

Perceptions and Experiences of Omani Foundation Students regarding Language Anxiety: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study investigates the perceptions and experiences of English Foundation Program students in the University of Technology and Applied Sciences Al-Musannah, Oman regarding foreign language anxiety (FLA). The researchers looked into the scope and seriousness of language anxiety among all those Foundation students, who had failed once in any level (from 1 to 4), to achieve a deeper understanding of the possible factors behind anxiety regarding language learning and practices. The study also tried to emphasize on some strategies that may be used to alleviate the negative effects of language anxiety. The findings suggest that some of the students experienced low to moderate levels of anxiety in the English language classrooms which could be ascribed to several factors. The findings highlight a few implications and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, higher education, motivation,

1. Introduction: Background of the Study

University of Technology and Applied Sciences Al-Musannah (UTAS) is one of the higher education institutes in Oman that caters to the labour market of the country. There is an English Language Centre (ELC) in the university that runs an IELTS based four-level Foundation Program for fresh higher secondary school graduates. It also has its Post-Foundation Program that offers ESP (English for Specific Purposes) courses for students in the professional fields. In the UTAS, the ELC aims at enabling students with required proficiency in English in preparation for the language demands of higher education and the job market. The UTAS's ELC has experienced staff of multinationals and provides state-of-the-art teaching facilities such as well-equipped language labs and audio-visual rooms. It claims to offer the best in English Language teaching in Oman. The ELC expects of its teachers to be friendly yet efficient, and capable of reacting to the student's particular learning needs. During the program, the teachers are expected to be supportive and understanding guides to the learning process to monitor the progress of students and to create opportunities for them to practice language in a comfortable and ideal learning environment. Given the objectives and outcomes by the Ministry of Higher Education, the ELC prescribes to active students' involvement within the class as well as immerse themselves in outside class language learning activities. Again, teachers are expected to provide the students with a kind of classroom practice that actively promotes pair and group work, presentations, and students' active engagement in projects, role plays, debates, and classroom discussions. The ELC also claims to develop critical thinking and self-learning capabilities among students. To achieve all this, the center claims to have student-centered courses. The students usually spend up to four semesters in the Center's English Foundation Program. The students, who successfully pass their level through continuous assessment and exams, are promoted to the next level the following semester. However, every semester many students fail to achieve the optimum level of language proficiency. Many even fail Level Exit Exams (LEE). It has been observed that despite being given a friendly milieu inside the class, many students remain unsuccessful in achieving the targeted language proficiency. There may be many factors involved in their failing to achieve desired language proficiency. It may be ranged from students' poor schooling background to their uneducated family backgrounds; from ineffective classroom teaching to students' personal distractions; from socio-cultural issues to students' psychological ailments. The researchers aim at looking into some of the affective factors that may hinder the students from achieving desired language proficiency. We, particularly, aim at probing into anxiety as a cause of their poor language learning experiences.

2. Statement of the problem

In order to investigate the concept of lack of achieving language proficiency on part of students, it is imperative to look into the affective factors that are extremely significant as these can bring along adverse negative effects on second language students' learning experiences and outcomes. Students failing to achieve language proficiency can have a negative effect on their personalities (e.g., Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Besides, there is usually adverse effect on their social interactions (MacIntyre, 1995). From the perspective to cognize language, it impedes in the three stages of learning which are input, process, and output (Tobias, 1986). Owing to its serious consequences, Krashen (1982) stresses for the significance of creating a low anxiety situation to improve learner's language competency. As a result, investigating the roots of achieving language proficiency will help provide a deeper knowledge of this complicated trend and will help teachers in developing ideal environment for learning language.

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Most of the studies on students' inability to achieve language proficiency in a foreign or second language because of anxiety have been conducted in the western countries (e.g., Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). There have been a very few studies conducted in the Arab world. However, some prominent exceptions are Al-Saraj 2011 (KSA); Hashemi, 2011 (KSA) and Alrabai, 2014, 2015 (KSA) in this regard.

