RICHTMANN PUBLISHING

Understanding English Language Anxiety among Undergraduate Saudi EFL Learners: The Case of Business College, PSAU

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners, understand their experience with the causes and sources of their anxiety, and examine if they witness differences in their anxiety based on the differences in their demographic profile. As the study seeks to understand how certain independent variables (gender, employment profile of learners' parents, and their educational level) shape and affect the dependent variable (English language anxiety), the quantitative approach (descriptive quantitative design) was selected, and Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) was utilized to collect the data from the participants. A simple random sampling method was employed to select 205 respondents from the total population of students studying at different levels of the undergraduate program at the College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia. The results of the study found that the participants experienced moderate levels of anxiety and that there were several sources of anxiety among Saudi EFL learners. Test and communicative anxieties were found to be the major sources of English language anxiety followed by classroom and negative evaluation anxieties respectively. One-way ANOVA analysis revealed no difference of any significance for English language anxiety among Saudi English students due to variance in their demographic profile. The study findings hold implications as they would be of immense use in addressing the issue of anxiety, understanding the possible sources, and finding ways to overcome issues of anxiety and help students move away from anxiety towards acquiring effective and excellent English language skills and proficiency.

Keywords: mapping out English anxiety, learners' different experiences, moderate levels of anxiety, test as a major source of anxiety

1. Introduction

The research on foreign language anxiety and how it impedes effective language acquisition continues to attract the attention of scholars and academicians. It is undisputed that anxiety results in certain behavioral and psychological problems. They in turn create a sense of insecurity, unwillingness, and stress and affect language proficiency. Many scholars acknowledge that anxiety impedes language learning (Vytal et al. 2012; Eysenck et al. 2007; MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Dvorak-Bertsch et al. 2007). As a result, the whole process of learning is adversely affected by language anxiety (Dewaele & MacIntyre 2014). In countries where English is a second/foreign language, English learners grapple with this anxiety problem which adversely affects their language learning. Horwitz (2001) stated that almost thirty of all second language learners experience a condition known as language anxiety, to some level. This explains why it remains a topic of discussion and research in academic circles.

Foreign language learning was the center of academic discussions and research when Krashen (1981) claimed that several issues including self-confidence, motivation, and anxiety correspond with success in second language teaching and learning. It is now an accepted fact that foreign language anxiety adversely affects the achievement and learning of a new language. The uncomfortable psychological reaction of students to language acquisition is often described as language anxiety. It has to do with how people feel when they are learning a language (Horwitz, 2001). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) argued that anxiety often means the feeling of uneasiness and worry that language students encounter when attempting to learn and acquire skills in a non-native language. This form of anxiety is characterized by feelings of concern as well as other negative emotions linked to anxiety that are generated by the process of acquiring or utilizing a second/foreign language.

Developing anxiety-free classrooms has been one of the challenges confronting English language teachers and course instructors. In the Arab larger world in general, and Saudi Arabia in particular, foreign language anxiety continues to adversely affect the English skills and proficiency of Saudi learners. Despite several years of studying English in their pre-university education, they often stay passive participants in EFL classrooms. A large majority do not demonstrate willingness and curiosity to learn the English language. As students are often unwilling to participate in discussions and academic activities in the English classroom, equipping them with English skills and proficiency remains a challenge for teachers and administrators. Given these adverse effects Saudi EFL learners encounter in their EFL classrooms, it is vital to investigate this issue and look for measures to be undertaken to help students address these problems and become excellent learners of the language.

1.1 Research Problem Statement

English learners in countries where English is a second or foreign language encounter anxiety which has a detrimental impact on their language acquisition. Research suggests that around 30% of second/foreign language learners experience some level of anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Given the lack of studies dealing with Saudi EFL learners' anxiety, this study aims to carry out this investigation and bridge this gap in literature.

