

# Exploring the Phenomenon of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Among English Language Learners in Saudi Arabia

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**Abstract**—The study aimed to understand the anxiety experienced by Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It aimed to determine if their preference for foreign language classes affects their anxiety levels and which specific anxiety features are most prevalent when speaking English? The study employed a quantitative research technique to evaluate the anxiety levels of EFL learners. The anxiety was measured using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a widely used tool for assessing speaking anxiety that was established by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope in 1986. The scale consists of 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. However, nine out of the thirty-three items have been reverse-coded and then translated into Arabic. The data indicated that 73.43% of the participants had different degrees of anxiety while talking in English. Among them, 14.06% experienced a high level of anxiety, 39.06% had moderate anxiety, and 20.31% had low anxiety. The results revealed that preference or sensation towards the EFL had no impact. Studies reveal that anxiety is a prominent concern in EFL programs, with a significant number of students experiencing challenges related to speaking anxiety.

**Index Terms**—Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety, English as a Foreign Language, English Language Teaching

## I. INTRODUCTION

Foreign language learning research has been focusing on the impact of anxiety, a pervasive emotion, on second language acquisition since the early 1970s. There are several definitions of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), including those by Horwitz et al. (1986) and MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012). Horwitz et al. (1986) define language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 128). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argue that language anxiety “encompasses the feelings of worry and negative, fear-related emotions associated with learning or using a language that is not an individual’s mother tongue” (p. 103).

Language learning often involves oral communication, which is a concern for foreign language learners who experience anxiety (Pan et al., 2022). FLA, or fluency anxiety, is more intense in spoken language situations. It affects English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' oral communication and class speaking performances, necessitating further research and investigation to understand its impact on language learning.

The study investigates the unique sources of speaking anxiety among English language learners in Saudi Arabia, considering demographic factors like age and gender, and explores the phenomenon of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and its impact on language learners. Despite the significant body of literature on speaking anxiety, there is a gap in Saudi educational contexts. This study aims to examine the experiences of EFL learners with anxiety during speaking.

### A. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

FLSA is a significant issue that negatively impacts the performance of language learners. FLSA is considered one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, as it can lead to lower oral performance and participation in speaking activities (Bashori et al., 2020). Despite being present in almost all learning disciplines, FLSA is unique as it is situation-specific and can impact learners who are not typically anxious in other situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). Academic anxiety, which refers to apprehension and worry about activities related to a specific subject or domain, is a unique situation in which learners must communicate using a language they have not fully mastered (Hasty et al., 2021). As a result, FLSA can impair the performance of learners who still need to become proficient, diminishing their confidence and ability to communicate effectively in the target language.

Language anxiety is a significant issue in EFL education, leading to negative emotional attitudes towards language learning. This is particularly evident in classroom speaking activities, where many learners are anxious. According to Bashori et al. (2020), “Among the four language skills, speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill” (p. 420). The belief that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill is often misguided, as high-anxious students may avoid or

participate briefly in speaking activities, shake hands or legs, or go blank. They may also sweat or experience palpitations, leading to a lack of oral proficiency development (Horwitz, 2017).

### *B. Types of Anxiety*

Horwitz et al. (1986) define language learning anxiety as situation-specific, often occurring in classrooms, specifically during oral language use. It is a subjective sensation triggered by the autonomic nervous system. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) identified three approaches to studying anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situational anxiety. Understanding these types of anxiety is crucial for effective language learning.

#### *(a). Trait Anxiety*

Trait anxiety is a stable personality characteristic that allows individuals to become anxious in any situation, as defined by Dörnyei and Ryan (2015), indicating a predisposition to anxiety across various situations.

#### *(b). State Anxiety*

State anxiety is a momentary aspect of an individual's characteristics, causing them to become anxious. It is an apprehension experienced at a particular moment, such as before an examination (Spielberger, 1983). High levels of trait anxiety can lead to a greater state of anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) argued that individuals with high levels of anxiety generally show greater elevations of state anxiety.

