

# A Comparative Analysis of Preparatory Year Students' FL Anxiety

AbdulRahman Al Asmari<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Faculty of Arts, Taif University, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence: AbdulRahman Al Asmari, Preparatory Year Deanship, Taif University, Saudi Arabia. Tel: 966-55-734-4666. E-mail: [abdulasmari@gmail.com](mailto:abdulasmari@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

This study investigated preparatory year students from a Saudi University to identify anxiety they experience during their English language classes. The participants were 76 preparatory year students with high English language proficiency and 64 with low English language proficiency. A translated version of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) was administered to generate data for this survey. Descriptive analyses and Independent-samples t-test were run to identify the participants' perceptions related to four categories of Foreign Language (FL) anxiety as well as to see whether any significant differences exist due to their English language proficiency. The results of this study have revealed that Saudi EFL preparatory year students suffer from medium level of FL anxiety. Among four types of FL anxiety, the participants have reported that they suffer the most from communication anxiety followed by negative evaluation anxiety, anxiety of English classroom and test anxiety respectively. The present findings haven't exhibited any significant differences in the perceptions of Saudi preparatory year students regarding FL anxiety in relation to their English language proficiency. It is recommended that EFL teachers try their level best to decrease anxiety level by making their classroom proceedings interesting and stress free. This seems advisable for EFL teachers to enhance the possibilities of their students' participation in class activities by letting them know in advanced so that they are able to prepare those topics well. Generally speaking, it transpires that though Saudi preparatory year students bear moderate level of FL anxiety that can easily be addressed by exploiting appropriate teaching techniques to help them overcome their anxiety and perform better in their language classes.

**Keywords:** FL anxiety; Preparatory year students; English language proficiency

## 1. Introduction

There is no denying of the fact that English has acquired an important role in the modern world, and oil-rich Saudi Arabia has also witnessed an unprecedented expansion in English Language Teaching (ELT). Saudi Arabia has been investing heavily to ensure state-of-the-art English language teaching facilities in Saudi universities. Establishment of Preparatory year deanships in nearly all public universities was a substantial step verifying this national determination. A growing mass of research has highlighted the challenges surrounding ELT, and it has been found that along with other factors, learner-centered issues such as their individual personalities, gender, motivation, attitudes, age, anxiety, intelligence etc. also play an important role in this regard (Trang, 2012). Gardner and MacIntyre (1992 cited in Javid, 2014) have classified language learners' differences into three categories including: "1) Cognitive factors including language learning strategies, language learning experiences, language learning aptitude, intelligence etc., 2) affective factors such as learning styles, motivational constructs, attitudes and beliefs toward language, language anxiety etc. and 3) other miscellaneous factors including the age and sociocultural experiences of the learners" (p. 180).

Previous research has offered valuable insights into the fact that FL anxiety among EFL learners has been singled out as a major factor that impedes the process of language learning and significantly hinders English language proficiency (Liu & Huang, 2011; Olivares-Cuhat, 2010; Krashen, 1987). The investigation of FL anxiety becomes rather significant if various psychological theories related to foreign/second language learning are considered. Research has also reported that during the last thirty years, FL anxiety has seriously been taken into account by the majority of known models of foreign/second language learning theories. This is particularly valid by those who realized the importance of affective variables in the learning process including Krashen's *Monitor Model* and his *Affective Filter Hypothesis* (Krashen, 1987), *Intergroup Model* (Giles & Byrne, 1982),

*Social Context Model* (Clément & Kruidenier, 1985), *Acculturation Model* (Schumann, 1986) and Gardner's *Socio-Educational Model* (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993).

Previous studies conducted to investigate the effect of FL anxiety have consistently shown that this pedagogical variable can be detrimental for language learners and negatively affect their language efficiency (e.g., Humphries, 2011; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Elkhafafi, 2005; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Similarly, Hewitt and Stephenson (2012) have reported that EFL learners have demonstrated a worse performance than usual due to FL anxiety. Though there have been many studies conducted to investigate this important factor, investigating EFL learners' perspectives from various academic settings can be enriching to this line of research as different socio-cultural backgrounds could be a predictor of the variations in FL anxiety. As such, preparatory year can be one significant setting in the university EFL context.