1.2 Research Purpose

This study seeks to examine English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners, their experiences with its causes and sources, and finally to understand if the differences in their demographics affect the learners differently.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding foreign language anxiety (FLA)

The fear or uncertainty that occurs when learners are required to carry out activities in a language that they are not fluent in is referred to as language anxiety (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Most of the studies have established a deep connection between language learning and anxiety and have largely focused on how it (anxiety) impedes language learning (Yule, 2006; Bless and Fiedler, 2006; Horwitz, 2001). Horwitz et al. (1986), who defined it as a separate combination of thoughts, opinions, and emotions, initially described foreign language anxiety and actions associated with language learning in the classroom that develops because language learning is a unique process. What these studies suggest is that anxiety stands as a stumbling in the way of learning a language. Research has revealed that anxiety associated with learning a new language is not only common among people who want to learn a foreign language, but it also has a variety of adverse effects on the learning process of a new language (Luo, 2013).

In most academic discussions of anxiety, a distinction is often made between three distinct categories of the condition: trait anxiety, situational anxiety, and state anxiety (Spielberger, 1966, 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). A general tendency to experience feelings of anxiety in the face of a variety of situations is referred to as trait anxiety. The sense of worry or stress that comes about at some point because of specific circumstances can be described as state anxiety. The condition of situational anxiety is similar to trait anxiety in that it is stable over time; however, it may not stay constant from one situation to the other (Luo, 2013). In previous studies (Scovel, 1991; Daly, 1991), language anxiety was thought of as one of the manifestations of other forms of anxiety including trait anxiety, test anxiety, and public speaking anxiety. However, in more recent years, most researchers have come to believe that language anxiety is a different kind of anxiety that stands out from other various general types of anxiety (Horwitz et. al, 1986). Many researchers and academics currently believe that anxiety linked with acquiring a foreign language ought to be considered a situation-specific anxiety that is specific to learning a new language and is different from other types of anxiety.

2.2 Examining anxiety as a psychological construct

The studies on foreign languages usually focus on problems related to language learning and teaching. They argued that learners' affective variables such as anxiety and motivation should be taken into consideration for an in-depth understanding of the foreign language learning process (Samimy, 1994). The foreign/second language-learning researchers have recognized several affective components as some of the key factors for looking at the success or failure of the learners of second/foreign language learners. A feeling of worry and uneasiness is referred to as anxiety. It is an undisputed fact that anxiety not only impedes one's natural ability to learn a language but also comes in the way of many types of learning. Spielberger (1983) categorizes anxiety into state anxiety and trait anxiety. The former refers to reactions/responses to situations that cause a person to be anxious, like an important test, while trait anxiety is about something that stays with a person for a long time. While throwing further light on different aspects of anxiety, Luo (2013) argues that trait anxiety is a predisposition for anxiety in many different types of situations. State anxiety is a temporary worry or tension. Scenario-specific anxiety is stable like trait anxiety but can differ with circumstance. It is not only widely recognized that anxiety hampers numerous types of learning, including learning a new language.

2.3 Foreign Language Anxiety: Sources and Causes

Several different things can cause anxiety (Horwitz, 2001). Multiple studies have examined the origins and causes of anxiety among learners (Young, 1991; Tanveer, 2007; Aydin 2009; Williams & Andrade,

2008). That is the reason researchers and scholars look at different affective factors to understand why language learners perform differently in language acquisition. A few more studies deal with language learning anxiety in different contexts (Scovel, 1978; Dörnyei, 2005; Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1986; Horwitz & Young, 1991). For example, Pappamihiel (2002) carried out a study on language phobia among 178 immigrant students from Mexico studying in the middle class in the United States of America. The English Language Anxiety Scale was given to participants to investigate the relationship between their anxiety levels and variables such as gender, years lived in the United States of America, educational success, reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. The findings revealed that engagement with Mexican students led to an increase in the respondents' levels of anxiety, which led to the adoption of techniques to reduce anxiety, such as avoidance. In a study involving 600 FL students and 163 FL instructors, Levine (2003) revealed that students whose families spoke multiple languages had a lower frequency of anxiety than students whose families spoke just one language. Bensoussan (2012) reviews the literature on classroom anxiety and suggests remedies for advanced foreign language reading comprehension. The study asserts that most evidence shows anxiety reduces written exam performance and affects results. Using a nine-item questionnaire, the study examines students' suggestions on how to improve their feelings toward exams. Bhattarachaiyakorn & and Phettakua (2023) examined the anxiety levels and factors affecting university students' English-speaking skills at a public institution in northeast Thailand. The study chose a purposeful sample strategy to gather data and 102 questionnaires were sent to first-year students majoring in English in a public institution in Thailand. The findings revealed that students' language learning beliefs constituted a major source of anxiety followed by test anxiety.

