and Schmidt (2010, p.46), when speaking or writing in a second or an FL, the speaker will typically try to avoid employing a challenging term or structure in favor of an easier one. For instance, a speaker learner who is confused about how to use the relative clause in English, for instance, can choose to delete it entirely and substitute two shorter phrases. "That is my structure. Instead of saying, "That's the building where I reside," say, "I live there" (p.46).

According to Laufer (2000), avoidance is a symptom that language users, and learners, in particular, may struggle with the form they do not want to employ, not that they are illiterate in its usage. They cannot avoid what they do not understand. If there is a feature that they do not want to utilize, they must be aware of it and select a less challenging or error-prone substitute. Avoidance, therefore, presupposes that the user is aware of the target feature and that they have deliberately chosen to replace it with a substitute perceived as being less difficult and mistake-prone.Kano (2006) has noted that there are two different definitions of avoidance. When the "distance between the second-language learner's linguistic knowledge and the interlocutor's target knowledge" appears to be "unbridgeable," it can be regarded as one of the communication strategies that may be adopted (Tarone, 1981, as cited in Kano, 2006, p.8). Additionally, avoidance is seen by Moghimizade and Pandian (2007, p. 2) as a communication strategy that "second

language learners utilize when faced with a communicative dilemma and resort to this strategy in order to overcome the obstacle."

In contrast with the aforementioned statements, Ellis (1994) considers avoidance as a language transfer manifestation and states:

Avoidance is said to take place when specific-target language features are under-represented in the learner's production in comparison to native-speaker production. Learners are likely to avoid structures they find difficult as a result of differences between their native language and the target language" (p. 693).

To put it differently, the structural distinction between first language and second or target language may increase the level of complexity, leading speakers of languages in general and learners in particular, to avoid using the challenging structures. However, avoidance is the product of communication strategy rather than a result of language transmission, since the interlocutors utilize avoidance to communicate better and comprehend each other. Gluth (2008) asserts this by saying that avoidance is a communicative strategy and can happen at any level of linguistics.

Avoidance is described by Ahemd and Isma'eel (2011) as a dynamic significant way by which people transmit a range of messages wherever and at any moment. This definition emphasizes the concept's ambiguous nature as a unique one. It conveys what has been stated and what has been kept silent, as well as what has been accomplished and what remains unfinished.

2.3 Classification of Avoidance Strategy

Many researchers have attempted to provide a taxonomy of avoidance. Faerch and Kasper (1983), Willems (1987), and Nakatani (1988) refer to avoidance as a reduction strategy. When a language speaker employs a reduction strategy, they intend to "either communicate an incomplete message or communicate a message other than the one meant initially." According to the Faerch and Kasper (1983) and Willems (1987), reduction strategy (avoidance) can be classified into formal and functional strategies.

The formal reduction strategy is described as "the learner communicates using a reduced system" in order to avoid producing non-fluent or inaccurate utterances through the application of insufficiently automated or imaginary rules/item" (Faerch, Kasper, and Willems, 1983). In other words, formal reduction strategies are used by second language speakers who are worried about the accuracy or fluency of their speech. As a result, people avoid adopting rules that they do not fully understand and instead choose a set of rules that are more straightforward.

The same researchers further divided phonological formal reduction strategies (when the speakers do not know how to pronounce a word, they either use a different word or avoid saying it), lexical, syntactic, and morphological (avoiding some structures due to inadequate understanding of sentence structure and grammar and some structures due to ignorance of the structure of words or their constituent parts) (avoiding some words and utilizing a different word due to the lack of necessary vocabulary).

They add that functional reduction strategies are employed by speakers and second language learners when their communicative goal is diminished or abandoned. Actional reduction, model reduction, and propositional content reduction are the subsequent categories for functional reduction methodologies (Faerch and Kasper, 1983). Actional functional reduction is a strategy used by language users to avoid performing unnatural speech acts or discourse functions. Modal functional reduction, on the other hand, is applied when speakers decide not to categorize a specific speech behavior as politeness/social distance. Topic avoidance is when a learner chooses not to bring up a subject for which they do not know the target phrase. Message abandonment is when a speaker starts a topic but gives up when difficulties arise. Last but not least, meaning substitution involves learners and speakers substituting a different concept with one that has the same overall meaning. Examples of propositional functional reduction include these three.

