Dr. Hamdan G. Al-Shalawi
College of Languages and Translation
Imam Mohammad Bin Saud Islamic University

Saudi University Male Students' Perceptions and Experience of English Learning Classroom Anxiety

تجربة وإدارك الطلاب الجامعيين السعوديين للقلق

في فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية

Abstract

   The aim of this study is to investigate the experience and perception of Saudi male Arabic–speaking university students on English learning classroom anxiety. The study has been carried out at the College of Languages and Translation, Imam Mohammad Bin Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. sixty students from English department participated in this study to explore students' English learning anxiety in Saudi EFL classrooms. The data have been collected by means of a questionnaire, namely the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (*FLCAS*) introduced by Horwitz et al., (1986); interviews and a proficiency English test, designed to measure the anxiety levels of the students. The results indicated that students indeed experienced comparatively high anxiety in English learning. Finally, the possible causes of classroom anxiety as well as the various strategies students used for reducing anxiety in classrooms were discussed and suggestions were proposed for both students and teachers

Key words: English learning anxiety, Arabic, Saudi, Imam University, EFL, Linguistics

ملخص البحث :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في تجربة وإدراك الطلاب الجامعيين السعوديين للقلق في فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية، كما تهدف إلى تحديد الاستراتيجيات التي يستخدمها الدارسون في تعاملهم مع القلق. وقد تألفت عينة البحث من ستين طالباً من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية اللغات والترجمة بجامعة الإمام محمد بن سعود الإسلامية بالرياض في المملكة العربية السعودية. وجمعت المعلومات باستخدام معيار القلق في فصول تعلم اللغة الأجنبية الذي تم تصميمه لقياس معدلات القلق لدى الدارسين للباحث هورتز وآخرين (١٩٦٨). كما قام الباحث بإجراء المقابلات الشخصية لعينة البحث، وإخضاعهم لاختبار الكفاءة في اللغة الإنجليزية الخاص ببرنامج الإنجليزية المكثف لقياس كفاءة الدارسين. وقد أفادت النتائج أن الدارسين يعانون من القلق بنسبٍ متفاوتة عند تعلمهم اللغة الإنجليزية. وفي نهاية البحث نوقشت الأسباب المحتملة للقلق، والاستراتيجيات المختلفة التي استخدمها الدارسون للتغلب على هذا القلق في الفصول الدراسية، ثم أورد الباحث بعض المقترحات والتوصيات للدارسين والمدرسين على حد سواء.

بياض

Introduction

A considerable amount of research has confirmed the existence of language anxiety and its impact on second and foreign language learning process, revealing that anxiety can hinder foreign language production and achievement (e.g., Aida, 1994; Bailey 1983; Ely, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Krashen, 1985a; l985b; MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1988; 1989; 1991a; 1991b; 1993a; 1994; Muchnick & Wolfe, 1982; Oxford, 1999; Price, 1991; 1992; Schlesinger, 1995; Trylong, 1987; von Wörde, 1998; 2003; Young, 1990, 1991, l992). MacIntyre, Noel, & Clément (et al.) (1997:279), for example, asserted a mutual relationship between anxiety and proficiency whereas Campbell & Ortiz (1991:159) stated that almost half of all language students experience language anxiety "because it can interfere with the acquisition, retention and production of the new language" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991:86). Other studies reported that foreign language anxiety can cause students to delay enrolling in a language class (Young, 1991) or even change their field of study (Horwitz et al., 1986). For these reasons, language anxiety has been the focus of a great amount of research by linguists and psychologists, researching its causes and how to reduce them to improve learner performance and achievement (Eysenck, 1979).

In spite of the importance of anxiety as one of the important factors that affect second and foreign language acquisition, no single study, to the researcher's knowledge, has been conducted to examine foreign language anxiety on Saudi male Arabic–speaking university students and their perceptions on this experience. Most studies (e.g., Bailey 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Young, 1991) have been carried out in western countries to study the relationship between anxiety and achievement in studying foreign languages. Other similar studies (e.g., Ohata, 2005; Samimy, 1994; Samimy and Tabuse, 1992; Tsui, 1995; Zaho, 2007) have been conducted in Chinese and Japanese context and found negative correlation between language acquisition and anxiety. The study presented in this paper, however, aims to investigate English learning classroom anxiety in Saudi university environment and explore the strategies students use to address it.

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Theoretical background
Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety, still considered to be a relatively new and developing area within foreign language research, is recognized as a common feature to all foreign language classrooms in the world which cannot be defined in a simple form since it deals with various factors such as self-esteem, self-image, confidence, competitiveness, motivation, classroom instructional procedures, cultural beliefs, among others.. Researchers have tackled foreign language acquisition from different angles.