Hismanoglu (2013) examined the fears of first-year English instructors to see if there was any connection between their anxieties and demographic profile including age, gender, and experience teaching. Horwitz et al' *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* was used to collect data from 132 English language teacher candidates. The findings revealed that aspiring English language instructors experience low anxiety levels and there was a strong correlation between anxiety and independent factors such as grade level, age, and gender. In their study, Djafri and Wimbarti (2018) investigated the existence of foreign language anxiety among Indonesian students studying in their undergraduate programs for English, French, Japanese, Korean, and Arabic and its connection with their motivation and course instructors' behavior. One-way ANOVA demonstrated that people learning the Japanese language experience the highest level of anxiety as compared to learners of other languages. T-test showed that people learning languages other than Latin (Korean, Japanese, and Arabic) experience higher levels of anxiety than those learning Latin languages (English and French). The study implies that teachers should focus on their methods of instruction and learning environment to reduce students' foreign language anxiety. Olagbaju (2021) argues that previous studies on teacher education in Nigeria have focused primarily on innovative methods of delivering instruction and overlooked learner-related factors like anxiety about language and previous expertise, both of which can impede the development of English composition competencies in ESL classes. His study, therefore, evaluated how anxiety about the language and previous knowledge affect descriptive composition performance. Data was collected from 350 utilizing two tools for study. The findings revealed that there is no connection of any significance between the various independent variables and students' performance in the expository essay.

Al-Saraj (2014) conducted a case study to examine the experience of the process of studying English as a second language in Saudi Arabia where English is gaining rapid popularity. Ten participants who experienced varying degrees of anxiety, ranging from moderate to high levels, were purposefully chosen for both level 1 and level 3. A multimethod approach was used to learn about the learners' perspectives and behavior. This consisted of carrying out surveys, observing classrooms while taking field notes, as well as interviewing people and groups. With the help of Horowitz et al.'s 1986 *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale,* Lucas et al. (2011) investigated the strategies for language acquisition as well as the reasons for anxiety in language acquisition among international learners in the Philippines. The findings showed that the students used vocabulary methods to

become more fluent in the English language and reduce their classroom anxiety.

This method enables students to study independently to enhance their target language macro skills. Alrabai (2015) carried out a two-stage quasi-experimental investigation to show how Saudi EFL teachers reduce learners' anxiety. While in the first stage, he investigated the foreign language anxiety sources among language learners, in the second one 465 students were split into two different groups, and 12 course teachers were enlisted for the study. Eight weeks of anxiety-reduction treatment was given to the treatment group. The results of the statistical analysis, specifically the analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) indicated a substantial reduction in foreign anxiety levels among students who received the intervention in the experimental group.

2.4 Research Questions

Q.1. Do Saudi EFL students encounter English language anxiety?
Q.2. How do Saudi EFL learners experience different sources of English language anxiety?
Q.3. Is there any significant difference among Saudi EFL learners based on variations in their demographic profile?

2.5 Research Objective

1. To understand if Saudi EFL learners experience English language anxiety
2. To understand the causes and sources of their English language anxiety
3. To understand if the difference in their demographic profile affect them differently

2.6 Hypothesis

H01: Saudi EFL learners do not differ statistically based on gender.
　　H02: Saudi EFL learners do not differ statistically based on participants' education levels.
　　H03: Saudi EFL learners do not differ statistically based on their parents' different professions.

3. Method

3.1 Resign Design

As the study involves investigating the existing relationship among the dependent variable (English language learning anxiety) and independent variables (gender, employment profile of learners' parents, and parents' educational level), the quantitative approach (descriptive quantitative design) was selected and Horwitz et al' (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was used to collect data from the study respondents.