Message abandonment, false starts, interlanguage-based reduction strategies, and first language-based strategies are the other four categories that Nakatani (2005) divides reduction strategies into; first, Message abandonment is when the message is left unfinished and speakers remain mute. Second, false starts are

utterances where speakers keep repeating what they said at the beginning. Third, interlanguage-based reduction strategies are employed when speakers struggle to convey their meaning in the target language, switching either consciously or subconsciously to their native tongue. Fourth-language-based strategies, on the other hand, pertain to speakers or learners reducing the message and coping with linguistic challenges by using their insufficient interlanguage system to minimize intended utterances, resulting in an improper word order based on their interlanguage system.

Tarone (1981) and Dornyei (1995) distinguish between two types of avoidance: message abandonment, or leaving the message unfinished, and topic avoidance, or avoiding topics that are challenging for the L2 learner to discuss. Corder's (1983) taxonomy refers to avoidance as message adjustment or risk avoidance approaches. Corder identified semantic avoidance as the third sort of avoidance. In addition, Brown (2007) makes a distinction between four different types of avoidance, namely subject avoidance, phonological avoidance, lexical avoidance, and syntactic.

Uzan (2019) provides a list of the different types of avoidance (reducing techniques), along with explanations and an example that will be given by the researcher. This list is in accordance with the categories that have previously been offered. First, phonological avoidance is the practice of using a different word when you do not know how to pronounce a word or when you are hearing it for the first time. For instance, if you cannot pronounce a word like "Constantinople," you might use "Istanbul," a more recent name for the city. Second, morphological avoidance occurs when speakers consciously steer clear of using certain words due to their lack of understanding of the word's structure or a specific part of the word. For instance, the term "illiterate" might be replaced with a simpler word due to the complexity of the topic and the speaker's avoidance of using that specific vocabulary. If a speaker does not know how to add the proper negative prefix to make the word "literate" "illiterate," they may choose to use the phrase "not literate" instead. Third, avoiding a sentence due to a lack of comprehension of its structure is known as syntactic avoidance. For instance, if the speaker is unfamiliar with the perfect and progressive tenses, they will try to speak simply in the simple tenses. Fourth, lexical avoidance happens when a speaker's vocabulary is insufficient. As a result, the speaker could use a general phrase instead of a specific one, such as "fruit" to refer to all types of fruits (orange for tangerine).

Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011) have divided avoidance in linguistic contexts into two main types: verbal avoidance and non-verbal avoidance. Verbal avoidance is divided into five categories, namely, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and semantico-pragmatic.

First, morphologically speaking, they claim that in verbal communication, the speakers of the language may find themselves in the position of having to meet specific communicative goals by adopting or even creating certain processes that allow full-length words to be reduced to specific shortened forms (abbreviated forms) in order to communicate effectively.

Concerning the use of acronyms, Adams (1973) says that since the beginning of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been an increase in the use of acronyms. There were many acronyms created during the two world wars, and others have been created as short names for government institutions and international organizations. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), SOFIA (Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy), and FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) are just a few examples of modern acronyms.

Second, syntactic avoidance, Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011) provide an overview of some studies that are conducted on syntactic grounds, such as Schachter (1974) on relative clauses, Kleinmann (1977, 1978) on passive, present progressive, infinitive complement, and direct object, as well as Sakita (1995) on the occurrence of sexism in Japanese English education textbooks. Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011) put the main focus in their study on ellipsis, which is another syntactic device. According to Quirk et al. (1985, p.536), the ellipsis is "a pure surface phenomenon" In other words, ellipsis, whatever its syntactic function is, does not indicate a change in the meaning of the sentence; it merely modifies its form.