From a broader perspective, anxiety is defined by psychologists as an emotional state of "apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (Scovel, 1978:34), and as "subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (Horwitz et al., 1986:125; Spielberger, as cited in Horwitz et al., 1991:27). These definitions refer to a "transitory emotional state or condition characterised by feelings of tension and apprehension and heightened autonomic nervous system activity" (Spielberger, 1972:24), a state which smoothes the progress of learning process. Three classes of anxiety (trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety) are presented by Izard (1972) who distinguishes between negative reactions such as fear, shame, shyness, and positive reactions like interest and enthusiasm. Trait anxiety, as Scovel (1978) mentioned, refers to "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious" whereas state and situation-specific anxiety are commonly experienced in relation to some particular well-defined event or situation (Brown, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a).

On the other hand, second-language-learning educators define language anxiety as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient" (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993a), this apprehension is characterised by "physiological responses such as increased heart rate" (1993a:5). This feeling of tension and apprehension linked with second language contexts and performance (MacIntyre & Gardner 1994:284) (cf. Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; 1991b). Williams & Burden (1997:92) describe language anxiety as "highly

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situation specific and itself affected by a number of other factors" (cf. Horwitz & Young, 1991).

Studies of anxiety in language learning process have a history extending over the last thirty years (e.g., Papalia, 1970; Dernorsek, 1973; Chastain, 1975; Curran, 1976; Gardner et al., 1976; Kleinmann, 1977; Eysenck, 1979; Scovel, 1978; Stevick, 1980; Price, 1991). According to Guiora, (1983:8),"the task of learning a new language is a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition", an opinion supported by Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1991:31) who argued that "probably no other field of study implicates self-concept and self-expression to the degree that language study does". Research has seen language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors […] arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986:128) and which "does not appear to bear a strong relation to other forms of anxiety" (MacIntyre, 1999:30).

Language anxiety has a 'subtle' and 'pervasive' effect on cognitive processing (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oxford 1999) and is connected with "deficits in listening comprehension, impaired vocabulary learning, reduced word production, low scores on standardized tests, low grades in language courses or a combination of these factors" (Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997:345). Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) noted that anxious students show a lack of self-confidence, freeze up in role-play activities, forget earlier - learned grammar or vocabulary and avoid communicating in the new language. Likewise, Young (1991:430) found that foreign language anxiety displayed in the form of "distortion of sounds, inability to produce the intonation and rhythm of the language, 'freezing up' when called on to perform, and forgetting words or phrases just learned or simply refusing to speak and remaining silent." Many other studies (e.g., Horwitz et al. 1986: 36; Koch and Terrell, 1991:123; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Young, 1992:163) have confirmed that oral communication in the foreign language is considered as more anxiety provoking than other language skills.

Early empirical studies into language anxiety demonstrated sometimes inconsistent evidence (Phillips, 1992:15) and illustrated "mixed and confusing results" (Scovel, 1978) and were "unable to

establish a clear picture of how anxiety affects language learning and performance" (Horwitz & Young 1991:xiii). However, there have been some studies which found neutral and positive relationships between anxiety and second language achievement. Bailey's (1983), for instant, found that facilitative anxiety was one of the major sources to success.

Other early studies (Tucker et al., 1976; Horwitz, 1991; Steinberg, 1982; Tobias, 1980; Sarason, 1983), on the other hand, showed negative connection between language anxiety and standardized achievement test results.

Liebert and Morris (1967) introduced two cognitive elements of anxiety, "worry" and "emotionality". Sarason (1986) described "worry" as "distressing preoccupations and concerns about impending events" (1986:21). Distraction, extreme self-evaluation, possible failure, and opinions of others were recognized as signs of worry which weaken task performance (Eysenck, 1979) and proposed that anxiety triggers cognitive interference in performing required tasks (cf. Schwarzer, 1986). Eysenck (1979:364) also suggested that the anxious person is divided between task-related cognition and self-related cognition. Nevertheless, the findings of Horwitz et al., (1986) have been the most significant where they recognized and introduced three causes of language anxiety or performance anxieties: 1) communication apprehension; 2) test anxiety; and 3) fear of negative evaluation. On the light of these three causes of language anxieties they developed their anxiety scale.

The major goal of the earlier studies was to investigate the causes of language anxiety. Bailey (1983), for instant, in his study of the diaries of 11 learners found that competitiveness can cause anxiety. He (1983) also noted that tests and learner-teacher relationship contributed to anxiety. These results were confirmed by Young (1991) who mentioned six possible sources of language anxiety including personal and interpersonal, learner's language beliefs, instructor's teaching beliefs, instructor-learner relationships, classroom instructional practices and language tests. Up to now most studies have shown a negative relationship between anxiety and language achievement. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), based on a study of 97 college students learning French, found that anxious learners undervalue their own abilities and face difficulties in expressing their own opinions

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compared with relaxed learners. They also noted that anxiety and learning achievement are negatively correlated through all learning stages of language acquisition: input; processing; and output. Moreover, some other studies supported these results and confirmed the negative correlation between anxiety and all language learning skills, particularly speaking and listening. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), for example, stated that speaking is the most provoking factor of anxiety, and that high anxiety learners perform worse than others. This study, therefore, was intended to examine the general situation of university students' foreign language anxiety and the effects of anxiety on foreign language learning.