3.2 Participants' description

The study participants comprise level 1 and level 2 of undergraduate programs of the College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia. The respondents have been studying English as a foreign language for 7 to 8 years. They are native speakers of the Arabic language and are in their early twenties. 205 participants were randomly selected through a simple random sampling method out of a population of almost 2000 students. While 122 (59.50%) are male, 78 (38%) are female. 5 (2.40%) participants chose to be neutral regarding their gender.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Description	Group	Frequency	percentage
	Male	122	59.50%
Gender	Female	78	38.00%
	Other	5	2.40%
	Govt job	144	77.20%
Parents' profession	private job	14	6.80%
	Business	15	7.30%
	No employment/Job	32	15.60%
	Level 1 to Level 3rd	127	62%
Learners' educational level	Level 4 to Level 6th	34	16.6%
	Level 7 to Level 8th	44	21.5%

3.3 Data collection instrument

To collect reliable data, a questionnaire was developed using content items from the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (1986) by Horwitz, Cope, and Horwitz. The questionnaire was provided both in English and Arabic after being reviewed by three experts in both English and Arabic languages to facilitate better understanding and reliable responses. The participants were asked to demonstrate their choice on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree).

3.4 Method for Data Collection

The researcher employed simple random sampling method to select 205 respondents (around 10% of the total population) from the population comprising students studying at different levels of the undergraduate program at the College of Business Administration, Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Saudi Arabia.

3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation

When the researcher received enough responses from the participants, the questionnaire was downloaded from the Google form into an Excel sheet. To facilitate calculation, Numeric codes (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neutral, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree) were assigned and the data was exported to SPSS version 23. The 5-point Likert scale's range was computed by deducting the highest score (5) from the lowest (1) and then dividing the result by the highest score (5). Thus, Table 2 shows details for determining the highest and lowest values on the Likert scale. As the questionnaire contained only close-ended questions, participants' responses were inserted into a table and analyzed quantitatively. Employing descriptive statistics, the means, frequency, and standard deviation were calculated. One-way ANOVA was utilized to find differences among the participants based on the differences in their demographic profiles. For interpreting and categorizing the level of anxiety, the following criteria were adopted from Akkakoson (2016).

Table 2. Anxiety Measuring Scale

Mean Square	Level
4.21 – 5.00	Highest
3.41 – 4.20	High
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
1.81 – 2.60	Low
1.00 – 1.80	Lowest

4. Result & Findings

The overall statistical results provided in Table 3 show that Saudi learners of EFL experience moderate levels of English language anxiety. The overall representations, individual components, and average mean square suggest that Saudi EFL learners experience a moderate level of English language anxiety. The levels of anxiety of individual components like test anxiety, communicative anxiety, classroom anxiety, and the fear of negative evaluation are respectively 3.33, 3.30, 3.23, and 3.17. The overall level of anxiety is 3.24 which falls within the range of moderate. This addresses the study's first research question.

Table 3. Components/Aspects of English Language Anxiety

Components/ Aspects	Mean	Level of Anxiety
Learners' Test Anxiety	3.32	Moderate
Communicative Anxiety	3.30	Moderate
English Classroom Anxiety	3.23	Moderate
Fear of Negative Evaluation	3.17	Moderate
Overall	3.24	Moderate

Table 4. Items representing communicative anxiety of Saudi EFL learners

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Level of Anxiety
1	15.6	31.7	21	23.4	8.3	3.22	Moderate
9	17.6	31.2	18.5	23.4	9.3	3.24	Moderate
14	22.4	43.4	17.1	13.2	3.9	3.67	High
18	20	31.2	28.8	16.6	3.4	3.47	High
24	14.6	32.2	15.1	26.8	11.2	3.12	Moderate
27	12.2	25.9	20	27.3	12.2	3.03	Moderate
29	21	31.7	20	22	5.4	3.40	Moderate
Total						3.30	Moderate