## 2 Literature Review

Language anxiety can broadly be defined as the feeling of apprehension and tension particularly in foreign/second language contexts, and it may inflict speaking, listening, reading, and writing (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). From a communication stand point, McCroskey (1977) defined anxiety as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 78). A comprehensive definition of language anxiety is laid out as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a SL with which the individual is not fully proficient, this apprehension being characterized by 'derogatory self-related cognitions... feeling of apprehension and physiological responses such as increased heart rate'" (Ezzi, 2012 citing from MacIntyre & Gardner, 1993, p. 5). They have also stated that language learning anxiety is directly associated with learners' performance in the target language that differentiates it from general performance anxiety.

It has also been transpired that the kind of anxiety which affects language learners is of special kind, termed as FL anxiety, and it has been defined as the feeling of uneasiness, fear and nervousness that is experienced during the process of learning a foreign language (Horwitz et al., 1991). Spielberger (1983) posited that unlike trait-anxiety, FL anxiety is not of permanent nature, but it is transitory and fluctuates in different situations. In the same vein, EFL learners may experience FL anxiety at particular moments when they encounter a communicative situation like speaking in front of their classmates. Tanveer (2007) has stated that "feelings of anxiety, reticence, apprehension and nervousness are commonly expressed by foreign language learners in learning foreign languages" (p. 3). Portugal (2007) further elaborates that FL anxiety: "Is the fear felt when ..... students are expected to use or act in the foreign language..... It is the fear or apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language or the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning or using a second language." (p. 2)

FL anxiety has been classified as 'facilitative' and 'debilitative' anxiety (Ando, 1999). While facilitative anxiety is associated with positive performance, debilitative anxiety is associated with negative results which lead to poor performance. It becomes the responsibility of teachers to analyse their students' anxiety and decide whether their anxiety is truly negative. According to Brown (2000), anxiety may be graded with a continuum in which too much and too little anxiety may negatively affect the language learning process. Young (1990) has posited that anxiety is linked with performance, suggesting that it is a factor that may facilitate improvement in learners' performance and names it as facilitating anxiety or it may cause impaired performance termed as debilitating anxiety.

Identification of causes of FL anxiety has been a major concern of researchers. Bailey (1983) analysed diaries of 11 learners and found out that competitiveness was a major cause of anxiety. He has further reported that tests and learners' perceived relationship with their teachers also create anxiety among EFL learners. More recent studies also supported the findings of Bailey. For example, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have pointed out that enumerated communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation were the most important causes of FL anxiety. Also, Young (1991, p. 427) explained that language anxiety was caused by six potential causes including "personal and interpersonal, language learning beliefs of learners, teachers' beliefs about the process of language teaching, teacher-student interactions, classroom proceedings and language tests". Young's identification of FL anxiety causes seems to be based on the perspective of the students, instructors and teaching practices. On the other hand, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) have classified language learning anxiety into communicative anxiety, classroom anxiety, learning anxiety, state anxiety, test anxiety, and audience anxiety. They have posited that each kind of anxiety depends on the situation within second language (L2) learning.

Von Würde (1998) has reported that difficulties in comprehension, the teaching pace, the fear of being singled out, insufficient time dedicated to teaching practices, the risk of being humiliated while error correction and

native speakers' presence could make the learners more anxious than usual. The concept of perfectionism among learners might be another interesting factor that impedes students' performance as well (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Woodrow (2006) has gone a step further and distinguished between in-class and out-of-class causes of anxiety. He stated that learners' interaction with faculty members and speaking in front of a class are major causes of language anxiety. Tanveer (2007) has revealed that intrinsic motivators such as the students' self in particular result in anxiety-breeding situations. Tanveer further maintained that their beliefs, perceptions and low proficiency in the target language usually lead to high levels of anxiety. He further explains that there are some extrinsic factors like learners' social and cultural environments that may trigger anxiety-provoking situations.