Recent qualitative studies propose that students are aware of anxiety and its effects when there is self-image-involvement as in oral tests (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz et al., 1986; 1991; Price, 1991; Tobias, 1980; Young, 1990).

Horwitz et al. (1991) have found that anxiety exists in listening and speaking where anxious students suffer great difficulties in speaking in front of class or when they are asked to discriminate between sounds and structures.

Price (1991) also found that speaking a foreign language in front of other students, making pronunciation errors or being laughed at by others were the most anxiety-provoking factors. Moreover, he advised instructors not to criticize students' pronunciation but encourage them to make mistakes in the class.

Sparks & Ganschow (1991; 1993a; 1993b; 1995; 2000) introduced that language motivation and willing to learn are the actual motives for individual differences in language success and they did not accept a connecting relationship between anxiety and learning. In reply to their critics, MacIntyre (1995a; 1995b; 1999) and Horwitz, (2000; 2001) deeply believe that anxiety can be both a cause and a consequence of poor language achievement and state that "the potential of anxiety to interfere with learning and performance is one of the most accepted phenomena in psychology and education" (Horwitz, 2000:256).

MacIntyre (1995a) argued that the results of language anxiety are more complex than described by Sparks & Ganschow, and that language learning process "relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval

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processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students" (MacIntyre, 1995a:96).

Krashen (1985a, 1985b) argued that anxiety slows down the learner's ability in the cognitive level to process and acquire second or foreign language. He (1985b) introduced his "affective filter" hypothesis which inhibits students from receiving language input. In other words, high anxiety prevents classroom input from reaching the language acquisition device in learner's brain. Consequently preventing and hindering the process of language acquisition. Furthermore, Crookall and Oxford (1991) reported that other problems may occur with anxiety such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and risk-taking ability, which finally hinder proficiency in the second language.

Foreign language anxiety is also described as a form of situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000; Haskin et al., 2003), which is illustrated by physiological signs such as feeling cold, sweating perspiration, sweaty palms, dry mouth, muscle contractions, nervous stomachs, tension, increases in heart and perspiration rates (Chastain 1975; Haskin et al., 2003; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000), headaches, clammy hands, cold fingers, shaking, tears, foot tapping (von Wörde 2003) and behavioral signs such as squirming, stuttering, stammering, giving short responses, joking, nervous laughing, avoidance responses, avoiding class, not completing assignments, distortion of sounds, inability to produce the proper intonation and rhythm of the language, 'freezing up' when called on to perform, failing to remember words or phrases just learned or simply refusing to speak, a preoccupation with the performance of other students in the class, desk drumming, losing patience and becoming angry (cf. Bailey 1983; Horwitz et al., 1986; Haskin et al., 2003; von Wörde, 2003; ElKhafaifi, 2005) These physiological and behavioral manifestations, however, can differ from one learner to another or even due to stimuli other than anxiety. For all these factors, the more valid and reliable instruments for the study of anxiety are the psychologically oriented research instruments or self-reports elicited by interviews or questionnaires (McCroskey, 1977: 82; Scovel, 1978:135-136) similar to the one used in the present study.

The first researchers who introduced a comprehensive research instrument centered on the learner's anxiety inside the foreign language

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classroom as mentioned before were Horwitz et al (1986). They developed a Likert scale of five points which consisted of 33 items, self-report measure, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree to investigate students' experiences of anxiety in the classroom context, i.e. *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* or henceforth the *FLCAS* (cf. Appendix A). The *FLCAS* was developed to understand the real meaning of foreign language anxiety in a classroom setting and to offer researchers with a standard measure. This scale has been widely used in numerous studies of anxiety in foreign language learning and found to be a reliable measure (e.g., Aida, 1994; Al Sibai, 2005; Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Chen& Chang, 2004; Ganschow & Sparks, 1996; Haskin et al., 2003; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000; Price 1988; Schlesinger, 1995; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007). It is based on an investigation of possible sources of anxiety in a language classroom, incorporating three types of anxieties (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation) as presented by Horwitz et al. (1986).

The first, communication apprehension, involves the lack of appropriate vocabulary to communicate in the target language which triggers student's apprehension. The second, test anxiety, entails frustration and anger due to language tests. Finally, fear of negative evaluation refers to the emotional feelings and insecurity students experience when they are exposed to others' evaluations.

The purpose of the present study

The present study aims to investigate English language classroom anxiety and its causes as perceived by Saudi male Arabic–speaking university students, and identify strategies students believe may reduce anxiety in an attempt to understand thoroughly the role of anxiety in learning a foreign/second language. This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine and understand the students' beliefs, feelings, knowledge and perceptions of foreign language anxiety and its causes.

It was hoped that this study could present a more comprehensive and context-specific framework for Saudi university students classroom language anxiety; meanwhile, the scarcity of relevant literature about language anxiety in the Saudi context also necessitates additional

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research effort in order to obtain a more up-to-date and fuller picture of Saudi university classroom language anxiety.