Horwitz (2001) review of research studies suggests that there are cultural variations through which language anxiety in a foreign or second language is experienced by learners. As a result, generalizations from other studies should not be given more importance. To cater to this challenge, this study aimed at exploring foreign language anxiety as experienced by Omani Foundation level students. In addition, the findings and recommendations of this study might have a significant impact on the pertinent literature. Building upon some of the studies carried out in other L2 contexts in the Arab world (such as, Alrabai, 2014, 2015 and Rassaei, 2015), this study is going to contribute with a distinct approach in investigating language anxiety in Oman.

3. Literature Review

As English language is being used excessively worldwide, it has put foreign language learners into a challenging situation to achieve effective communicational skills. The magnitude of this challenge gets increased for the technology students who must cope with the problem of passing the English language courses and gaining subsequent success in the job market through communication skills besides technical or professional skills. Achieving effective communication skills in English language skills becomes even harder especially for Arabic speaking students who must take on the challenge of affective factors while learning it (Lababidi, 2016).

Many research studies have been undertaken to look into the value of affective variables and their role in the foreign language learning and teaching in the last few decades. Anxiety is one such factor. According to Krashen (1981), harmful effects of anxiety are experienced in almost all phases of the learning process and in the acquisition of different language skills that largely result in poor performance. Horwitz et al. (1986: 125) defines the term *anxiety* as "the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system". In clearer terms, an anxious student does not feel confident in a setting where second or a foreign language is being used. He tends to feel discomfort whenever he is invited to participate in the class; he wants to stay away from participating in the class discussions, and he usually feels nervous of making mistakes and remains hesitant to use new language (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991). Similarly, Burden (2005: 1) has defined it as:

"Anxious students are often concerned about the impressions that others form of them. When such students are confronted in a classroom with a learning situation that makes them uncomfortable, they may choose to withdraw from the activity. Some learners believe they cannot perform in English and consequently form negative expectations, which in turn lead to decreased effort and the avoidance of opportunities to enhance their communication skills."

He further suggests that in order to counter students' anxiety issues, a low-anxiety classroom is clearly required for the success of language learning.

According to Greer (2000) as cited in Khan & Khattak (2011), there are seven types of anxieties that students confront in a second language classroom:

1. The students feel that their peers may not understand what they say.
2. The students feel that their peers may misunderstand them.
3. The students feel that their low proficiency of the second language may impede effective communication.
4. The students feel that the topic is not useful for discussion.
5. The students feel that they may sound funny.
6. The students might feel embarrassed if the peers talk in the first language.
7. The students might feel afraid of making mistakes.

In most of L2 contexts like in the Arab world, it has been seen that teachers usually lack proper training and skills to encourage a stress-free learning environment that promotes learners' interest in learning a second language. Both teachers and students enter the classrooms with optimum expectations, beliefs, and prospects to create an ideal teaching and learning environment that is devoid of any stress and anxiety for the students to develop language skills. However, the teachers hardly come up with an ideal stress-free academic milieu inside the classroom which ultimately destroys the student's personal thinking capacity. Horwitz et al. have explicitly suggested, "Any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual's self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear, or even panic" (1986: 128).

There are many challenges that both students and teachers alike must take on in any second language learning context. For students, these challenges are interdependent on their unique psycho, social and educational framework. The students' affective and cognitive tendency in learning a second language shape up this framework. The feelings of anxiety, nervousness, and trepidation are usually shown by L2 students in learning to produce a second language. These feelings represent a negative consequence on communication in the target language. In a series of studies conducted in late nineties in the last century, the researchers have established the fact that foreign language anxiety is a specified anxiety experienced in the context of the foreign language classroom (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1991b, 1994). The emergence of language anxiety among L2 students is largely due to the nature of the classroom atmosphere. The term 'classroom environment' is largely associated with a wide range of educational proportions. These

include the physical setting, the socio-psychological environment, and a variety of approaches and methods related to teachers' intra- and inter-personal views and behaviours. It has also been reported that some classroom situations create a feeling of insecurity among students. In most of the cases, these classroom related scenarios including teachers and peer students' behaviourism are the main cause of language anxiety. According to further studies, it has become evident that these challenges need to be overcome. The educators need to help students overcome their anxieties regarding their academic achievement and communicational skills are badly affected (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994 and Hashemi, 2011).

