

## English Language Anxiety and Stress among Saudi Students in the First Year at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub

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*Language anxiety, stress, daily stress, English intensive course, socio-cultural factors.*

### ABSTRACT

This study investigates English language anxiety and stress among Saudi students in the First Year in College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub who study an English intensive course. It demonstrates the major causes of language anxiety and stress in English class. The study is based on descriptive analytical approach. The researchers used a student questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The study aims at eradicating and reducing English language anxiety and stress among Saudi students studying an English intensive course at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub. The study concludes that fresh students feel anxious of making mistakes in English class and they scare of their colleagues' jest comments. The study recommends that making mistakes in English class is familiar and part of learning process and students are recommended to learn that all the students and the teachers are learners and colleagues' jest comments should not affect learning process.

### INTRODUCTION

Feelings of anxiety are often prevalent in English language classes in Saudi Arabia and most of Saudi students learning English as a foreign language express anxiety and stress in their English classes. Thus, most Saudi learners sound reluctant to participate in English class, passive engagement and overly dependent on their teacher. This study investigates English language anxiety and stress among Saudi Students in the first year in College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub. The feeling of anxiety appears in the sensation of vague fear, nervousness, discomfort and apprehension and the stress is characterized by everyday life irritating, frustrating, distressing demands that some degree which characterizes every transaction with the environment. Daily stresses can be financial, family, academic, cultural and the many events in the daily life which demand that the individuals should be able to manage their and be able to cope applying different mechanism to struggle against external and internal adversities conflict and intense emotion. (Jennifer & Miller, 2004).

### Statement of the Problem

Students in the first year in College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub show anxiety and stress in English class which hinder benefiting from an intensive English course which aims at upgrading English language proficiency among students. The

students feel anxious and stressed to participate in English class and they are scared of making mistakes. In addition, they are scared of their colleagues, jest comments; as a result, they do not participate in English classes and they feel anxious. Pedagogically, it is crucial to investigate how Saudi students can eradicate and reduce English language anxiety and stress.

### General objectives

The general objective of this study is to eradicate and reduce English language anxiety and stress among Saudi students studying an English intensive course at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub .

### Specific objectives

- 1- To understand the causes of English language anxiety and stress among first year students in College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub
- 2- To specify techniques and strategies to reduce English language anxiety and stress among first year students at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub

### Research Question

- 1- Why do most of the freshman students studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub feel anxious in English classes?

2- To what extent do freshman students feel stressed when speaking or writing English?

3- What are the socio-cultural factors that cause language anxiety for the freshman students in learning English Language?

### **Study Hypotheses**

- 1- Most of the freshman students studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub feel anxious in English classes which hinders their learning .
- 2- Freshman students feel stressed when speaking or writing English because of scaring of making mistake or being a source of fun.
- 3- Some socio-cultural factors cause language anxiety for the freshman students in learning English Language.

### **The Significance of the study**

This study is important because it provides the students with techniques and strategies which help students reduce anxiety and stress. Moreover, it provides students with anxiety coping strategies.

### **Study Design**

#### ***Geographical Area***

This research is based on geographical area at College of Sciences and Arts, King Khalid University in Dharan Aljanoub.

#### ***Target Population***

This study consists of students in the first year and studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub.

#### ***Study Sample***

The sample constitutes 30 1<sup>st</sup> male students.

#### ***Tool of data collection:***

The study uses a student questionnaire as a tool of data collection.

#### ***Plan of Data analysis:***

The plan of data analysis is divided in two ways namely: the computer program (SPSS) used to analyze the structured questions and the codes and patterns for the unstructured questions.

### **Limitation of the study**

The study is limited to only Saudi students studying in the first year and studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoub.

### **Time Frame:**

Research starts in February, 2018 and ends in October, 2018.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This section includes the theoretical framework, literature review related to this study and discussion of the previous study.

### **Definition of Language Anxiety**

Anxiety is an emotion characterized by strong feelings of tension, worries and some physical changes including occasional increased blood pressure.( Encyclopedia of Psychology,2000) . Scovel (1991:18) defines anxiety as a psychological construct, commonly described by psychologists as a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object. Gardner, Tremblay and MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) proposed that anxiety in the context of foreign or second language learning differs from and independent of personality trait anxiety and state anxiety. Young (1992) stated that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a complicated psychological phenomenon specific to language learning. Whereas, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) defined it as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second or foreign language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning, or the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning or using a second or foreign language.

Horwitz, and Cope (1986) mentioned that foreign language anxiety has a negative influence on language learning and students with any level of anxiety in foreign language face great difficulty in speaking language due to Xenoglossophobia, a sign of extreme anxiety when exhibited with strange speech lacunae, in written or spoken course.