Foreign language anxiety, the goal of this paper, refers to the apprehension and fear encountered when learners forced in a well-defined situation to use a second language in which they are not fully competent (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1991b, 1994). The following research questions were addressed to shed light on these experiences and to seek answers to them:

Research Questions
1. Do Saudi male university students experience anxiety in their foreign language classroom?
2. What are the students' perceptions on the causes of their anxiety?
3. What are the strategies students believe may reduce anxiety?
4. Is there a relationship between students' achievement and their anxiety?

Method
Participants
A total of 60 (n=60) Saudi male undergraduate students studying English as a foreign language enrolled in the second semester at Imam Mohammad Bin Saud Islamic University Intensive English Program year 2007-2008 participated in this study. They were all native speakers of Arabic between the age of 19 and 20 and all of them had studied English as a compulsory subject at Saudi middle and high schools for 6 years. Students received 24 hours of formal instruction per week. In addition to this, they could consult a teacher during his office hours. All the students were asked to sign a consent form and were told that their participation was voluntary and they can withdraw at anytime. They were also asked to give their opinions as honestly as possible, which was essential to the success of this investigation. Moreover, students' names were anonymous to conceal their identities and their responses would remain confidential.

Instruments for Data Collection
This study used both qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine and understand the students' beliefs, feelings, knowledge and perceptions of foreign language anxiety and its causes. The data for

this study were collected through three instruments. The first one was the Arabic version of *FLCAS* questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al (1986) (Appendix B); the second was audiotaped interviews; and the third was an achievement test.

Studies carried out into language learning beliefs and anxiety have often employed interviews and questionnaires. Since structured questionnaires in particular are easier to administer and more convenient to elicit information from a large number of learners at the same time, this study adapted the *FLCAS*, the most widely used research instrument to elicit foreign/second language learners' anxiety.

FLCAS originally consisted of 33 items; 8 items were for communication apprehension anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), 9 items were for fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33) and 5 items were for test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21). The other 11 items were classified as anxiety of English classes. Responses scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (a) "strongly disagree" to (e) "strongly agree". For each item, the highest degree of anxiety receives five points and the lowest, one point. Therefore, anxiety scores for this scale range from 33 to 165.

The internal consistency measure of *FLCAS* showed an alpha coefficient of .91. Other studies using the *FLCAS* also yielded high reliability scores. For example, in a study by Aida (1994), the *FLCAS* showed an internal reliability of .94. As for the present study, the internal reliability score of the translated version of the *FLCAS*, computed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was .90. The scores of the items ranged between .89 and .91, which showed that all the items in the instrument maintained high internal reliabilities.

The audiotaped interviews, on the other hand, were used to elicit students' perceptions, opinions and beliefs on their experience of anxiety. Finally, the test was used to measure students' overall English abilities and achievement in language use.

Procedures

At the first stage, the questionnaire was administered in English to 60 students during the fifth week of the second semester in the regular English class and required about 20 minutes to complete. The participants were asked to complete the *FLCAS* and rate each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly

agree). This instrument allowed the author to have an inside look at the beliefs students have towards in-class foreign language anxiety. Thus, the researcher explored students' perceptions and feelings associated with the difficulties they have when learning a foreign language. After the implementation of the questionnaire, Students' elicited answers to every question were put into the computer for all the statistical analyses and compared in a later stage with the students' beliefs and perceptions as presented in the interviews to ensure validity.

At the second stage, the researcher conducted audiotaped interviews with the most anxious six participants using the following set of questions (adapted from von Wörde, 2003 with some changes) to elicit answers to the research questions:

1- What is your feeling about your foreign language class?
2- How do you act in response to what bothers you?
3- How do your classmates react to your mistakes?
4- How do you act when you get embarrassed in front of your classmates?
5- What is your feeling about your foreign language instructors?
6- What strategies do you use to overcome your foreign language anxiety?

The audiotaped interviews were analyzed by the researcher according to the 4 research questions to look for common examples and strategies of anxiety illustrated in the participants' answers of the interview questions. Then, students' beliefs and perceptions given during the interview were compared with the elicited answers to the *FLCAS*.

Finally, a written final exam administered by the researcher at the end of the semester was given to the participants to measure their overall English abilities and achievement in language use. The test items contained multiple choice, reading comprehension, listening and writing. All items were taken from a test bank to ensure the reliability.

Data Analysis

The data of the questionnaire were coded for quantitative statistical analysis to answer the research questions indicated above. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 15.0) was used for this study. Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, standard

deviation) were applied to find patterns of anxiety and the overall situation of Saudi university students' anxiety in English classrooms. T-tests and correlational analysis were computed to evaluate and explore the effects of anxiety on English achievement.