### *2.1 Causes of FL Anxiety*

Among several factors that cause FL anxiety, fear of negative evaluation is considered very common. Horwitz et al. (1986) have reiterated that students are constantly being evaluated in the classroom setting that creates fear among them. They have reported that anxiety can primarily be caused by the teacher, "the fluent speaker" in the classroom. The anxiety may also be created from the peers as well because some students feel that they are weaker as compared to their peers and that they are looked down upon due to their weak classroom performance. It has also been suggested that students be able to answer more questions if they are not afraid of committing mistakes in answering the question (Young, 1991). Summative and formative assessment is deemed as a major component of EFL teaching/learning process; therefore, its role in creating anxiety among EFL learners cannot be overlooked. It has also been reported that the majority of EFL learners suffer from test anxiety. For example, many students have stated that they knew the grammar rules, but due to test anxiety they were unable to recall them during the examinations (Horwitz et al., 1986). The students may suffer from this type of anxiety when they find out that they have committed mistakes due to exam pressure and nervousness during the tests. It has also been posited that test anxiety rather increases because of unfamiliar question format. Young (1991) has stated that "in language testing, the greater degree of student evaluation and the more unfamiliar and ambiguous the test tasks and formats, the more the learner anxiety is produced" (p. 429). Another situation that multiplies text anxiety is when students do not find the questions they have prepared on the examination. A negative reaction to this situation is that some students may stop studying altogether (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Another major cause of FL anxiety is students' self perception regarding their own ability in the language they are learning. Most of the students' anxiety can be caused by their self-concept of ability in the target language (Horwitz et al., 1986). The situation rather worsens when they compare their language skills with those of native speakers, a situation that tends to create feelings of embarrassment that their pronunciation is not like the native speakers. It has also been mentioned that among various language skills, speaking skill is perceived as more difficult. Kitano (2001) has argued that "...speaking skill is usually the first thing that learners compare with that of peers, teachers, and native speakers" (p. 550). Research has provided insights into the fact that sometimes the instructors also trigger EFL anxiety. Due to various misconceptions, some instructors believe that their intimidation enhances motivation among their students and they tend to exert more efforts to enhance learning. In this regard, Young (1991) has posited that: "Instructors who believe their role is to correct students constantly when they make any error, who feel that they cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control, who believe that the teacher should be doing most of the talking and teaching, and who think their role is more like a drill sergeant's than a facilitator's may be contributing to learner language anxiety" (p. 428).

As such, Conway (2007) has stressed that language teachers should not increase the already enormous stresses experienced by the student during the language learning process.

### *2.2 Related Studies*

A growing mass of research indicates that identification of ESL/EFL anxiety has been a major concern during the last four decades and a lot of studies have been conducted worldwide. The study of Horwitz et al. (1986) is considered of primary significance in this regard. Their study included 225 ESL students from a beginning language class from University of Texas who were investigated through Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), an inventory extensively used to examine the scope of FL anxiety and its implications on language learning process. This inventory is consisted of 33 Likert-scale items subdivided into communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation and fear of language classes. A similar relevant study is by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) who have investigated students' perceptions from 97 colleges. The overall findings have revealed that the participants with FL anxiety found it more difficult to express themselves and underestimated their language learning abilities as compared to the relaxed students. MacIntyre and Gardner have also posited that in the three phases of language learning namely input, processing and output, there is a

negative relationship between anxiety and achievement. They have further reported that there exists a negative correlation between anxiety and various language skills especially speaking and listening skills.

Contrary to the findings of the above mentioned study, there are several studies that have reported positive relationship between language proficiency and anxiety. Bailey (1983) has conducted a survey to investigate the mutual relationship between competitiveness and anxiety and stated that facilitative anxiety was found to be the key to success and that this kind of anxiety was closely associated with competitiveness. In the Saudi context, Javid (2014) has conducted an empirical study to identify the anxiety of EFL learners who were found to encounter different social, cultural and psychological factors that create anxiety in EFL learners while interacting with their teachers, class fellows and even the textbooks, and thus may fail in achieving proficiency in the target language. Furthermore, Javid's results have revealed that the participants of the study suffered from communication apprehension anxiety followed the most by English class room anxiety. Fear of negative evaluation anxiety and test anxiety remained 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> respectively. Accordingly, Javid has suggested that teachers need to exploit appropriate teaching methodologies to ensure friendly atmosphere in EFL classes to facilitate learning process and overcome anxiety issues.