Butler (1997) assumed that anxious students sound uncomfortable and they may choose to withdraw from the activity. Burden added that some learners believe they cannot perform in English and thus form negative expectations, which in turn lead to decreased effort and the avoidance of opportunities to enhance their communication skills. Anxious students are generally less willing to participate in learning activities and perform worse than non-anxious students (Macintyre and Gardner, 1994).Moreover, Virginia (2000) described anxious language learners as those having manifestations in

class that include panic, indecision, anger, and a sense of diminished personality.

### **Sources of Language Anxiety**

Language anxiety appears to be the most important variable in language learning as many learners endure discomfort and frustration because of it. There are numerous anxiety-provoking situations in the language classroom. Burden (2004) identified three components of foreign language classroom anxiety. The first component is communication apprehension, which refers to “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people”. The second component is the fear of negative evaluation, which is an apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others will evaluate one negatively. The third component is test anxiety. Young (1992) attributed foreign language classroom anxiety to six sources: personal and interpersonal anxieties, learner beliefs about language learning, instructor beliefs about language learning, instructor-learner interactions, classroom procedures, and language testing.

### **STRESS**

Stress is a state of physical and psychological arousal produced by internal or external stressors that are perceived by the individual as challenging or exceeding their ability or resources to cope. Individual exposure to stressful situation is common human experience with daily stress or hassles that are relevant to the events such forgetting locker key or missing the bus and the longer lasting such as the loss of a significant relationship or being victims of violent situations and event can bring term of stress.

#### **Daily stress**

Jennifer (2004) maintains that it is daily hassles rather than major events that result in cumulative stress. Research studies have found that daily hassles are strong predictor both physical and psychological. Experience for more daily hassles or daily stress also tends to lead to more symptoms for people who are already suffering from disease and more symptoms of physical and mental health problems (Virginia, 2000). She proposes that physical health problem such as: headaches, back hatches in relation to mental health mood disturbances especial increase daily hassles and the individuals affect for that different from one to another. studies have also found that accumulation of daily hassles can contribute more physical or psychological health that significant life event such as getting divorced or death of loved one (Susan,2011.) involves change that forces

individuals to adopt to new circumstance ,loss of a significant relationship ,living home ,living friend, new career and change school.

Rodriquez and Abreu (2003) identify four factors associated with job stress:

- 1- Environment physical and social conditions of the work place
- 2- Job complexity the nature of the tasks to be done.
- 3- Role conflict the implication of the status positions we hold because of our job.
- 4- Job responsibility the consequences that flow from our doing or not doing the job.

Freshmen often have difficulty adjusting to college life so many changes occurring fast.

### **Socio-Cultural Factors and Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign language learning can be acquired in two divergent types of social backgrounds: community which does not use target language as L1 and community which use target language as L1. In the former type of background, foreign language learners are exposed to narrow and defective input. The later type attains unlimited exposure to target language inside the classroom and outside the classroom. Intercultural and interethnic interaction also triggers communication anxiety. When people interact with individuals of other cultures and face cultural differences, they incline to view people as strangers. (Young, 1992).

### **Previous Studies**

Mohammed ( 2017) in his study, Anxiety and Relation with Learning English as A Foreign Language, concluded language anxiety impacts directly learning English language also the second study by Omer ( 2015) in this study sources of Language Anxiety and Coping Strategies among English Language Under Graduate Students, agreed that anxiety impacts the students psychologically and physically. Denovan and Andrew( 2013) also conducted a study on An interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of Language Anxiety and Stress among English Learners. He concluded that language anxiety and stress negatively affected English learners and they lead to avoidance and stabilization. The study conducted by Yahya M. (2013) is of special significance in terms of its context being carried out in the Arab culture

background. He investigated the factors which lead to speaking anxiety among the Arab EFL learners in English language classroom. The findings of his study revealed that the fear of negative feedback received the highest mean (2.93), followed by communication anxiety (2.80) and test anxiety received the lowest mean (2.68). Some studies assured the role of the teacher, classmates, techniques, time, content, fear of getting bad grades, worry, types of activities and lack of preparation may increase students' anxiety in the language class. Studies clearly show that speaking English before the class or delivering their presentations, reported to be a major cause of anxiety as students fear of making mistakes before their peers. No studies were conducted in the Arab World in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. This emphasizes the vital need for conducting such studies. These previous studies are in line with recent studies in terms of the effect of anxiety and stress on the student' learning and hence make them feel anxious.

## STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

### Introduction

This section presents the research methodology and explains the methods used for collecting and analyzing the data needed for this study.

### Study design

This study is based on quantitative formal methods, providing a systematic process in which numerical data are used to obtain information about the work in hand. Quantitative methods were applied by conducting the study among a convenient sample of students studying at first year at College of Sciences and Arts in Dhran Aljanoub . A student questionnaire is used as a tool of data collection. The researchers conducted this study at College of Sciences and Arts which is located in Dhran Aljanuob(male section). The college is composed of two departments –computer science and business administration.