Language researchers have examined many individual and or situational variables that are associated with second language anxiety. Students having high level of anxiety commonly have several characteristics. In their study with university language students, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) have asserted that they display at least one of the following characteristics:

- a) The students find themselves older,
- b) They have not been to a foreign country,
- c) They have not attended high school language courses,
- d) They have low prospects about their grades in their language course,
- e) They have a negative perception about their academic competence, and
- f) They have a negative opinion of themselves as students.

Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) have asserted that besides personal attributes there are certain social circumstances which play a vital role in creating language anxiety. They have established through undertaking a large-scale study of bilingual grownups from different countries that learners with younger age-groups felt lower levels of FLA while learning a foreign language. Similarly, social circumstances also support language learning. These include the availability of supportive conversational partners to help language learners overcome their foreign language anxiety.

Al-Saraj (2013) has carried out a study in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to observe female students' perception of foreign language anxiety. According to her findings, there are a few teacher-related variables that may contribute towards language anxiety among students. The results of several research studies further show that the variables associated with foreign language anxiety may fall into two main categories. These include micro-level which include learner's variables and/or trait-specific anxieties; and macro-level which are situational variables and/or situation specific anxieties. To further elaborate, micro-level variables are related to learner's age, gender, ability, attitude, beliefs, culture, learning styles and other person-related variables (Gardner, Day, & MacIntyre, 1992; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Campbell, 1999; Oxford, 1999; Gregersen & Horwitz 2002). Similarly, macro variables include course level, course activities, course organization, teacher's attitude, students' collective behaviour and communication in class (Young, 1991; Oxford 1999; Spielman & Radonfsky, 2001 and Jackson, 2002).

In the above review of related literature, we have discussed some intrinsic factors that play a key role in the foreign language anxiety that is experienced by students. To cater to the objectives of the present study, we will try to explore the intrinsic factors such as personal motivation, stress level and emotional challenges of the students along with the extrinsic factors that may contribute to the foreign language anxiety of our students which ultimately lead to their failure.

4. Research Questions

This case study with its principal objective to probe into the phenomenon of language anxiety among Omani language learners undertakes that attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and experiences of students and teachers are very important for learning any language, and that there are many variables that impact these perceptions, experiences and ultimately the anxiety level of foreign language students. It also undertakes that language anxiety that many students experience in foreign language classrooms cannot be taken as a simple phenomenon (Skehan, 1989); rather, it can be taken as a complex psychological construct, influenced by many interrelated factors.

The data collected through Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is expected to answer the following two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are ACT students' perceptions of the extent to which they feel anxiety while learning English as second language?

Research Question 2: What strategies would be effective in enhancing students' motivation and confidence level and reducing their anxiety if they feel any, while learning English as a second language?

5. Research Method

In order to explore the perceptions and experiences of Omani Foundation students regarding language anxiety, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was administered to 47 failed students of English Foundation Program in the University of Technology and Applied Sciences Al-Musannah (UTAS). This resulted in the collection of quantitative data on the anxiety state of students.

Participants and Setting

Students of the present study are Omani Foundation students who have previously attended governmental institutions, where for the most part only traditional methods of instruction were strongly used. They are registered in the Foundation Program at University of Technology and Applied Sciences Al- Musannah (UTAS). All the classrooms are sufficiently equipped with teaching and learning resources. The language course, Pathways Series of Books of National Geographic, is taught to second language learners within a student-centered learning environment. The language learning environment, however, strongly encourages respect for students, their culture, and traditions. The language teachers make use of various educational technological resources to confirm that effective and innovative instruction methodologies are utilized. The language students taught in these classrooms are also provided with extrapedagogical assistance whenever they need it.