Following a comparative approach, Ezzi (2012) attempted to investigate EFL-major students in Yemen to identify the level of anxiety versus gender, educational level, age and their place of residence. The study included 163 EFL Yemeni learners: 84 participants were from 2<sup>nd</sup> year and 79 were from 4<sup>th</sup> year students. The findings of the study have revealed that female-students' anxiety was higher than that of male students. Such factors as gender, age and residence were found to contribute to FL anxiety. However, Ezzi did not find any significant difference of the levels of anxiety between the two genders. The survey study of Qaddomi (2013) investigated EFL learners' anxiety through an adopted version of frequently used FLCAS designed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The participants of his study were 52 EFL learners from Al- Quds Open University (AOU) who were asked to record their anxiety along gender and educational level lines. It has been reported that EFL learners of AOU suffered from FL anxiety, especially while speaking in front of native speakers. The findings also revealed that the female cohort suffered from higher level of anxiety as compared to the male participants of the study. Notwithstanding, the results did not exhibit any significant differences in FL anxiety because of their educational level. The study of Wei and Yodkamlue (2012) investigated EFL learners and the data analyses indicated that freshmen bore higher level of FL anxiety as compared to the sophomores. Furthermore, there have been several other studies which attempted to investigate FL anxiety in relation to various aspects of English language proficiency. It has been reported that a significant, negative relationship was found between general FL anxiety and course grades (e.g. Yan & Horwitz, 2008; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Coulombe, 2000), between EFL listening anxiety and grades in listening course (e.g. Bekleyen, 2009; Elkhafaifi, 2005), between EFL anxiety and proficiency in speaking skills as represented by their oral grades (Sellers, 2000), between EFL anxiety and reading scores (Zhao, 2009) and foreign language writing anxiety and writing achievement (Chen & Lin, 2009).

### 3. Research Questions

This study attempts to find out the answers to the research questions given below:

- 1) What are the perceptions of high English proficiency group (HEPG) and low proficiency group (LEPG) of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of communication apprehension anxiety?
- 2) What are the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of test anxiety?
- 3) What are the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of negative evaluation anxiety?
- 4) What are the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of English classes anxiety?

### 4. Null Hypotheses

This study aims to test the following hypotheses:

- 1) There does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of communication apprehension anxiety.
- 2) There does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of test anxiety.
- 3) There does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of negative evaluation anxiety.

4) There does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEPG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of English classes anxiety.

## 5. Research Methodology

This study investigated the Saudi EFL preparatory year students' anxiety through a survey instrument in which the responses of the participants were generated through a Likert-scale inventory.

### 5.1 The Research Setting

Horwitz et al. (1986) have posited that anxiety is common among learners learning a foreign language. The level of anxiety is rather high during the beginning of EFL learning process. Therefore, the researcher recruited the participants from Preparatory Year Program (PYP) at Taif University during the second semester in the academic year 2013/2014. Taif University English Language Center (TUELC) is responsible for providing English language teaching to all the students who are enrolled in this program. Every year, PYP delivers intensive EFL courses to around fifteen thousand students with the aim of developing their English language skills.

### 5.2 The Participants

The participants of this survey have been randomly selected from the PYP. To select the participants of this study, two factors were considered as criteria of assortment. The first factor was to include those students who have passed the first semester courses and they know their GPA. Secondly, those students who were willing to participate in this survey were included. This was done only to generate authentic responses regarding the FL anxiety. The number and classification of the participants of this study is given in the following Table.

Table 1. Participants' classification of the study

No	Participants	number	Percentage
1	High English Language Proficiency Group	76	54.3%
2	Low English Language Proficiency Group	64	45.7%
	Total	140	

### 5.3 Instrumentation

There are many inventories which have been used to investigate language learners' anxiety. However, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) can be a reliable tool that has been frequently employed by the researchers worldwide to investigate language learning anxiety in EFL classes. This inventory consisted of 33 statements divided into four parts; each one is dedicated to identify various important aspects of FL anxiety. The first component of this inventory identifies Communicative Apprehension anxiety and includes 8 items (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, & 32). The second component consists of only five items related to test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, & 21). The third component consists of 9 items related to negative evaluation anxiety (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, & 33), and the last component of this inventory includes 10 items which identify anxiety of English classroom (4, 5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 26, & 28). The researcher administered FACAS to the participants of this survey and the responses of the participants generated through this inventory were synthesised to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses of the present study.

### 5.4 Data Collection Procedures

The following procedural steps have been followed to collect data through the FLCAS inventory. After obtaining the approval from the concerned authority to administer the questionnaire, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic so that the participants should not have any confusion due to the language barrier. The researcher requested English language teachers to administer the Arabic translation of the questionnaire during the teaching sessions. It was also requested that only those students who qualify for the inclusion criteria mentioned above should be given the questionnaires. The data were collected from male as well as female candidates.