Findings and Discussion
Findings of the Questionnaire

Descriptive statistics for the *FLCAS* demonstrated that the participants showed wide range of average anxiety levels ranging from 1.26 to 4.17.. The overall mean was 3.31 (SD = .66), which indicated an overall moderate rating of anxiety levels. The rating levels of each of the statement in descending order are presented in Table 1. The highest five anxiety statements, which all had mean values exceeding 4, were: " I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English "; "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class"; " I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called in English class"; "I worry about the consequences of failing my English class"; " I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting. the course." Descriptive analyses of this study also revealed that there were 27 items whose means were above 3.00. These items appeared to suggest a generally negative attitude towards the English course.

Table 1 The Rating Levels of Each of the Statement in Descending Order

	M	SD		M	SD
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	4.17	1.57	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.	3.31	1.51
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class..	4.12	1.26	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	3.29	1.55
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called in English class	4.09	1.49	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class.	3.28	1.47
I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	4.03	1.67	I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	3.22	1.60

I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	4.01	1.50	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	3.21	1.44
I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions I haven't prepared in advance.	3.93	1.40	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	3.19	1.62
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English classes..	3.86	1.35	I often feel like not going to my English class.	3.12	1.49
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my English class.	3.79	1.51	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.	3.10	1.46
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	3.79	1.32	During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	3.10	1.51
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes.	3.79	1.36	When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	3.05	1.38
I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	3.69	1.48	Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it.	2.97	1.57
I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes	3.66	1.60	In English class, I can get so nervous that I forget things I know.	2.90	1.52
I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	3.45	1.48	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	2.83	1.31
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	3.38	1.39	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	2.65	1.54
I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes.	3.38	1.72	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get.	2.45	1.48
I keep thinking that the other students are better	3.34	1.60	I feel confident when I speak in English class.	2.41	1.17

in English than I am.		
Language class moves so quickly that I worry about getting left behind.	3.33	1.44

Furthermore, the study found that students' fear of negative evaluation was very significant carrying the mean of 3.71. Table 2 illustrated the overall average of means and standard deviations of the participants' anxiety levels in the English classroom.

Table 2: The Overall Average of Means and Standard Deviations of the Participants' Anxiety Levels

Anxiety Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.71	.77
Communication Apprehension	3.38	.51
Test Anxiety	3.22	.71
Anxiety of English Classes	2.96	.65
General Feeling of English Classroom Anxiety	3.31	.66

Moreover, the results of the correlation analysis showed a significant negative correlation between the final foreign language grade (English achievement) and the test anxiety (-.28, p=0.03<0.05).. The coefficient of anxiety for English classes was -0.22 which came close to the significant level of -0.25. A t-test was also used to see if there were any significant differences in the students' anxiety. The results of the analysis demonstrated that anxiety of English classes influences Saudi university students' English achievement (p=0.04<0.05).

Table 3 The Correlation of Anxiety and English Final Grade (Achievement)

Anxiety Variables	Correlation Coefficient	p-value (<0.05)
Fear of Negative Evaluation	-.09	0.41
Communication Apprehension	-.11	0.35
Test Anxiety	-.28	0.03*
Anxiety of English Classes	-.22	0.07
General Feeling of English Classroom Anxiety	-.21	0.11

Causes of anxiety

The interviews demonstrated negative experiences with the language class and revealed that some of the participants were unconscious of foreign language anxiety, while others were aware of a feeling of discomfort. Terms like frustration, nervous, angry, desperate, distracted, worried, distressed and anxious were used by some students which show their uneasiness with their foreign language acquisition. The participants mentioned many and different sources of their anxiety, such as speaking and listening drills, incapability to comprehend, fear of negative evaluation by their peers, methods of teaching, pedagogical practices, and the teachers themselves. Table 4 illustrate all the significant causes of anxiety mentioned by students in this study:

Table 4. Causes of Anxiety Mentioned by Students

	Causes of anxiety (n=60)	All %
1	Fear of negative reaction from others, teacher and peers	96
2	Oral presentation, speaking and listening activities	94
3	Fear of making mistakes	64
4	fear of my accent	53
5	Fear of being misunderstood	50
6	'Freezing' when called upon to speak	45
7	Instructor's peculiar personality and behavior	45
8	Comprehension difficulty	41
9	having difficulties with grammar	41
10	Remembering vocabulary	41
11	Methods of teaching and pedagogical practices	34

The participants revealed that various speaking drills and exercises which require face to face interaction or speaking in front of class provoke anxiety. This fear of speaking in front of class or in public has

been regarded and confirmed by psychologists and linguists as one of anxiety–triggering factors (e.g., Daly, 1991; Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Horwitz et al., 1986; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007). Several students stated their embarrassment to speak in front of class or to be exposed to others. Horwitz et al (1986) noted that students are aware of themselves when they are involved in speaking activities that reveal their incompetence which often lead to fear and panic (1986:128). In addition, some students stated that they were anxious because of their limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge when they were speaking.