Table 4 shows the Saudi EFL learners' anxiety level toward English measured through 7 items given above. As is clear from item no.1 in the table, 47.3 % (SA 15.6% & 3A 1.7%) of the participants agree that they never feel completely confident when speaking in their foreign language classes.   21% of participants chose to remain neutral. While 23.4% disagree, 8.3% strongly disagree. The mean is 3.22 which falls within the range of moderate. In item no. 9, 48.8% (SA 17.6 & A 31.2%) of the participants agree that they experience a state of anxiety when required to engage in impromptu speaking activities during language classes. While 18.5% remain neutral, 23.4% disagree and 9.3% strongly disagree. The mean is 3.24 which is moderate. Concerning item 14, 65.8% (SA 22.4% & A 43.4%) of the respondents agree that they would feel comfortable speaking foreign languages with native speakers. 17.1% do not express their opinion. While 13.2% disagree, 3.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.67 falls within the range of high. Since the statement is negative, it must be interpreted differently. This means that Saudi EFL learners hardly experience any anxiety while speaking English with native speakers. Regarding item no 18, 51.2% (SA 20% & A 31.2%) of the participants agree that they speak confidently in foreign language class. 28.8% of learners are undecided. While 16.6% disagree, 3.4% of participants strongly agree with the statement. The mean is 3.47 which is high. This again shows that the learners do not experience anxiety and feel confident while speaking in foreign language classes. In item no. 24, 46.8% (SA 14.6% % A 32.2%) of the participants agree that they experience intense self-consciousness while speaking a foreign language in front of peers. 15.1% remain neutral, 26.8% disagree and 11.2% of the participants strongly disagree. The mean is 3.12 which is moderate. This shows that Saudi EFL learners experience a moderate level of anxiety while

communicating in English in front of other students. Similarly, in item no 27, 38.1% (SA 12.2% & A 25.9%) of the participants agree that speaking in front of their friends in a language causes them to get anxious and perplexed. 20 % of learners stay neutral, 27.3% disagree, and 12.2% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.03 which is moderate. In the last item under this category, 52.7% (SA 21% & A 31.7%) of the participants agree that they experience increased levels of anxiety when they are unable to follow along with the language teacher's every word. While 20% do not express their choice, 22% disagree, and 5.4% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.40 which again falls within the range of moderate.

Table 5. Items representing Saudi EFL learners' fear of negative evaluation

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Level of Anxiety
3	8.3	25.4	22.9	24.4	19	2.79	Moderate
7	18	31.7	21.9	19	10.2	3.28	Moderate
13	12.2	25.4	17.1	33.2	12.2	2.92	Moderate
15	21	42.4	14.6	16.1	5.9	3.56	High
20	16.6	23.4	22.4	25.4	12.2	3.06	Moderate
23	19	30.2	21.5	21	8.3	3.30	Moderate
25	10.2	24.9	23.9	35.1	5.9	2.98	Moderate
31	15.6	21.5	19.5	27.8	15.6	2.93	Moderate
33	27.3	33.2	22	13.7	3.9	3.66	High
Total						3.17	Moderate

Table 5 shows the fear of negative evaluation among Saudi EFL learners measured through 9 differently numbered items. In item no. 3, 33.7% (SA 8.3% % A 25.4%) of the participants agree that they get nervous whenever the teacher calls on them to speak in language class. While 22.9% choose to stay neutral, 24.4% disagree, and 19% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.79 which falls within the range of moderate. In the same way, in item no. 7, 49.7% (SA 18% & A 31.7%) of the participants agree that they continue to believe that other students are more competent in languages than they are. While 21.9 % of the participants are neutral, 19% disagree, and 10.2% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.28 which is moderate. Regarding item no. 13 is concerned, 37.6% (SA 12.2% & A 25.4%) of the respondents agree that it embarrasses them when they give answers in their language class. 17.1% do not express their opinion. While 33.2% disagree, 12.2% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.92 which is moderate. In item no. 15, 63.4% (SA 21% & 42.4%) of the participants expressed becoming upset when they failed to understand the teacher's correction. While 14.6% are neutral, 16.1% disagree, and 5.9% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.56 which is high. Similarly, in item no. 20, 40% (SA 16.6% & A 23.4%) of the participants say they noticed an increased pulse rate as they anticipate being asked to take part in the language instruction. 22.4% of learners are neutral. While 25.4% disagree, 12.2% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.06 which is accepted to be moderate. Regarding item no. 23, 49.2% (SA 19% & A 30.2%) of the participants stated they always think other students speak the foreign language better. While 21.5% are undecided, 21% disagree, and 8.3% of the participants strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.30 which is considered moderate. In item no. 25, 35.1% (SA 10.2% & A 24.9%) of the participants agree that their language class goes by so fast that they are afraid of getting left behind. 23.9% remain neutral. Whereas 35.1% disagree, 5.9% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.98 which is moderate. About item no 31, 37% (SA 15.6% & A 21.5%) of the participants worry that their classmates will mock them when they speak a foreign language. While 19.5% are undecided, 27.8% disagree, and 15.6% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.93 which is considered moderate. In the last item, no 33, 60.5% (SA 27.3% & A 33.2%) of the participants state that they feel anxious whenever the language instructor poses a question for which they are unprepared. 22% of

learners do not express their opinions. Whereas 13.7% disagree, 3.9 of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.66 which is considered high.