According to Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011), four reasons, whether in spoken or written language, are assumed to have a role in the omission of portions of a sentence. These reasons include:

(1) Unique recoverability is when words only be elliptically deleted under one condition which is uniquely recoverable. In other words, there is no mistake about which words must be provided, and it is possible to incorporate the recovered words into the sentence without causing confusion. Consider the following sentence:

- She is cannot sing tonight, so she won't (sing), (Quirk et al, 1972, p.536).

The verb 'sing' is omitted because the omitted item is uniquely recoverable from a preceding clause in the same sentence.

(2) Reducing redundancy and avoiding repetition, ellipsis is used also to diminish the redundancy and avoid repetition. For example:

- She might sing, but I don't think she will do so (Quirk et al, 1972, p.537).

(3) Attracting attention to the new material, sometimes ellipsis is done to put the attention on the new thing in the conversation. For instance:

(A) Have you spoken to him?

(B) (I have) Not yet (spoken to him).

Sentence (B) demonstrates that omitting the items between brackets will cause

speaker (A) to concentrate on the items that are newly mentioned in speaker B's

speech (Quirk et al, 1972, 538).

(4) Economy is another significant reason that can be assumed in this case. The speaker's objective is to transmit his or her message as quickly as possible with the least amount of effort. As a result, s/he frequently omits portions of the phrase.

The third type of verbal avoidance, according to Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011), is semantic avoidance. They tackle the idiom avoidance, referring to Henzl (1973) study, who believes that idiom avoidance is language-specific and hence non-transferable to the second language. This stems from the fact that idioms are uncommon in "foreign conversation;" that is why teachers are not permitted to use idioms while addressing learners. Jordan and Kleinmann (1977) also give an additional indication in their experimental tests conducted in the Netherlands.

When idioms have equivalents in the first language, second language learners may regard them as non-grammatical constructs. This reflects their unwillingness to transmit them to the second language in an indirect manner. As a result, they abstain from utilizing them (as cited, Irujo, 1993, p.205-206). Irujo (1993) adds that second language teachers' perception is that even their most advanced pupils prefer to avoid speaking idioms. This avoidance can be owing to the anxiety of not getting the idioms properly, as learners know that idioms do not literally imply what they say (p.25).

Pragmatic and semantico-pragmatic are the fourth and fifth types of verbal avoidance, according to Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011). As for pragmatic avoidance, they state that Fraser (1981) and McDonough (1995) have tackled the talk speech act, which is one of the primary topics in pragmatics. Semantico-pragmatic is the last avoidance strategy, according to Ahmed and Isma'eel (2011). They believe that rules and principles govern how people communicate with one other, as the word indicates. Some are described as generally oriented, while others are described as culturally oriented, with differences depending on the context or the speakers. They categorize semantico-pragmatic into the following six types:

(1) The religious unsaid: Many people avoid mentioning such entities on the spur of the moment or at the most insignificant of times. Examples include the names of Almighty Allah, God or gods, and names of prophets like Muhammad (PBUH), Jesus, and Mary in Islam and Christianity, respectively.

(2) The superstitious unsaid: People make an effort not to use or speak words associated with black magic, witch curses, and other such superstitions on the basis of superstitious beliefs.

(3) The social unsaid: Speakers may avoid using phrases that relate to sex, specific parts and functions of the body, and words that are associated to connotation, swear and f-words. Greenberg (1966) claims that

the aforementioned terms are unrestricted universals in regard to their meanings and applications since these terms are governed by social and cultural factors (p.245).

(4) The unsaid disease: Serious deadly diseases or contagious diseases that are widely transmitted in societies, whether in ancient or modern times, are not popular topics to discuss, nor is reciting the disease's lexemes, even in civilized civilizations. Among these illnesses are tuberculosis, cholera, measles, cancer, and, more recently, Aids. For instance, Kurdish people would not name cancer by it is name in Kurdish which is (penceşêr), but they avoid saying it by using the alternative (êşa pîs), which is literally translated into the ugly disease.

(5) The unsaid naming: People, to a greater or lesser extent, dislike talking about death and dying-related problems. As a result, names of deceased individuals, funeral services and burials, an undertaker, a coffin, and a grave are not mentioned explicitly.