The participants also demonstrated their sensitivity to peer and teacher's evaluation of their speaking skills. Some of the students noted that they got worried and anxious when their peers laughed at their mistakes inside the language class. They also fear of making mistakes, fear of their accents and fear of being misunderstood by teacher or classmates. Some other students stated that they freeze and get anxious when they are called by their names to speak or read the materials or when they are criticized by the teacher for not preparing the lessons.

Another anxiety-triggering factor indicated by the participants was error correction. Students noted that they got frustrated and nervous when the teacher would interfere and correct their speaking errors. These corrections would frequently increase students anxiety and lead them to lose their concentration.

The difficulty and inability to comprehend and understand what was being explained and mentioned in the classroom triggered significant anxiety in this study. The incapability to comprehend listening exercises introduced through tapes was also found as anxiety-triggering by other students. This is consistent with von Wörde (2003) and Young (1992) who found that incomprehensible listening activities might also cause anxiety.

Strategies students use to reduce anxiety

Students suggested several strategies to overcome and reduce their foreign language anxiety. These strategies are explained in the following sections:

Table 2. Strategies Suggested by Students to Reduce Language Anxiety

	Strategy (n = 60)	All %
1	Team work and social gathering	81.5
2	Consider my self in a friendly talk not in a classroom	75.4
3	Supportive and considerate instructor	43.8
4	Instructor should Speak slowly and use moderate error correction	33.8
5	Instructor's have to use the native language to explain and simplify the major points in the lesson	32.7
6	Be familiar with various signs of anxiety which hinder my language learning	13.3

Many participants proposed that students should be motivated to work together in groups and meet each other outside the classroom. These study groups or study partners would help students overcome their anxiety and interact with each other freely. Students would know each other more when they get together in a coffee shop or a restaurant as suggested by several participants. Social gatherings and team work or collaborative activities outside the classroom add a feeling of harmony and friendship which alleviate anxiety and enable students to interact easily with each other before class and know each other personally (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005; Brown, 1995; Jie, 1999;von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007). This view of collaborative learning and small groups activities was supported by Crump & Dudley (1996) and Thomas (1994).

The majority of students mentioned that the personality of the teacher and his/her behavior with the students would help and establish a friendly, warm classroom environment which is essential in reducing anxiety.. The teacher's attitude toward the language and his/her good relationship with the students reduce anxiety as suggested by other students. The students also pointed out that using moderate error correction would help them to reduce anxiety and make them relieved.

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Clearly, these interviews and participants suggestions revealed that teachers play an important and vital role in reducing anxiety. The participants asserted that anxiety is minimized when instructors make the class interesting and fun as well as using topics relevant to the students' interests which seemed to increase learner motivation (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005; Lim, 2003; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007; Liao, 1996). Supportive and considerate teacher who can utilize suitable and adequate teaching methods with interesting and relevant topics appear to improve the foreign language knowledge and experience. These findings were similar to those of von Wörde (2003), Al-Sibai (2005) and Price (1991).

The interviews also demonstrated that a friendly and supportive informal atmosphere adapted by the instructors in the classroom would also help to decrease anxious feelings among students. An environment of friendship and sense of one community among the students themselves seem to decrease learner anxiety which is consistent with Young (1990) who stated that anxiety reduced when teachers establish a friendly social environment. Samimy and Rardin (1994) also reported that group commonality and harmony appear to lessen anxiety and may strengthen language learning process.

Other proposed strategies by the participants to reduce anxiety were that teachers should use Arabic, the native language of the participants, to explain and simplify the main points in the lesson presented in the class and also should speak slowly when explaining the materials to enable students to follow up and not to be distracted.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study were similar and compatible with many other studies (e.g. Al-Sibai, 2005; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007) which confirmed and demonstrated that anxiety can negatively influence the language learning experience in various ways and that reducing anxiety may improve and increase learner enthusiasm and motivation as confirmed in many previous studies (cf. Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Krashen, 1985a, 1985b, MacIntyre, 1995; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; Price, 1991; Young, 1990, 1991).

This study has also presented significant findings of Saudi university students' anxiety in EFL classroom. All students displayed negative

experiences with the language class, particularly the fear of negative evaluation.

The participants in this study mentioned several and various sources of anxiety, such as speaking and listening activities, failure to comprehend the required tasks in the lesson presented, fear of negative evaluation, methods of teaching and instructions, and the teachers' personalities. The most anxiety-triggering factors found in this study were speaking and listening activities. 94% of the respondents stated that speaking was the major cause of anxiety. This is in harmony with the work of other researchers who proved that speaking in the foreign language was considered to be the most anxiety provoking factor (Baily 1983; Daly, 1991; Horwitz et al., 1986; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1988, 1991; Young, 1990, 1992; von Wörde, 2003; Al-Sibai, 2005; Zaho, 2007).