Table 6. Items representing Saudi EFL learners' test anxiety

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Level of Anxiety
2	20	35.6	11.2	29.3	3.9	3.38	Moderate
8	20.5	35.6	22.4	16.6	4.9	3.50	High
10	33.2	31.7	10.2	14.1	10.7	3.62	High
19	21	27.3	23.9	20.5	7.3	3.34	Moderate
21	12.7	18	16.1	41	12.2	2.78	Moderate

Table 6 above shows Saudi EFL learners' test anxiety measured through 5 differently numbered items. In the first item, number 2, 55.6 % (SA 20% & A 35.6%) of the participants say that they don't feel worried about making mistakes in language class. 11.2 % of students remain neutral. While 29.3% of the participants disagree, 3.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.38 which is considered moderate. In the next item no. 8, 56.1% (SA 20.5% & A 35.6%) of the participants say that they feel relaxed throughout language class tests. 22.4% of the participants neither agree nor disagree. 16.6% disagree and 4.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.50 which is considered high. In the same way item no. 10, 64.9% (SA 33.2% & A 31.7%) of the participants agree that they feel worried about the consequences of their failure in their foreign language class. 10.2% of participants chose not to express their opinion. While 14.1% disagree, 10.7% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.62 which is considered high. Similarly, in item no. 19, 48.3 % (SA 21% & A 27.3%) of the participants expressed anxiety that their language teacher would correct their every mistake. While 23.9% are undecided, 20.5% disagree, and 7.3% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.34 which is considered moderate. In the last item numbered 21, 30.7 % (SA 12.7% & A 18%) of the participants say that their confusion increases with the amount of language they study for an exam. 16.1% of the participants did not express themselves. 41% of EFL learners disagree, and 12.2% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.78 which is considered moderate.

Table 7. Items representing Saudi EFL learners' classroom anxiety

Question	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Level of Anxiety
4	15.6	30.2	16.1	27.8	10.2	3.13	Moderate
5	30.7	35.6	16.1	12.7	4.9	3.74	High
6	16.1	22	26.3	28.3	7.3	3.11	Moderate
11	19	37.6	24.4	14.1	4.9	3.51	High
12	15.1	27.8	16.1	27.3	13.7	3.03	Moderate
16	15.6	34.6	13.7	24.4	11.7	3.18	Moderate
17	16.1	18	20.5	31.2	14.1	2.90	Moderate
22	13.7	28.3	25.4	25.9	6.8	3.16	Moderate
26	12.7	19	20	36.6	11.7	2.84	Moderate
28	12.2	31.7	31.2	20	4.9	3.26	Moderate
30	27.8	31.7	18.5	18	3.9	3.61	High

Table 7 shows Saudi EFL learners' English classroom anxiety measured through differently numbered 11 items. In the first item number 4, 45.8% (SA 15.6% & A 30.2%) of the participants say that it scares them if they are unable to understand what the foreign language teacher is saying. 16.1% of the participants neither agree nor disagree. While 27.8% of the Saudi EFL learners disagree, 10.2% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.13 which is considered. In the next item numbered 5, 66.3% (SA 30.7% & A 35.6%) of the participants say that attending extra foreign language classes would not trouble them in the least. While 16.1% of the EFL learners neither agree