### Target population and sampling:

The target population selected constitutes male freshman student studying in the first year at College of Sciences and Arts in Dhran Aljanoob(male section).The sample size constitutes 30 male freshmen. The researchers use a student questionnaire as a tool for data collection.

### Questionnaire Procedures

After the construction of the questionnaire, the tool was taken to a consultant who revised the questions

in terms of their reliability in relations to the objectives. The questions were then tested against a sample of 10 students in the college to create a standardization of the tool in terms of the questions and procedure to collect the data. The questionnaire was submitted to a statistical expert to be tested against as of how would it be analyzed. After the piloting, the last edited version forms were distributed to the students.

### Structure of the questionnaire:

The questionnaire consists of four parts including the demographic descriptions of the population of the study as well as the three other parts relevant to the different objectives. The questions consist of open questions and close questions relevant to each objective break down.

### Data analysis

After the data was collected the analysis was done using two methods, namely the self manual analysis for open questions and the computer analysis by SPSS program (statistical package for the social science) in terms of the close ended questions. For the open ended questions the researcher analyzed the data using codes and patterns.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Introduction

This is chapter describes and analyzes data through using statistical package for the social science.

**Table (4.1): Demographic data**

Variable		1st year	
		Freq	Per
<b>Age group</b>	19 years	1	6.7
	20 years	7	46.3
	21 years	11	72.7
	22 years	7	46.7
	23 years	4	26.6
	Total	30	100.0
<b>Residence</b>	Abha	5	33.3
	Khamis Mashait	17	83.0
	Dharan Aljanoob	8	53.0
	Total	30	100.0
	<b>College Level</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> year	30
Total		30	100.0

<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	0	0.0
	Single	30	100.0
	Total	30	100.0

Table (4.1) illustrates demographic data of the respondents, and revealed that the majority of the respondents (72.7 %) were 21 years old in their 1st year, and most of the respondents live in Khamis Mashit (83.0%). Most of the respondents were single.

**Table (4.2): The most frequent types of stress that student daily face**

Variable	1 <sup>st</sup> year	
	Freq	Per
Speaking	20	66.7
Writing	2	6.7
Classroom	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0

Table (4.2) shows the type of anxiety facing the respondents daily, and it revealed that the majority of them were facing anxiety while speaking (66.7%) while just one of them faced anxiety in writing (6.7%).

**Table (4.3) Learning English as a foreign language in the university cause anxiety and stress on students.**

Variable	1 <sup>st</sup> year	
	Freq	Per
Yes	24	80.0
No	6	20.0
Total	30	100.0

Table (4.3) demonstrates learning English as a foreign language in the university causes anxiety and stress for students, and it revealed that the majority of them feel anxious and stressed -(80%).

**Table (4.5): Freshman students feel stressed when speaking or writing English language**

Variable	1 <sup>st</sup> year	
	Freq	Per
Yes	18	60.0
No	12	40.0
Total	30	100.0

Table (4.5) illustrates whether the students feel stressed when speaking or writing English language. The findings showed that the stress affected the performance of the majority of the respondents in 1st (60%), while (40%) in 1st year they are not affected by daily stress.

**Table (4.6) Most of the freshman students studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoob feel anxious in English class.**

Variable	1st year	
	Freq	Per
Yes	18	60.0
No	12	40.0
Total	30	100.0

Table (4.6) illustrates whether freshman students studying at College of Sciences and Arts in Dharan Aljanoob feel anxious in English class, and it revealed that (60%) of the respondents in the first year feel anxious in English class.

**Table (4.7): Some socio-cultural factors causing language anxiety for the freshman students in learning English Language.**

Variable	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	
	Freq	Per
Yes	16	53.3
No	14	46.7
Total	30	100.0

Table (4.7) illustrates that (53.3%) of the respondents are affected by some socio-cultural factors causing language anxiety for learning English Language while 46.7 of the respondents are not affected.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study and recommendations.

### Findings of the Study

1- Freshman students feel anxious of making mistakes in English class.

2-Most of the freshman students scare of classmates' comments and kidding while participating in English class.

3-Students hesitate and feel worried when speaking English in the classroom.

4-Most of the students feel anxious when they do writing task or exercise due to the lack of confidence in writing skill.

5-Students feel anxious when practicing English because of their sociocultural background which involves perfect performance in exam.

6-Students feel anxious when discussing issues related to sociocultural aspects such as talking about family or role of women in society.

### Recommendations

1- Freshman students should be learnt that making mistakes in English class is familiar and part of learning process.

2-Students are recommended to be learnt that all the students and the teachers are learners and colleagues' jest comments should not affect learning process.

3-Students should be motivated to feel relaxed while practicing speaking English.

4-Sudents should learn that writing skill involves mastering particular skills and it is not a source of anxiety.

5-Students should learn that learning English entails various graded performance; as a result, learners sometimes might attain lower degree which requires exerting efforts to upgrade it. Moreover, they should learn that learning English is not an exam oriented.

6-English teachers should select appropriate topics which suit students' sociocultural aspect.

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