#### *(c). Situation-Specific Anxiety*

Situation-specific anxiety refers to anxiety related to a specific situation, such as speaking a foreign language. It differs from trait and state anxiety and can be seen as a measurement of trait anxiety specific to a particular situation (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). This approach focuses on analyzing anxiety responses in specific contexts such as public speaking, taking tests, solving mathematical problems, and engaging in second or foreign language classes. Anxiety can be facilitative or debilitating, depending on the situation (Kleinman, 1977). Speaking a foreign language can create anxiety associated with using the target language, which may be situation-specific for some learners. This principle is significant for this study, as it will help the researcher understand how Saudi EFL learners perceive anxiety-provoking situations associated with speaking English.

### *C. Speaking Anxiety*

The literature (Bashori et al., 2020; Horwitz et al., 1986) highlighted the significant anxiety associated with speaking skills in many languages, particularly FLSA. Research showed that FLSA is a primary factor discouraging students from speaking, particularly in socio-cultural settings where they are expected to express themselves in a language they have limited competence (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1991).

Speaking is a crucial language learning process, one of the four macro skills essential for human interactions and communications, especially in a second or foreign language (Diep et al., 2022). It is the key to effective communication and the ultimate goal of second language acquisition (Pan et al., 2022). However, developing speaking skills requires time, effort, dedication, and practice, making it a challenging task.

Studies showed that EFL learners often experience high levels of anxiety during speaking activities, particularly in front of peers. This anxiety is a significant barrier to proficiency in various abilities, mainly speaking skills (Tadjouri, 2017). Speaking anxiety refers to the impact of anxiety on one's ability to talk, with Bashori et al. (2020) stating that speaking is the most anxiety-provoking skill among the four language skills.

FLSA negatively impacts the performance of foreign language learners. Anxious learners may experience shaking hands or legs, going blank, sweating, palpitations, and uncontrollable trembling (Horwitz et al., 1986). Extreme cases may result in freezing, inability to think or act, and inaudible voices (Horwitz, 2017). Many students choose to remain silent in class, resulting in a decrease in their oral skills in the target language.

### *D. Age and Foreign Language Anxiety*

Studies have shown a significant relationship between FLA and age, with older participants reporting higher levels of anxiety than younger learners (Dewaele, 2017; Zhang, 2019). Younger learners reported less anxiety when interacting with strangers using their EFL and additional languages compared to older language learners (Dewaele, 2007). According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), adult learners typically take longer to process new information and are more self-critical in terms of their correctness compared to children and young learners. However, Dewaele (2007) suggested that younger learners may experience higher levels of anxiety than adults in situations where language learning is a new experience in the early phases of development.

Dutra and Finger (2019) conducted a quantitative research design using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) designed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The concept of the FLCAS consists of three dimensions: fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. The study recruited 90 participants, including teenagers, middle and high school students, and adult EFL learners. The results indicate that older and beginner English learners are more susceptible to FLA than younger and advanced students.

### *E. Context and Foreign Language Anxiety*

Scholars (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2022; Liu, 2019) argued that language learning outcomes are significantly influenced by the context in which a language is taught, which can lead to language anxiety. Social contexts, particularly in EFL contexts, can present specific challenges to students, such as limited exposure to the target language and limited English-language speaking opportunities. This can make students vulnerable to anxiety when using English in the classroom and in front of peers (Akramy, 2020). Additionally, the target language may represent another cultural community, making some individuals more predisposed to anxiety due to their ethnicity or foreignness (Aydın, 2016).

#### *F. Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety*

Young (1990) conducted a quantitative examination of FLSA among university-level Spanish and high school students. The questionnaire, consisting of three sections, was designed to investigate the causes of anxiety over speaking in foreign languages. The results showed that speaking in front of the class is not the sole cause of student anxiety, but it is the most important reason. Teachers' positive approach to error correction can significantly reduce language anxiety.