nor disagree, 12.7% disagree, and only 4.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.74 which is considered high. In the same way in item no. 6, 38.1% (SA 16.1% & A 22%) of the participants agree that they frequently fantasize about irrelevant themes during language classes. 26.3% of Saudi EFL learners remain undecided. While 28.3% disagree, and 7.3% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.11 which is considered moderate. *Concerning* item no. 11 is concerned, 56.6% (SA 19% & A 37.6%) of the *respondents* state they are unable to understand why some people become so upset about foreign language programs. 24.4% of the learners remain neutral. Whereas 14.1% disagree, only 4.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.51 which is considered high. In item no. 12, 42.9% (SA 15.1% & A 27.8%) of the participants say that they can get anxious in language classes that they forget whatever they already know. While 16.1 % of the participants neither agree nor disagree, 27.3% disagree, and 13.7% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.03 which is considered moderate. Regarding item no 16, 50.2% (SA 15.6% & A 34.6%) of the participants say that they experience anxiety before language classes even when they are well-prepared. 13.7% of learners are neutral. While 24.4% disagree, 11.7% of Saudi EFL learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.18 which is considered moderate. *Regarding item no.* 17 is concerned, 34.1% (SA 16.1% & A 18%) of the respondents say that they frequently consider skipping their language classes. 20.5% of the learners neither agree nor disagree. Out of the remaining 31.2% disagree, and 14.1% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.90 which is considered moderate. In the next item, no. 22, 42% (SA 13.7% & A 28.3%) of the participants feel that there is no pressure on them to be sufficiently ready for their language sessions. 25.4% of the learners remain undecided. While 25.9% disagree, 6.8% of the learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.16 which is considered moderate. In the following item no.26, 31.7% (SA 12.7% & A 19%) of the participants feel more uncomfortable and nervous in their language lesson as compared to other classes. The percentage of those choosing to stay neutral is 20%. While the percentage of those who disagree is 36.6%, 11.7% of learners strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 2.84 which falls within the range of moderate. In item no 28, 43.9% (SA 12.2% & A 31.7%) of Saudi EFL students say they feel quite confident and at ease on their way to language class. 31.2% of participants remain undecided. 20% of the learners disagree, and only 4.9% strongly disagree with the statement. The mean is 3.26 which is moderate. In the last item numbered 30, 59.5(SA 27.8% & A 31.7%) of the participants say that they are overwhelmed by the number of rules that people must master to speak a foreign language.

Those who remain neutral are 18.5%. In addition, those who disagree and strongly disagree with the statement are 18% and 3.9% respectively. The mean is 3.61 which is considered high. This analysis answers the second research question.

5. Difference in Language Anxiety based on the Differences in Saudi EFL Learners' Demographic Profile

5.1 Language anxiety and gender

Table 8 given below represents the one-way ANOVA result about English language anxiety among EFL learners of Saudi Arabia. The result makes it clear that no difference of any statistical significance was found among Saudi EFL learners based on gender as the calculated F value (1.406465) is less than the critical F value (5.192168). Hence, HO1 is accepted.

Table 8. ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	409	4	102.25	1.406465	0.352924	5.192168
Within Groups	363.5	5	72.7			
Total	772.5	9				

5.2 *Language anxiety and parents' profession*

Table 9 given below shows the result for English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners based on parental profession. The result found no statistically significant variance among EFL learners of Saudi Arabia based on study respondents' parents' professions. Since the calculated F value (0.297787) is lower than the critical F value (3.055568), no difference exists in participants' English language anxiety. Hence, HO2 is accepted.

Table 9. ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	204.5	4	51.125	0.297787	0.874836	3.055568
Within Groups	2575.25	15	171.6833			
Total	2779.75	19				

5.3 *Language anxiety and participants' educational level*

Table 10 below represents the one-way ANOVA results for English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners. It is clear from the result that no variation of any statistical significance exists among EFL students based on their different academic levels as the F calculated value (0.585289) is less than the critical F value (3.47805). Hence, HO3 is accepted. This answers the third research question.

Table 10. ANOVA

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	272.6667	4	68.16667	0.585289	0.680651	3.47805
Within Groups	1164.667	10	116.4667			
Total	1437.333	14				