Moreover, the study revealed other kinds of anxiety triggered by teachers due to either pedagogical practices or instructor peculiar behavior and personality which may play a vital role in increasing the level of students' anxiety in a language classroom and lead to tensed environment for learning and make students feel anxious and angry. These results were similar to those of Price (1991); Al-Sibai (2005); von Wörde (2003) and Young (1990, 1992). Studies by a number of researchers (also showed that the interaction between teachers and learners was effective in the increase or decrease of the students' anxiety levels (Horwitz, 1988; Young, 1990; Koch and Terrell, 1991).

A comfortable classroom atmosphere was found as an essential factor in minimizing anxiety. This factor would reflect the vital role of the teacher in lessening anxiety more than any particular method of teaching. Most of the participants needed the teacher to speak more slowly; use Arabic to simplify major points in class; strengthen the material with many exercises to facilitate comprehension; present topics and materials related to their interest and goals, and to be aware of students' individual differences, learning styles and approaches. The interviews also illustrated that an environment of friendship among the students themselves inside and outside the classroom seemed to alleviate learner anxiety (cf. Aide, 1994; Al-Sibai, 2005; Baily, 1983; Horwitz, 1988; Koch and Terrell, 1991; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007; Young, 1990).

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The findings of this study through both the interviews and the responses to the *FLCAS* questions showed that 91% (54) of the 60 participants were anxious learners whereas 9% (6) of them were extremely anxious. Comparable to the findings of other similar studies (e.g., Al-Sibai, 2005; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007), the current study showed that Saudi university students experienced the feeling of anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in their English classroom. The existence of their anxiety and fear could be referred internally to their English incompetence which did not help them to communicate and interact with their peers and teachers easily and properly. As a result of this, Saudi university students are often anxious in their English classes where they need to be relaxed and at ease to express themselves and answer teachers' questions effectively. Another factor is that, as a collectivistic culture, Saudi people care about their face-image and in-group harmony where they consider negative evaluations and criticism signs of face-threatening acts to their self-esteem (cf. Al-Shalawi, 1997). This explains why students experienced more fear of negative evaluation than any other aspect of anxiety in this study. In addition, university students in Saudi Arabia rarely have chances to communicate with native speakers of English or to be exposed to English environment. Therefore, university students experience more anxiety in English classrooms than any other classes. Besides, most Saudi teachers in university as well as in middle and high schools tremendously focus on teaching grammar and reading comprehension, while ignoring or paying little attention to listening and speaking skills.

The findings of the study also revealed significant correlations between test anxiety and university students' English achievement. In fact, the effect of anxiety on language learning has been observed in great amount of studies as mentioned before (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Al-Sibai, 2005; Zaho, 2007) which confirmed that anxiety can lead learners to be frustrated, angry, discouraged, nervous, losing self-confidence in their abilities and avoiding communication and contribution in the classroom activities. Consequently, extremely anxious learners acquire low grades and achieve lower than other learners which may cause them to drop language learning for ever, delay it for a long time or change their field of study and majors. (cf. Horwitz et al., 1986; Zaho, 2007).

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Suggestions & Recommendations

This study recommends and suggests that students and instructors should be aware of foreign language anxiety and fears in the classroom. This knowledge would help instructors to know students who are anxious in language learning classes and then use what is needed to overcome this problem whether through additional class time and effort or by employing the appropriate means of instruction and method of teaching. Students, on the other hand, will reduce their anxious feelings and fears and preserve their self-image and self-esteem when they realize that anxiety is a common problem in the foreign language classroom and they are not alone in this matter (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007).

Offering workshops and presentations as stated also by von Wörde (2003) and Al-Sibai (2005) for both instructors and students on foreign language anxiety might introduce ways and ideas for minimizing anxiety. Instructors also need to be familiar with the *FLCAS* instrument (Horwitz, et al., 1986) to increase awareness of foreign language anxiety and to understand students experience with all various ways and causes of anxiety. They have to watch closely students' levels of anxiety as the class moves forward and make sure that students are not facing any kind of negative experiences in the language learning context which seemed to be present in this study (cf. MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989; Al-Sibai, 2005; von Wörde, 2003; and Zaho, 2007).

Creating and establishing a friendly informal warm classroom environment which is essential in reducing anxiety. (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005;; Lim, 2003; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001; von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007). Liao (1996) suggested that the target language should be presented in a realistic context of appropriate situations.

Encouraging Social gatherings and team work or collaborative activities outside the classroom to add a feeling of harmony and friendship which alleviate anxiety and enable students to interact easily with each other personally (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005; Brown, 1995; Jie, 1999;von Wörde, 2003; Zaho, 2007; Crump & Dudley, 1996; Thomas, 1994).

Aida (1994) also suggested that peer reviews and feedbacks should be used in speaking activities so that students would be more comfortable to speak without hesitation or worry about making errors.

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Sitting in a semi-circle arrangements as suggested by von Wörde (2003) and provide enough class structure as mentioned by ElKhafaifi (2005) would also increase students solidarity and harmony and preserve the feeling of security.

Speaking slowly as well as using the native language of the students to explain the major points in the classroom are suggested by many students in this study to understand the required materials and consequently contribute to reduce anxiety (cf. Al-Sibai, 2005; Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001; Izquierdo, 2004; Liao, 1996; von Wörde, 2003).