### 5.5 Statistical Analysis

All the responses of the participants were manually entered and coded. Descriptive analyses and Independent-samples t-test have been run through SPSS (version 17) to calculate means, medians, standard deviations, percentages to identify the preferences of the participants and to identify p-value to see whether or not any significant differences exist due to the respondents' English language proficiency.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The researcher administered FLCAS developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) that has 33 items which are further divided into four sub-categories. For the results and discussion, all these four categories were analyzed and presented thematically into separate tables followed by a discussion of findings.

### 6.1 Communication Apprehension Anxiety

Table 2. Data analysis of communication apprehension anxiety

Questionnaire Items	Group	n	M	SD	T	df	p value
1 I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	HPG	76	2.8289	1.1241	-1.091	138	.277
	LPG	64	3.0313	1.0536	-1.098	136.39	.274
9 I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	HPG	76	3.5921	1.1452	-.504	138	.615
	LPG	64	3.6875	1.0820	-.506	136.15	.614
14 I would <i>not</i> be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	HPG	76	3.2368	1.3253	1.499	138	.136
	LPG	64	2.9063	1.2689	1.505	135.71	.135
18 I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	HPG	76	3.2632	1.2041	-.565	138	.573
	LPG	64	3.3750	1.1198	-.569	136.61	.570
24 I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	HPG	76	2.5395	1.0886	-2.007	138	.047
	LPG	64	2.9375	1.2583	-1.982	125.54	.050
27 I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	HPG	76	2.8026	1.0331	-1.567	138	.119
	LPG	64	3.0938	1.1645	-1.551	127.23	.123
29 I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	HPG	76	2.8816	1.1772	-1.897	138	.060
	LPG	64	3.2813	1.3150	-1.879	127.82	.063
32 I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	HPG	76	3.3553	1.1742	1.646	138	.102
	LPG	64	3.0000	1.3801	1.623	124.39	.107

Table 2 contains the data analysis of 9 items related to the first component of EFL anxiety, i.e., “communication apprehension anxiety”. Research has reported that suffering from communication apprehension anxiety may cause the students to avoid communication or sometimes even withdraw from studies altogether. The current descriptive analysis have revealed that LEPG exhibited higher level of anxiety as compared to their HEPG counterparts in 7 items. Items 14 and 32, which are related to speaking the target language in front of native speakers, have reported somewhat an interesting finding that LEPG felt lesser anxiety as compared to HEPG. This finding may be due to the fact that learners with high English language proficiency are more concerned and careful about their pronunciation as compared to students with low proficiency, causing them to be rather anxious in the presence of native speakers. The present study findings confirm the results of Javid, Al-thubaiti, Uthman (2013) which indicated that Saudi EFL learners attempt to talk like native speakers by following native-like pronunciation.

“I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class” has been unanimously assigned as the highest mean value indicating that both groups suffered from high level of anxiety if they are not well prepared. This finding aligns with the findings of Qaddomi (2013) who has reported that EFL university learners also ranked this item high. Item 32 was the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest anxiety creating factor among HEPG followed by item 18. Similarly in the present study, the LEPG has allocated 2<sup>nd</sup> highest score to this item. Participants have also reported that their anxiety level is high when they don't understand every word used by their teachers partially. These results confirm the findings of Javid and Uthman (2013) who investigated Saudi EFL learners' vocabulary learning strategies and the findings have revealed that they concentrated on each word they encountered instead of exploiting various strategies to handle unfamiliar words.

It seems that language learners with low language proficiency represented by the participants of this study lack the skills of guessing the meaning of unknown words, whereas students with high proficiency seem to tackle them effectively. Both groups have reported that they do not feel high level of anxiety when they speak the foreign language in front of other students. This finding contradicts with the findings of previous studies which investigated Saudi medical undergraduates as well as Saudi English-major undergraduates whose results suggested that they don't prefer using English with their peers and resort to their mother tongue while interacting with their teachers and class fellows and teachers (Javid, 2011; Javid, 2010). This finding also partially contradicts several studies that have revealed that the majority of EFL learners suffer from high level of speaking anxiety and tend to avoid speaking in front of their peers (Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013; Tianjian, 2010, Liu & Jackson, 2008). Based on this significant finding, English language faculty should exploit this positive attitude of

preparatory year learners to enable them to practice the target language more frequently and ensure that they must interact in the target language, especially within the classroom setting. The results of Independent-samples t-test have also revealed that both groups do not have statistically significant difference in 8 items of this sub category, and hence rejecting the first hypothesis (i.e. there does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEFG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of communication apprehension anxiety).