(6) The unsaid naming: is that sometime speaker avoids using nicknames.

A discernible semantic characteristic of these and several other examples is that the unsaid, the unspeakable, or the undone are connotatively awful, filthy, undesirable, unfavorable, unpleasant, or fearful. In semantics, they are denoted by a technical word, namely taboo (Ahmed and Isma'eel, 2011, p.27).

3. Methodology

3.1 Procedures and Data Collection

The procedure adopted in the present research is that there is a number of topics and subtopics that are relevant to the subject under discussion, i.e., language avoidance, side by side with a questionnaire comprising items that stand for the factors behind EFL language teachers' use of the avoidance strategies, which was administered to a sample of 39 EFL teachers teaching at the universities within the borders of Duhok Governorate during the academic year 2021-2022.

3.2 Research Tools

The selected EFL university teachers were asked to give responses to a questionnaire that was constructed on the basis of the information (1) elicited from the answers to a question posed to the sample of EFL university teachers asking them about the language avoidance strategies that they use and the reasons behind such a use, (2) the related literature and (3) any previous questionnaire(s) that is/are relevant to the topic under research. The construction of the questionnaire in its draft version was followed by its administration to a panel of juries to make the questionnaire obtain validity. That was followed by the piloting of the questionnaire to a sample of 10 teachers selected from among the population on two occasions with an interval of two weeks. The Cronbach's alpha stability equation was applied, and the value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.894, indicating that the questionnaire items were stable and ready for administration to the main sample.

3.3 Population and Sample

The population of the present research comprised all the EFL University teachers, males and females, teaching at the Departments of English of the universities within the borders of Duhok Governorate during the academic year 2021-2022. As for the sample, it was selected from among the population already referred to and included 39 EFL university teacher.

3.4 Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

The analysis of the data is based on the hypothesis, aim(s) and research question relevant to the factors that affect EFL university teachers' use of language avoidance's:

- **Hypothesis:** There are no differences between EFL teachers' use of language
    Avoidance in terms of the personal, educational and social reasons.
- **Aim**: identifying the differences between EFL university teachers' use of
    language avoidance in terms of a set of reasons, namely personal,
    educational and social.

- **Research Question**. Do personal, educational and social reasons play a role in
         EFL university teachers' use of language avoidance?

It is worthwhile that 21 items account for the personal, educational and social reasons that make EFL university teachers use language avoidance in their classes. As shown in Figure 1:

Type of Reason	Items
Personal	topics I am not well knowledgeable about.
	writing certain phrases or sentences as I encounter them for the first time.
	certain phonological elements.
	certain syntactic elements.
	words that have multiple meanings.
	ambiguous terms.
	using abbreviations.
Educational	using acronyms.
	writing some words on the whiteboard due to the difficulty of spelling
	using phrasal verbs while speaking English out of concern that my students may miss the point
	using certain idioms.
	using words and structures as they are difficult for students to understand.
	using certain morphologically compound words (multi-morphemes).
	certain topics due to their taboo nature.
	political topics
	socially controversial topics.
Social	topics that are embarrassing to female students.
	topics that may be offending to some students.
	certain topics for ethnic or religious reasons
	using archaic words.
	avoid using slang and vulgar language.
	using words/expressions that are face threatening for the students.

Figure 1: Types of Reasons behind Language Avoidance and their Representing Items in the Questionnaire

To demonstrate the role of the three types of reasons behind teachers' use of language avoidance, Table 1 shows the frequencies of the participants' responses in terms of the three types of reasons. Table (1) further shows the results of applying the Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency Analysis:

Table 1: Frequencies of Each Reason

Type of Reasons (Variables)	Reach	% of Cases	Frequencies	% of Responses
Personal	15	38.5	15	27.8
Educational	14	35.9	14	25.9
Social	25	64.1	25	46.3
Personal + Educational	25	64.1	29	53.7
Personal + Social	28	71.8	40	74.1
Educational + Social	32	82.1	39	72.2
N = 39	Variables: Personal, Educational, Social Reasons			

It is evident from Table (1) that 25 participants out of the total sample 39 selected the social reasons at the rate of 64%, while 15 participants selected personal reasons at a rate of 38.5%, and 14 participants selected educational reasons at a rate of 35.9%.