Ohata (2005) identified possible sources of anxiety for college Japanese learners of English in the United States, revealing that some learners are concerned about their speech being correct in comparison to native-like accents or pronunciations. This challenges language learners who believe pronunciation is the most critical component of EFL learning. Other studies confirm similar sources of FLSA, such as fear of negative evaluation, unease when speaking to native speakers, negative perceptions about the English classroom, negative self-evaluation, and fear of personal failure (Alnahidh & Altalhab, 2020; Mak, 2011).

Rachmawati and Jurianto (2020) quantitatively investigated the correlation between speaking anxiety, speaking achievement, speaking anxiety levels, and speaking anxiety sources among 114 EFL university learners in Turkey using the FLCAS questionnaire. Results indicated that fear of negative evaluation is the primary source of anxiety, even though EFL learners are often exposed to English.

Tulgar (2018) presented the sources of speaking anxiety under two categories: general sources of anxiety and context-specific sources of anxiety. The first group discusses the overall reasons adult language learners experience speaking anxiety, including fear of making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, comparison to other learners, self-evaluation, immediate questions, and focus on grammar and pronunciation. The second group presents context-specific causes of FLSA, such as communication with native speakers of the target language, the accent of the local people, having native speaker teachers, and cultural differences between themselves, their classmates, and native speakers. When EFL learners cannot understand what native speakers are saying, including their teachers, they are likely to experience anxiety in negotiating meaning and finding a suitable answer.

#### *G. Foreign Language Anxiety Components*

Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three primary components of FLA: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. These components can help understand the potential causes of FLA, particularly speaking anxiety. Communication apprehension is a psychological state of fear or anxiety experienced by individuals when they think of being evaluated by others. Fear of negative evaluation is a psychological term that reflects apprehension about people's evaluations, including avoidance of evaluative situations and the anticipation that others will evaluate one negatively. Test anxiety is a learner's perceived beliefs on language learning and performance, leading to anxiety and frustration when performing poorly in language assessments.

Numerous studies (Côté & Gaffney, 2021; Galante, 2018; Sparks & Alamer, 2022) have adopted this theory and produced evidence to support it. The FLCAS is a self-report instrument designed to assess levels of anxiety expressed through negative attitudes, subjective perceptions, beliefs, and feelings regarding foreign language classes. The FLCAS employs a 5-point Likert scale, where a rating of 1 signifies strong agreement, and a rating of 5 signifies extreme disagreement.

Communication apprehension is the fear or anxiety experienced in oral communication with another person, often resulting in limited control over the situation. According to Indrianty (2016), this anxiety can lead to the inability to speak the target language and diminish students' interest in speaking activities. Studies have shown that communication apprehension among language learners generates uncontrollable anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1990).

Horwitz et al. (1986) explained that fear of negative evaluation is one of the primary causes of speaking anxiety in foreign language learning (FLSA). This form of anxiety occurs when EFL students believe they are being evaluated or judged by their peers or teachers. The fear of being observed by others increases their fear and insecurity, preventing them from performing well in class, especially in speaking activities.

A qualitative case study conducted by Akramy (2020) explored the causes of speaking anxiety among 7 Afghan EFL university students. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and three main themes were identified: students' perceptions of anxiety in speaking, reasons for speaking anxiety, and the effects of speaking anxiety on students' performance and ways to overcome anxiety. Results showed that EFL learners perceive speaking anxiety in both positive and negative ways. Students reported that watching videos of English speakers from different countries and practicing deep breathing exercises before oral practices were effective strategies to reduce their anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation by teachers in front of peers is a major cause of speaking anxiety among EFL Afghan students.

Participants expressed the highest level of concern and fear of making mistakes and risking their self-esteem in front of their peers. These results align with previous research on communication apprehension among language learners.

The study by Toubot et al. (2017) investigated the level of speaking anxiety among 300 EFL fourth-year undergraduate students in three Libyan universities. The research focused on three primary concepts: communication anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence, which contribute to rising speaking anxiety among EFL students. The FLCAS was used to collect data, with scores ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. The results showed that Libyan EFL fourth-year students generally experience moderate to high levels of speaking anxiety. Communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence were identified as the main factors contributing to this anxiety. Low self-confidence had the highest average score of 181.25, followed by fear of negative evaluation with an average of 167.8 and communication apprehension with an average of 140.57.