6. Discussion, Analysis, and Significance

The research study investigated English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners, the causes and sources of anxiety, and differences in their experiences based on the variance in their demographic profile. The result revealed that Saudi EFL learners experience moderate levels of anxiety. This finding is in line with multiple studies (Heng et al. 2012, Çatatay, 2015, Bhatti & Memon, 2016, Sadiq, 2017, & Lababidi, 2016). They found that the respondents' levels of English language anxiety varied from moderate to high. However, these findings contrast with the study conducted by Elkhafaifi (2005) whose findings revealed that students in advanced levels of study experience low levels of anxiety as compared to those studying in lower levels of the study. As far as the findings related to sources and causes of anxiety are concerned, our findings demonstrated that out of four measured anxiety sources, the test is found to be the biggest source of anxiety. Many research studies support this finding (Petridou & Williams, 2007, Aydin, 2009, and Aydın, et al. 2006). Our findings, which identify communication anxiety as one of the main causes of anxiety, are in line with the research carried out by Bhatti and Memon (2016) who investigated various causes of anxiety from learners' perspective. The study concluded that communication is one of the main factors causing anxiety in language learners. Our study found that classroom anxiety is the third most common source of anxiety. This is consistent with the one carried out by Young (1990) who investigated the perspective of students on speaking language classroom anxiety. The result also showed that Saudi EFL learners experience negative evaluation anxiety. However, this is one of the minor sources of anxiety among the study participants. Kitano (2001) whose research revealed that negative evaluation anxiety was one of the significant anxiety sources among foreign language learners supports this result.

One-way findings showed that there exists no variation of any statistical significance among EFL learners of Saudi Arabia based on gender. Both genders experience the same level of English language anxiety. Shabani (2012) whose independent sample t-test found no difference of any significance among female and male learners of the English language supports this finding. However, one study by Ali & Fei (2017) is inconsistent with the findings of our study. In one more study conducted by Kitano (2001), it is revealed that anxiety level among male language learners is found higher as compared to female students as they consider themselves less competent than their female counterparts. As far as the question regarding the relationship between the profession of parents and anxiety is concerned, our findings showed no difference among EFL learners based on their parents' profession. This finding is confirmed by Ali et al. (2021) whose research has found no significant impact of learners' lower socioeconomic background on their academic performance. However, one study carried out by Baroi et al. (2020) noted a significant impact on parents' education and their profession. Oteir & Al-Otaibi (2022) also noted that foreign language learners' socioeconomic status is a crucial factor in anxiety. Regarding the relation between educational level and anxiety, our findings conclude that EFL learners of Saudi Arabia experience moderate levels of anxiety, and no difference is found among them based on the difference in their educational level. A few studies (Yang, 2012, Alsowat, 2016, Awan et al. 2010) found that foreign/second language learners irrespective of their levels of study suffer from the same amount of foreign language anxiety.

The discussion makes it clear that Saudi EFL learners experience moderate to high level of anxiety. Horwitz (2001) also found that second/foreign language learners experience some level of anxiety. The studies discussed above support and corroborate the findings of this study. That is why many studies have suggested ways to overcome anxiety to help students acquire effective English language skills. McCown et al. (2010) and Curry et al. (2020) suggest that establishing student-teacher relationship and creating an inclusive and friendly classroom environment can help reduce and mitigate anxiety of the learners. Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) carried out a study to develop strategies to cope with language anxieties. They categorized them into five major types such as preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, peer seeking, and resignation (giving up sleeping in class). These strategies will immensely help students cope with language anxiety.

7. Conclusion

This study was conducted to investigate English language anxiety among Saudi EFL learners, examine the sources and causes of anxiety, and understand if they experience anxiety differently based on differences in their demographic profile. It also examined the relationship between various independent variables related to learners' demographic profiles and language anxiety. The results demonstrated that Saudi EFL learners experience moderate levels of anxiety. The study also revealed several sources and causes of English anxiety in Saudi learners. Test and communication anxieties were found to be major sources of anxiety followed by classroom and negative evaluation anxieties respectively. The results also revealed that differences in their demographic profile did not result in their different experiences of language anxiety. Almost all of them experience moderate levels of anxiety irrespective of their gender, parents' profession, and their educational levels. The findings hold implications for language teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Future studies may be carried out to find solutions to these different anxiety aspects adversely affecting Saudi EFL learners. These findings will be of immense use to help students acquire excellent and effective language skills.

7.1 Implications

The study has significant instructional and practical implications because it deals with English language anxiety which impedes language learning. In addition, it would help address the issues of anxiety, understand its causes, and find ways to overcome it and, thus, EFL learners develop effective and excellent English language skills.

8. Acknowledgment

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