Individual student-teacher meetings as recommended by Chou (2004) and noted by Al-Sibai (2005) is a useful method which enable teachers to have stress-free conversations with their students to understand their speaking difficulties, and help them to reduce their fears and apprehension. Offering words of encouragement and gentle methods of error correction as suggested by von Wörde (2003) and Aida (1994) are found to be a successful way of relieving speaking anxiety.

ElKhafaifi (2005), Levine (2003), Lim (2003), and Jie (1999) recommended that teachers should inform their students not to be afraid of making mistakes and encourage them to express themselves freely. They suggested also not to make corrections when students are speaking particularly with beginner levels.

Finally, as the study was only conducted in one male university, more research is needed to support the findings of this work and to find more about both Saudi male and female university students' anxiety in English classrooms.

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Appendix (A)
The English Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
Scale (FLCAS)
Horwitz, et al. (1986)

Strongly agree = **SA**
Agree = **A**
Neutral = **N**
Disagree = **D**
Strongly disagree = **SD**

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
12. In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. It would not be nervous speaking in the foreign language with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.

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

Appendix (B)
The Arabic Version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)
Horwitz, et al. (1986)

الترجمة العربية لمقياس القلق في فصول تعلم اللغة الأجنبية

لا أوافـق بشدة	لا أوافق	لا أعلم	موافق	موافـــق بشدة	السؤال	
					أشعر بأني واثق من نفسي عندما أتحدث أثناء دروس اللغة الإنجليزية	١
					لا أقلق عندما أخطئ في درس اللغة	٢
					ارتجف عندما أعلم أنه سينادى على اسمي في درس اللغة	٣
					أخاف عندما لا أفهم ماذا يقول أستاذ اللغة الأجنبية	٤
					لا يضايقني أبداً أن آخذ دروس إضافية في اللغة الأجنبية	٥
					أجد نفسي خلال درس اللغة أفكر في أمور لا علاقة لها بالدرس	٦
					أفكر باستمرار أن الطلاب الآخرون أفضل مني في اللغة	٧
					عادة أكون مرتاحاً خلال امتحان درس اللغة	٨
					أبدأ بالاضطراب عندما أتحدث بدون تحضير لدرس اللغة	٩
					أقلق من العواقب إذا رسبت في درس اللغة الأجنبية	١٠
					لا أفهم لماذا بعض الأشخاص يتضايقون بسبب دروس اللغة الأجنبية	١١
					أثناء درس اللغة الأجنبية أتوتر كثيراً عندما أنسى أموراً أعرفها	١٢
					أشعر بالحرج عندما أتطوع للإجابة أثناء درس اللغة	١٣
					لا أقلق عندما أتحدث اللغة الأجنبية مع الأجانب	١٤
					أشعر بالغضب عندما لا أفهم ما يصححه الأستاذ	١٥
					أقلق حتى ولو كنت محضراً لدرس اللغة	١٦
					أشعر في أغلب الوقت أني لا أريد الذهاب لدرس اللغة	١٧
					أشعر بالثقة عندما أتحدث أثناء درس اللغة الأجنبية	١٨
					أشعر بالخوف من أستاذ اللغة لإحساسي بأنه متربص لتصحيح أخطائي كلها	١٩
					أشعر بقلبي ينبض بقوة عندما أعلم أنه سينادى على اسمي في درس اللغة	٢٠
					كلما درست أكثر لاختبار اللغة أقلق كثيراً	٢١
					لا أشعر بضغط لتحضير دروس اللغة الأجنبية	٢٢
					أشعر دائماً بأن الطلاب الآخرون يتحدثون اللغة أفضل مني	٢٣

					أشعر بعدم الثقة في نفسي عندما أتحدث أمام الآخرين باللغة الأجنبية	٢٤
					يمر درس اللغة بسرعة وأقلق لإحساسي بعدم المتابعة من تخلفي عن بقية الطلاب	٢٥
					أقلق أثناء درس اللغة بصورة أكبر من توتري في المواد الأخرى	٢٦
					أشعر بالقلق خوفاً من عدم الوضوح عندما أتحدث أثناء درس اللغة	٢٧
					عندما أكون في طريق لدرس اللغة أشعر بالثقة والارتياح	٢٨
					أشعر بالقلق عندما لا أفهم كل كلمة يقولها الأستاذ	٢٩
					أصاب بالإحباط عندما أفكر في عدد القوانين التي يجب تعلمها حتى أتمكن من التحدث باللغة الأجنبية	٣٠
					أشعر بالخوف لإحساسي بأن الطلاب الآخرين يسخرون مني عندما أتحدث باللغة الأجنبية	٣١
					قد أشعر بارتياح إن كنت مع متكلمين لغتهم الأم هي اللغة الأجنبية	٣٢
					أشعر بالقلق عندما يسأل أستاذ اللغة أسئلة لم أحضرها مسبقاً	٣٣