Studies (Aydın, 2008; Young, 1991) suggested that the fear of making oral mistakes is primarily responsible for students avoiding classroom speaking activities. Akramy (2020) suggested that teachers should motivate and encourage their learners to speak and avoid spot correction in front of peers, as it is a significant factor affecting their speaking. Additionally, making oral mistakes is a natural part of the language-learning process, and some language learners may be concerned about the correctness of their speech in relation to native-like accents or pronunciations (Gynan, 1989).

Anxiety can be either facilitating or debilitating (Scovel, 1991). Debilitating anxiety results in an avoidance attitude and stimulates learners to avoid the learning task. On the other hand, facilitating anxiety motivates learners to adopt a strategy and confront a new learning task despite difficulties. SLA researchers (Dewaele, 2007; Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) have focused primarily on the negative aspect of emotion, with anxiety being the most researched topic and consistently demonstrated to correlate negatively with language learning success. However, the right amount of anxiety can help individuals be determined to accomplish a particular task, and feeling anxious could be a facilitating type of anxiety that drives language learners to perform well.

#### *H. Facilitating Anxiety vs. Debilitating Anxiety*

Language anxiety can significantly impact language learning, both directly and indirectly (Xiang, 2004). It can be both facilitating and debilitating, with facilitating anxiety motivating learners to study harder and make extra effort to overcome anxiety. Kleinmann's (1977) study argued that learners who scored high on facilitating anxiety tended to have better performance. The study investigated the relationship between English syntactic patterns avoided by international students (Arabic and Spanish) and their native language syntactic structures. Kleinmann used a modified version of the Achievement Anxiety Test to assess the impact of facilitating and debilitating anxiety on academic performance.

Results showed that Spanish students who scored highly on questions indicating facilitating anxiety also used different structures in English, such as direct-object pronouns and infinitive complements, which other students were more likely to avoid. Arabic students also demonstrated similar characteristics, using the passive voice more often than their counterparts. Kleinmann concluded that some language learners employ avoidance strategies that cannot be attributed to a lack of knowledge of the avoidance structure.

#### *I. English Language Education in Saudi Arabia*

An investigation into FLSA across different communities could provide insights into whether the causes and consequences of FLSA are universally applicable or specific to certain groups. Foreign language study holds significant importance in Saudi Arabia, primarily driven by the mounting pressure on Saudi Arabian students to acquire proficiency in English. The Saudi marketplace has experienced a surge in the need for English language proficiency due to globalization. Consequently, the Saudi educational system has undergone modifications to address this demand. Schools and universities have been developed to educate students in the essential skills required to thrive in the global market. These institutions offer instruction in English for all subjects, not just foreign languages.

According to Al-Saraj (2014), Saudi universities mandate that language instructors possess a minimum of a master's degree in a field relevant to English teaching. As a result of this educational prerequisite, instructors in Saudi universities have received comprehensive and varied training. They apply these diversified instructional techniques in their EFL classrooms. Furthermore, language instruction often requires students to participate actively and engage in autonomous investigation. Students are required to actively participate in class by engaging in question-and-answer sessions, delivering presentations during class time, and collaborating with their peers in group activities. Sure, students have never participated in these exercises previously. Thus, students are frequently provided with novel social experiences.

EFL programs have been established as part of the first-year curriculum to ease the shift from Arabic-medium schools to English-medium universities. These programs cater to students who need to possess sufficient English proficiency to enroll in English-taught courses. These EFL programs help students achieve the requisite level of English fluency to assimilate into the regular college or university environment, where all the courses are conducted exclusively in English (Al-Saraj, 2014, p. 55).