Analysis of the Data

Quantitative data collected through Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) were analyzed in terms of frequencies and percentages using Microsoft Excel program. To cater to research questions needs, the researchers thematically grouped different questionnaire items into three different themes i.e., **Anxiety in Speaking tasks, Anxiety in Exam-taking tasks and Anxiety in Motivation and Confidence-building**. Following is the detailed tabulated data analysis of these themes of the FLCAS administered to 47 failed students followed by key findings and detailed discussion:

Anxiety in Speaking Tasks

Table 1.0

Statement		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	No. of Frequencies	15	10	11	8	3
	Percentages	32.5%	21.5%	23%	17%	6%
I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class.	No. of Frequencies	14	9	15	6	3
	Percentages	30%	19%	32%	13%	6%
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	No. of Frequencies	8	13	18	7	1
	Percentages	17%	28%	38%	15%	2%
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	No. of Frequencies	13	9	14	7	4
	Percentages	28%	19%	30%	15%	9%

I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	No. of Frequencies	4	9	12	13	9
	Percentages	9%	19%	26%	28%	19%
I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	No. of Frequencies	6	5	12	11	13
	Percentages	13%	11%	26%	23%	28%
I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in language class.	No. of Frequencies	11	16	12	7	1
	Percentages	23%	34%	26%	15%	2%
I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	No. of Frequencies	10	15	13	5	4
	Percentages	21%	32%	28%	11%	9%
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	No. of Frequencies	8	15	12	10	2
	Percentages	17%	32%	26%	21%	4%
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	No. of Frequencies	12	19	6	6	4
	Percentages	26%	40%	13%	13%	9%
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	No. of Frequencies	6	3	11	14	13
	Percentages	13%	6%	23%	30%	28%

The Table 1.0 suggests that nearly half of the students (32.5% +21.5%) felt quite sure of themselves when they were asked to speak in their classes. 23% of them neither agreed nor did they disagree with the statement about confidence issue regarding speaking tasks. On the other hand, only 23% of them showed lack of confidence while confronting speaking tasks in their classes.

The Table 1.0 shows that almost half of the respondents (32.5% +21.5%) did not have any confidence issues regarding speaking tasks in the foreign language class, while nearly half of them (30% + 19%) were of the view that they did not tremble when they were about to be called for participation in their class. Only a few of the respondents (13% + 6%) felt panic when they had to speak without preparation in the language class. Nearly half of the failed students (28% +19%) did not feel embarrassed to volunteer answers in their language classes. Similarly, almost half of the failed students (28% +19%) did not feel nervousness while speaking the foreign language with native speakers. Only quarter of the respondents (13% +11%) did not feel any confidence while speaking in a foreign language class. Again, less than a quarter (15% + 02%) of the failed students felt their heart pounding when they were going to be called on in language class. Almost half of the respondents (21% +32%) did not feel any self-consciousness about speaking the foreign language in front of other students. Only exactly quarter of the respondents (21% + 04%) felt nervous and confused while speaking in a foreign language class. Again, two-third of the students (26% +40%) did not feel worried at other students will laughing at them when they had to speak the foreign language. More than half of the students (30% +28%) felt comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.

Discussion:

The above analysis clearly emphasizes the point that Omani students are quite confident and have no anxiety issue as far as speaking in the class or giving presentations are concerned. However, it has been observed that Omani students hardly speak fluently in their speaking classes or while giving presentations. Most of the times, they do not tend to impress their listeners. It means that their feeling minimal anxiety in speaking skills mark the point that they are either not high-achievers or then do not care about getting good grades. The data reveals that they do not have any major anxiety issue vis-a vis speaking English language in classroom setting. This lack of general anxiety on their part is not congruent with the findings of some other research studies conducted like: Howitz et al. (1986); Aida (1994); Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001); Lui (2006); Al-Zadjali (2008); Khattak et al. (2011) Khanand Al- Mahrooqi (2015) and Lababidi (2016). There might be many factors behind the overall lack of feeling anxiety among these Omani students. First, it can be attributed to the students’ level of comprehension and capabilities in English language. Since all those students have been low achievers who have failed in one of their previous level exams, it can be stated that their feeling lack of anxiety could be due to their carefree or easy-going mentalities and academic behaviours. It may also indirectly hint at some other issues such as the lack of interest and preparedness on their part for the language tasks, the level of difficulty of the speaking exams, the strong influence of their native language and culture that may also hinder them from doing well in the presence of opposite sex. One more factor that may reveal their feeling less anxiety can be associated with their socio-economic backgrounds. They do not have any social or economic pressure on them to excel in their studies. They generally tend to relax and enjoy. They are, at times, very diplomatic as well. This tendency of showing diplomacy can also be seen from the above data-analysis. The students might have taken the survey as something that had to target at their personal shortcomings or laxities. To confront this, their answers reveal that they are least worried, they do not take any stress, they do not bother, or they do not have any confidence issues as far as speaking English in classroom setting is concerned.

Anxiety in Exam-Taking Tasks

Table 2.0

Statement		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I do not worry about making mistakes in language class.	No. of Frequencies	7	12	11	8	9
	Percentages	15%	26%	23%	17%	19%
I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	No. of Frequencies	4	20	19	2	2
	Percentages	9%	43%	40%	4%	4%

I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	No. of Frequencies	6	9	9	5	18
	Percentages	13%	19%	19%	11%	38%
I get upset when I donot understand what the teacher is correcting.	No. of Frequencies	7	6	10	16	8
	Percentages	15%	13%	21%	34%	17%
I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	No. of Frequencies	10	12	9	9	7
	Percentages	21%	26%	19%	19%	15%
Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	No. of Frequencies	4	12	15	10	6
	Percentages	9%	26%	32%	21%	13%
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	No. of Frequencies	9	7	21	6	4
	Percentages	19%	15%	45%	13%	9%
I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I havenot prepared in advance.	No. of Frequencies	5	9	16	10	7
	Percentages	11%	19%	34%	21%	15%
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	No. of Frequencies	11	16	14	4	2
	Percentages	23%	34%	30%	9%	4%

The Table 2.0 shows that nearly one third of the failed students (15% +16%) felt worried about making mistakes in their classes. Only a very few students (4% +4%) felt no anxiety during taking tests in their language class. Almost half of the students (38% + 11%) did not worry about the consequences of failing their language classes. Nearly half of the students (34% + 17%) got upset at not being able to understand what the teachers were correcting for them in language classes. Nearly half of the failed students (21% + 16%) did not feel worried about their language teachers’ readiness to correct every mistake they made. Only one third of the respondents (09% + 26%) felt about getting left behind due to the pace of the language classes. Almost one-third of the respondents (19% + 15%) did not feel overwhelmed by the number of rules they had to learn to speak a foreign language. Only less than a quarter of the students (11% + 19%) did not get nervous when the language teacher asked questions which they had not prepared in advance.

Discussion:

The above analysis shows that most of the Omani students feel anxiety during tests in language classes. It has been clear that they do not to be tested. All types of formative and summative assessments do make them anxious as they feel as if they will never be ready for these. Paradoxically, every second student does not feel any anxiety regarding the outcome of the assessments they take part in. The process does make them worry whereas the product is not that burdensome for almost 50 % of the students. It might be because of the strong cultural and socio-economic background that carry forward with them as students wherein most of them feel themselves secured and strong enough to take on the trial of any misfortune if they come across. In simple words, their feeling less anxiety about failure can be associated with their somewhat strong socio-economic backgrounds.