On applying the Statistical Analysis Overlapping Method,32 participants (82.1%) attributed their use of language avoidance in EFL classes at university level to both educational and social reasons, 28 participants (71.8%) attributed it to personal and social reasons, and 25 participants (64.1%) attributed it to personal and educational reasons.

In the light of the analysis of the sample's responses to the items of the administered questionnaire in terms of the personal, educational and social reasons behind EFL teachers' use of avoidance in their classes at university level, the hypothesis set in this respect and which states that "There are no differences between EFL teachers' use of language in terms of the personal, educational and social reasons" is rejected.

In the following lines, light will be shed on the indications drawn upon comparison between the current research and related previous studies. The previous studies had different aims to achieve. For instance, the study by Schachter (1974) aimed at the causes of avoidance of relative clause sentences. Chiang (1980) aimed at the cause of relative clauses avoidance in written production by English learners. In addition, Seliger (1989) examined the reasons behind avoiding passive voice in the context of commonplace activities by English speakers. The main objective of Matter (2003) research was to know to how Arab learners avoid adversative subordinating adverbs. Regarding phrasal verbs avoidance, Dagut and Laufer (1985), Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), Laufer and Eliasson (1993), Liao and Fukuya (2004), Moghimizade and Pandian (2007), Mohammad (2010), and Aziz and Haji (2020) conducted studies to know the reasons behind avoiding phrasal verbs by foreign learners at universities. Additionally, the aim of Elyidirim (2017) study was to ascertain whether Turkish English language learners avoid grammatical structure or lexical items. The current study's objectives are consistent with those of earlier research on language avoidance in general and the reasons behind language avoidance.

As for the place of the study, the previous studies were conducted in various places and as follows: as for Schachter (1974), she conducted her study at the American Language Institute. Chiang (1980) chose University of Southern California to achieve his research's aims. Dagut and Laufer (1985) conducted their study at university of Haifa. Seliger (1989) uses some commonplace of activities to carries the study like, cooking the omelet, gathering oranges, and delivering the mails. On their part, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) carried out their study at English department of Leyden University. Laufer and Eliasson (1993) conducted their study in Scandinavian, English, and Linguistics department at Uppsala university. Matter (2003) achieved his aims by conducting the research at university of Bahrain. Hawaiʻi at Mānoa (UHM) was the university that Liao and Fukuya (2004) selected to carry out their study. Mohammad (2010) conducted his research at Kirkuk university. Elyildirim (2017) collected her data from department of English language and literature at Gazi university. Aziz and Haji (2020) included participants from Soran University's faculty of arts and college of education to conduct their study. The current study has been carried out in Kurdistan Region, Iraq at the following universities: University of Duhok, University of Zakho, Cihan University and Nawroz University. Concerning the academic stages that the previous studies accounted for, most of the participants were learners of English as a foreign language at university level, or foreign English speakers. The current study has been conducted on university teachers; stage 2 to 4, and their experience of teaching was between one year to more than thirty years. Regarding the academic subjects of previous study, they focused on the syntactic, semantics avoidance, specifically phrasal verbs and relative clause in English language. The current study has put a lot of emphasis on the language avoidance for social, educational, and personal reasons.

4. Conclusion

For a variety of social, pedagogical, and personal reasons, EFL teachers try to steer clear of using certain terminology, grammar patterns, or talking about a particular subject when instructing. This phenomenon, known as language avoidance, is quite common in all contexts in which English language is used. In addition to morphological and/or syntactic units, it is primarily represented by topic avoidance, in which the speaker or learner uses simple concepts for which they lack the necessary vocabulary or other meaning structures, and message abandonment, in which speakers begin a discussion but are unable to complete it and end it or give up. As a result of the disparities between the learner's native language and the EFL, avoidance occurs when specific target language elements are underrepresented in the learner's production. A number of variables, including social, educational, and personal ones, are thought to have a variety of roles in language avoidance use by language speakers.

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