#### *J. Objective of the Study*

The study aims to explore the dimensions of FLCA among EFL learners in Saudi Arabia. It will investigate the specific sources of speaking anxiety, considering factors like age and context, which impact FLSA among adult Saudi

English learners. Speaking anxiety is associated with feelings of failure and poor performance, and its debilitating impact on language learning is a topic deserving of extensive investigation. The results may be situation-specific and contribute to studying emotions in foreign and second language learning. It will also shed light on the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Saudi Arabia, raising awareness among educators and researchers about the serious phenomenon of speaking anxiety. The study will explore the specific sources of FLSA, considering the unique context and educational system of Saudi Arabia.

## II. METHODS

The study utilized a quantitative research approach to analyze the anxiety levels of adult learners in Saudi Arabia who are learning EFL.

### A. Research Questions

This study explicitly focuses on the following research questions:

1. Does the preference for foreign language classes influence the level of anxiety experienced by Saudi EFL learners?
2. Among Saudi EFL learners, which specific features of anxiety, such as communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of adverse assessment, or anxiety related to English classes, is the most observed when FLLs are required to speak English?

### B. Participants

The research encompassed a group of 64 Saudi EFL students whose ages ranged from 18 to 20. Among them, 51% were 18 years old, 41% were 19 years old, and 8% were 20 years old.

### C. Instruments

The study aimed to assess the anxiety experienced by EFL learners using the FLCAS, which was developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The scale consists of 33 items rated on a five-point Likert scale, commonly used to assess speaking anxiety. However, nine out of the thirty-three items have been reverse-coded, indicating a lack of anxiety. The positive items were inverted, reinterpreted, and translated into Arabic (see Appendix).

TABLE 1  
MODEL 3 FLCAS (ZHAO, 2007)

| Factors | Communication Anxiety       | Test Anxiety    | Fear Of Poor Assessment         | Anxiety Related to English Classes    |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Item    | 1, 9, 14, 18,24, 27, 29, 32 | 2, 8, 10, 19,21 | 3, 7, 13, 15,20, 23, 25, 31, 33 | 4, 5, 6, 11, 12,16, 17, 22, 26, 28,30 |

Zhao (2007) also confirmed the existence of four distinct factors: communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of poor assessment, and anxiety related to English classes. The FLCAS scale was used in this study to evaluate students' anxiety levels and provide a comprehensive understanding of their anxiety levels. The study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' anxiety levels and provide a better understanding of their anxiety levels (see Table 2).

TABLE 2  
CATEGORIZATION OF ANXIETY LEVELS BASED ON HORWITZ'S SCORE RANGES

| Anxiety level    | Scoring Range |
|------------------|---------------|
| No Anxiety       | 33 to 66      |
| Low Anxiety      | 67 to 99      |
| Moderate Anxiety | 100 to 132    |
| High Anxiety     | 133 to 165    |

### D. Data Collection Procedure

The study used an internet-based Google Form for data collection, which was distributed via WhatsApp groups, Telegram, Twitter, and Facebook.

## III. RESULTS

### A. Quantitative Data Analysis

The questionnaire consisted of two components. The initial investigation involved the use of a 33-item Likert scale questionnaire developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). Following that, the second part was created to develop the profile of the learners.

#### (a). Horwitz's FLCAS Descriptive Data Analysis

Using Horwitz et al.'s scale, the Google Form survey was created to assess the FLCA level. A revision was made to ensure positive language and accurate expression of anxiety. The objective of this quantitative analysis was to

categorize the participants into four distinct groups of FLCA: high anxiety level, moderate anxiety level, low anxiety level, and no anxiety level (see Table 2).