Anxiety in Motivation and Confidence-Building

Table 3.0

Statement		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	No. of Frequencies	10	16	10	6	5
	Percentages	21%	34%	21%	13%	11%
It wouldnot bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	No. of Frequencies	2	8	10	11	16
	Percentages	4%	17%	21%	23%	34%
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	No. of Frequencies	10	11	20	2	4
	Percentages	21%	23%	43%	4%	9%
During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	No. of Frequencies	12	14	14	1	6

	Percentages	26%	30%	30%	2%	13%
I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	No. of Frequencies	10	11	20	2	4
	Percentages	21%	23%	43%	4%	9%
I donot understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	No. of Frequencies	8	7	14	13	5
	Percentages	17%	15%	30%	28%	11%
In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	No. of Frequencies	7	14	14	6	6
	Percentages	15%	30%	30%	13%	12%
Even If I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	No. of Frequencies	9	15	15	4	4
	Percentages	19%	32%	32%	9%	9%
I often feel like not going to my language class.	No. of Frequencies	13	7	16	7	4
	Percentages	28%	15%	34%	15%	9%
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	No. of Frequencies	11	16	14	4	2

	Percentages	23%	34%	30%	9%	4%
I donot feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	No. of Frequencies	14	12	14	5	2
	Percentages	30%	26%	30%	11%	4%
I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	No. of Frequencies	4	8	22	8	5
	Percentages	9%	17%	47%	17%	11%
I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	No. of Frequencies	7	14	16	5	5
	Percentages	15%	30%	34%	11%	11%
I get nervous when I donot understand every word the language teacher says.	No. of Frequencies	6	9	17	10	5
	Percentages	13%	19%	36%	21%	11%

The Table 3.0 shows that more than half of the failed students (21% + 34%) did not feel frightened when they did not understand what the teacher was saying in the foreign language. More than half of the students (23 % + 34%) would not bother to take more foreign language classes. Only a very few (4% + 9%) kept thinking that the other students were better at languages than they were. More than half (26% + 30%), during the classes, found themselves thinking about things that had nothing to do with the course. Less than half of them (21% + 23%) kept thinking that the other students were better at languages than they were. They were not sure why some people get so upset over foreign language classes. Just less than half of them (15% + 30%) were of the view that they, in language class, got so nervous that they forgot things they knew. Nearly half of the failed students (19% + 32%) felt anxious though they were well prepared for language class. Only a quarter of them (15% + 9%) often felt like not going to their language class. More than half of them (30% + 26%) did not feel pressure to prepare very well for language class. Just a few of them (09% + 17%) felt that the other students spoke the foreign language better than they did. Just less than half of them (15% + 30%) of them felt more tense and nervous in language class than in other classes. Merely one-third of them (13% + 19%) got nervous when they did not understand every word the language teacher said.

Discussion:

The above analysis shows that most of the failed students did not feel keen towards learning English language. More than half of them did feel anxiety regarding the difficulty level of the course as they did not feel bothered about the things that were incomprehensible to them. Also, more than half of them were not interested in learning English language again. One more factor that may reveal their taking less interest in English language can be associated with the socio-economic and familial backgrounds of the students which put almost no pressure on them to excel in their studies. In most of the cases, Omani students generally tend to relax during their studies. On the other hand, some students showed psychological barriers in learning English language. They were of the view that they got confused in language classrooms despite having been prepared to participate. This uncertainty pertaining to their feeling confidence or otherwise, is quite a strange phenomenon. Similarly, some of the failed students' inability to recall the things they were asked during the class also speaks volumes of their feeling nervousness and lack of confidence. Also, most of them felt indifferent towards their peers' superior knowledge of the language to theirs. To sum up, we can say that Omani failed students inhibit a kind of psychological factors which make them, at times, very confident and indifferent, and, at times, they tend to become extremely nervous while taking part in English language classes.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The analysis of the data provided mostly varied results which indicate that Omani Foundation students experience mixed learning anxiety i.e. from low to moderate level of anxiety only. It can be arguably acknowledged that most of the UTAS failed students tend to feel nervous if they are asked to use English inside the classrooms. Since they do not have to use English language outside the classroom, they feel indifferent towards the need of using learning English language. It can also be asserted that despite having provided mostly friendly and less formal classroom environment by the experienced language teachers through different teaching and learning strategies, Omani Foundation students still are unable to do well in improving their language skills. As it has been seen that more than half of the respondent (Foundation students) did not show any interest in learning English language in future, we can deduce that their indifferent attitude towards English language can be associated with the socio-economic and familial backgrounds. They usually do not feel any pressure from their families to excel in their studies.