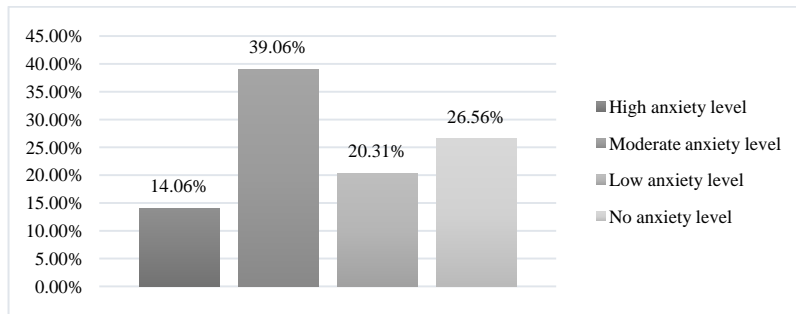


Figure 1. Participants' Anxiety Levels

Out of the 64 participants, 39.06% ( $n=25$ ) were allocated to moderate anxiety level, 26.56% ( $n=17$ ) to no anxiety group, 20.31% ( $n=13$ ) to low anxiety level and 14.06% ( $n=9$ ) to high anxiety level.

(b). Analyzing the Profile of the Learners

The learners' profile section includes a question asking students to rate their preference for foreign language classes using a 5-point Likert scale. This is an initial indicator of possible FLCA symptoms. The scale ranges from "I love the English language classes" to "I hate the English language classes." Despite a positive opinion, experiencing FLCA can still occur. The question serves as an initial indicator of students' susceptibility to FLCA.

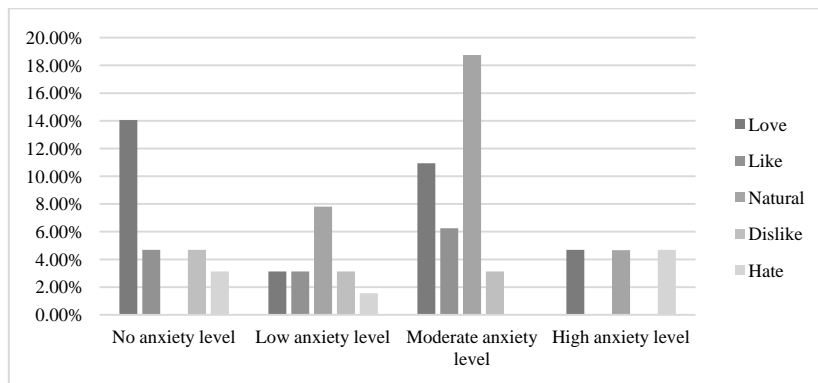


Figure 2. Student's Susceptibility to FLCA

(c). Analyzing the Four Distinct Factors

Based on Zhao's (2007) four distinct factors: communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of poor assessment, and anxiety related to English classes, the questionnaires were grouped and analyzed.

TABLE 3  
PARTICIPANTS ANXIETY BASED ON ZHAO'S CATEGORIZATION

|                                    | M    | SD   |
|------------------------------------|------|------|
| Communication anxiety              | 2.97 | 1.45 |
| Test anxiety                       | 3.06 | 1.57 |
| Fear of poor assessment            | 2.85 | 1.50 |
| Anxiety related to English classes | 2.78 | 1.51 |

The highest level of anxiety was observed in test anxiety, with a mean score of 3.06 (SD=1.57). This was followed by communication anxiety, which had a mean score of 2.97 (SD=1.45). Conversely, the level of anxiety associated with English lessons was the lowest, with an average of 2.78.