From the findings of the study, we can also assert that perhaps in most of the cases, Omani students tend to relax during their classes. However, some of them show psychological barriers in learning English language. For instance, they get confused in language classrooms despite having been prepared to participate. Their exhibiting care-free feeling and attitude, and showing lack of confidence in class activities is quite a strange phenomenon as it may mark towards the lack of understanding on part of the UTAS teachers regarding students' personal attributes. Most of the Omani Foundation students, however, feel fear of making mistakes and inhibit apprehensions about their fellows. This may raise the anxiety level of the students. Similarly, the fear of failure in different assessments also proves one of examples of the Omani students' language anxiety. Despite showing interest in asking teacher for correcting their mistakes, especially in writing, some students get nervous when they do not understand what the teacher is trying to correct. We can also say that since Omani Foundation students have very limited exposure to the English language outside the classroom setting, it can increase their anxiety level in classroom activities to some extent. However, we can assert from the analysis of the above data that they do not feel bothered about the classroom activities as long as they get exposed to any assessments in learning activities. Again, it may be their socio-economic background that to some extent influence their efforts of learning the targeted language. Similarly, their previous schooling background also influence their language learning. Thus, we can assert that despite teachers' employment of the modern communicative teaching approaches and techniques, the problem of English language anxiety persists among the students of UTAS, Al-Musannah to some extent. It is largely due to the students' personal attributes, prior schooling and their socio-economic backgrounds than owing to the teaching and learning deficiencies. It still needs to be studied in more detailed way. On the other hand, Omani students' feelings somewhat lack of confidence, their incapability to participate well in the classroom activities, their extra self-consciousness about the assessments and results, their awareness about the difficulty of the grammatical forms and structure, and their low self-esteem regarding speaking skills are, however, some important factors that hamper their overall language performance.

On the basis of the above results and discussion, certain recommendations can be put forth to facilitate the language students and teachers. These may help students to get affected by the minimum effects of language anxiety, and to facilitate language teachers in employing more effective teaching and learning strategies. First and foremost, the English language teachers need to acknowledge the importance of the issue of language anxiety among the students. They need to employ friendly, less formal, and learning-supportive environment in their language classrooms. Language teachers need to encourage the students whenever they make mistakes in language classrooms. They can set their language activities by keeping in mind the educational and socio-cultural backgrounds of the students. In other words, the teachers' awareness and familiarity with their students' culture and family background can help in reducing language anxiety. Not only students' centered teaching methods should be adopted in language classrooms, but also, the students need to be encouraged to practice English language inside and outside the classroom.

The present study has provided some valued thoughts into the perceptions and experiences of Foundation failed students in a higher education institution in Oman. It has not been researched widely in Omani context. The findings of this study will hopefully prove useful for language teachers and curriculum developers in Oman.

Despite some of the contributions of this study delineated above, we set forward a few recommendations for future research. The researchers interested in the field of language anxiety may wish to explore the extent to which these findings are applicable to other

contexts in higher educational institutes within Oman or elsewhere in the Gulf. Also, since we undertook our study only with failed Foundation students, it could be interesting to explore the extent to which high achieving students show language anxiety. Furthermore, we recommend to the future researchers to explore whether contextual or situation-based anxiety does exist in other subject areas. If it does exist, then there is a need to explore whether it has the same or different causes, what are its different forms or manifestations, and what effective strategies can be employed to minimize its effects.

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