TABLE 4  
PARTICIPANTS ANXIETIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FOUR DISTINCT FACTORS

| Factors  | Statements   | M    | SD   |
|--|--|------|------|
| Participants' Communication anxiety level  | 1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the English language class.                             | 2.89 | 1.3  |
|  | 9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the English language class.                        | 3.3  | 1.42 |
|  | 14. I would be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers.   | 3.3  | 1.44 |
|  | 18. I do not feel confident when I speak in the English language class.  | 2.69 | 1.41 |
|  | 24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students.                     | 2.59 | 1.43 |
|  | 27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English language class.                                    | 2.75 | 1.47 |
|  | 29. I get nervous when I do not understand every word the English language teacher says.                           | 3.08 | 1.46 |
| Participants' Test anxiety level   | 32. I would probably feel uncomfortable around native speakers of the English language.                            | 3.16 | 1.50 |
|  | 2. I worry about making mistakes in the English language class.  | 3.31 | 1.40 |
|  | 8. I am usually not at ease during tests in the English language class.  | 3.72 | 1.42 |
|  | 10. I worry about the consequences of failing the English language class   | 3.89 | 1.52 |
|  | 19. I am afraid that my English language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.                         | 2.93 | 1.57 |
| Participants' Fear of poor assessment level  | 21. The more I study for the English language test, the more confused I get.                                       | 3.06 | 1.57 |
|  | 3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in the English language class.                            | 2.36 | 1.45 |
|  | 7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.                                      | 3.20 | 1.32 |
|  | 13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in the English language class.  | 2.47 | 1.36 |
|  | 15. I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.   | 3.56 | 1.41 |
|  | 20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in the English language class.                     | 2.97 | 1.47 |
|  | 23. I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do.                             | 3.16 | 1.48 |
|  | 25. English Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.                                     | 2.23 | 1.37 |
| Anxiety related to English classes   | 31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the English language.                        | 2.5  | 1.52 |
|  | 33. I get nervous when the English language teacher asks questions that I have not prepared in advance.            | 3.23 | 1.62 |
|  | 4. It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.                                 | 2.86 | 1.54 |
|  | 5. It bothers me to take more English language classes.  | 2.53 | 1.49 |
|  | 6. During the English language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course. | 2.39 | 1.43 |
|  | 11. I understand why some people get so upset over the English language classes.                                   | 3.45 | 1.41 |
|  | 12. In English language Classes, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.                                      | 2.73 | 1.58 |
|  | 16. Even if I am well prepared for the English language class, I feel anxious about it.                            | 2.92 | 1.5  |
|  | 17. I often feel like not going to my English language class.  | 3.01 | 1.43 |
|  | 22. I feel pressure to prepare very well for the English language class.   | 2.78 | 1.53 |
| 26. I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes.     | 2.33   | 1.43 |      |
| 28. When I am on my way to English language classes, I feel very unsure and anxious.         | 2.25   | 1.36 |      |
| 30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak the English language. | 3.31   | 1.46 |      |

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study examined the impact of language learning preferences on anxiety levels among EFL learners. Results showed that 73.43% of participants experienced varying levels of anxiety when communicating in English, with 14.06% experiencing high anxiety, 39.06% having moderate anxiety, and 20.31% having low anxiety. Furthermore, the survey used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "I love the English language classes" to "I hate the English language classes." Some participants had positive opinions about language learning; however, 4.69% experienced high anxiety, according to their FLCA. Conversely, 4.69% of participants who hated language learning experienced high anxiety. The findings indicated that sentiments toward the EFL do not make a difference.

The second research question was, "Among Saudi EFL learners, which specific features of anxiety, such as communication anxiety, test anxiety, fear of adverse assessment, or anxiety related to English classes, is the most observed when FLLs are required to speak English?" A significant percentage of students struggle with speaking anxiety in EFL programs. Test anxiety was the top factor, with a mean score of 3.06 (SD=1.57), while anxiety related to English classes was the lowest, with a mean score of 2.78 (SD 1.51). Test anxiety is a widespread issue that students often face, particularly those who are studying foreign languages. Studies have shown that anxiety negatively impacts students during tests, leading to emotions of nervousness and confusion. According to Kralova and Petrova (2017), most participants in studies on foreign language anxiety expressed significant levels of concern while taking a formal exam or getting evaluated in a formal setting. Additionally, Horwitz et al. (1986) found that test anxiety is particularly evident when learners experience nervousness about making mistakes in the presence of their classmates, receiving critique from teachers, and having their performance evaluated.

This research indicated that anxiety is a significant issue in EFL programs, with a significant percentage of students struggling with speaking anxiety, necessitating further investigation into the sources of this anxiety in Saudi EFL learners. It is advisable to engage in further study to gain a more profound comprehension of instructors' strategies, techniques, and instructional approaches in connection to classroom activities.

## APPENDIX. SURVEY QUESTIONS

|  | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|--|----------------|-------|---------|----------|-------------------|
| I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the English language class.<br>لا أشعر أبداً بالثقة التامة في نفسي عندما أتحدث في صف اللغة الانجليزية                                |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I worry about making mistakes in the English language class.<br>أشعر بالقلق من ارتكاب الأخطاء اثناء محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in the English language class.<br>أرتجف عندما أعلم أنه سيتم استدعائي في فصل اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.<br>أشعر بالخوف عندما لا أفهم ما يقوله المعلم باللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| It bothers me to take more English language classes.<br>من المزعج بالنسبة لي أن أخذ المزيد من دروس اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| During the English language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.<br>اثناء محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية، أجد نفسي أفكر في أشياء لا علاقة لها بالدرس |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.<br>أعتقد أن الطلاب الآخرين أفضل مني في اللغات   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I am usually not at ease during tests in the English language class.<br>عادة لا أشعر بالراحة اثناء اختبارات اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the English language class.<br>أشعر بالهلع عندما أضطر إلى التحدث دون تحضير في فصل اللغة الانجليزية                              |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I worry about the consequences of failing the English language class.<br>أخشى عواقب الرسوب في دروس اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I understand why some people get so upset over the English language classes.<br>أتفهم لماذا يزعج بعض الناس من دروس اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| In English language classes, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.<br>أشعر بالتوتر اثناء محاضرات اللغة الانجليزية لدرجة أنسى الأشياء التي أعرفها                                      |                |       |         |          |                   |
| It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in the English language class.<br>اشعر بالحرج من المشاركة اثناء محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I would be nervous speaking the English language with native speakers.<br>أكون متوتراً عند التحدث باللغة الانجليزية مع الناطقين بها  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I get upset when I do not understand what the teacher is correcting.<br>أشعر بالانزعاج عندما لا أفهم ما يصححه معلم اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Even if I am well prepared for the English language class, I feel anxious about it.<br>أشعر بالقلق حتى لو كنت مستعد جيداً لدروس اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I often feel like not going to my English language class.<br>أشعر في كثير من الأحيان بعدم الرغبة لحضور محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I do not feel confident when I speak in the English language class.<br>لا أشعر بالثقة عندما أتحدث في فصل اللغة الانجليزية  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I am afraid that my English language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.<br>أخشى من أن يكون معلم اللغة الانجليزية مستعداً لتصحيح كل خطأ أرتكبه                                 |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in the English language class.<br>تتسارع نبضات قلبي عندما يتم استدعائي للمشاركة في صف اللغة الانجليزية                           |                |       |         |          |                   |
| The more I study for the English language test, the more confused I get.<br>كلما حضرت لاختبار اللغة الانجليزية أكثر، كلما زادت حيرتي   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I feel pressure to prepare very well for the English language class.<br>أشعر بالضغط للتحضير جيداً لمحاضرة اللغة الانجليزية   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I always feel that the other students speak the English language better than I do.<br>أشعر دائماً أن الطلاب الآخرين يتحدثون اللغة الانجليزية أفضل مني  |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I feel very self-conscious about speaking the English language in front of other students.<br>أشعر بالخجل الشديد من التحدث باللغة الانجليزية أمام الطلاب الآخرين                             |                |       |         |          |                   |
| English Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.<br>تمضي محاضرات اللغة الانجليزية بسرعة كبيرة لدرجة أنني أشعر بالقلق من عدم اللحاق بزملائي                         |                |       |         |          |                   |
| I feel more tense and nervous in my English language class than in my other classes.<br>أشعر بالتوتر والعصبية اثناء محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية أكثر من المواد الأخرى                            |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Do you like English language classes?<br>هل تحب دروس اللغة الإنجليزية؟   | love           | like  | Natural | dislike  | hate              |
| Gender<br>الجنس  | Male           |       | Female  |          |                   |
| Age<br>العمر   |                |       |         |          |                   |
| Academic Major<br>التخصص   |                |       |         |          |                   |

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