### 6.2 Test Anxiety

Table 3. Data analysis of test anxiety

Questionnaire Items	Group	n	M	SD	T	df	p value
2 I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	HPG	76	3.052	1.0695	-.411	138	.682
	LPG	64	3.1250	1.0000	-.413	136.46	.680
8 I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	HPG	76	2.960	1.4646	-1.830	138	.069
	LPG	64	3.406	1.3998	-1.838	135.77	.068
10 I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	HPG	76	2.118	1.2751	-2.812	138	.006
	LPG	64	2.750	1.3801	-2.792	129.78	.006
19 I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	HPG	76	2.763	1.1647	-1.062	138	.290
	LPG	64	2.968	1.1123	-1.066	135.80	.288
21 The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	HPG	76	2.500	1.3711	-1.598	138	.112
	LPG	64	2.875	1.3973	-1.595	133.08	.113

Data analysis related to the next component “test anxiety” has been detailed in Table 3. Conway (2007) has posited that this kind of anxiety is produced when learners realise after an examination that they have committed some mistakes by virtue of their nervousness. The results seem to follow the pattern of the previous category where LEFG was found to bear higher level of FL anxiety as compared to HEPG, confirming the growing mass of research conducted worldwide that anxiety has negative correlation with target language proficiency (e.g. Humphries, 2011; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Elkhafai, 2005; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Horwitz et al., 1991; Horwitz, 1986). Therefore, it is significant that English language teachers should understand this sensitive issue and try their level best to decrease anxiety level of their students by making their classroom proceedings interesting and stress free.

Descriptive analysis of 5 items of this category has revealed that both groups have seen eye to eye to each other as far as the least preferred item is concerned. Data analysis also revealed that both groups did not feel high level of anxiety regarding the consequence of failing their FL courses. The current results do not seem to go in line with the previous research conducted in the same academic context (Javid, 2010), suggesting that Saudi EFL learners seem to prefer to study English only to pass the exam. Rather, the present results seem to suggest that somehow PYP learners bear in mind that they will be able to pass the EFL courses in the make-up exam even if they fail. Such results suggest that it is important to reinforce a feeling that they need to work hard for their English courses as well, and unless they do so, it may not be easy to pass these courses in the second chance provided to them.

Further, results show that Saudi EFL preparatory year students do not worry much about making mistakes in their language class as this item was assigned the highest mean by HEPG and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest by the LEFG of this study. Pedagogically speaking, this is another positive attitude of EFL preparatory year students that they are not over-conscious about making mistakes in their language classes. Accordingly, it is suggested their EFL teachers need to provide them with more practice in the target language and help them achieve fluency first followed by accuracy. As it has been found that the participants of this study were usually at ease while taking tests in their language classes, this finding contradicts with the findings of Al-Shboul et al. (2013) who have reported that the participants of their study suffered from uneasiness and fear of making mistakes in their exams. In the present study, this item has been allocated the highest value by the LEFG and 2<sup>nd</sup> highest by HEPG. The other items of this important anxiety creating category bear medium level of mean values showing that these factors do not create high level of anxiety. There was only one item that showed significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) as revealed by the results of independent-samples t-test, and hence rejecting the second hypothesis as well (i.e. there does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEFG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of test anxiety).

## 6.3 Negative Evaluation Anxiety

Table 4. Data analysis of negative evaluation anxiety

Questionnaire Items	Group	n	M	SD	T	df	p value	
3 I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	HPG	76	2.8684	1.1701	-2.194	138	.030	p < 0.05
	LPG	64	3.3125	1.2199	-2.186	131.92	.031	
7 I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	HPG	76	2.8816	1.1658	-1.778	138	.078	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.2500	1.2848	-1.763	128.68	.080	
13 It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	HPG	76	3.0000	1.1888	-3.807	138	.000	p < 0.05
	LPG	64	3.7188	1.0153	-3.858	137.96	.000	
15 I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	HPG	76	3.1579	1.2864	-1.759	138	.081	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.5313	1.2080	-1.768	136.33	.079	
20 I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	HPG	76	2.8816	1.1885	-1.085	138	.280	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.0938	1.1087	-1.091	136.53	.277	
23 I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.	HPG	76	3.0000	1.0456	-1.792	138	.075	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.3438	1.2243	-1.768	124.65	.080	
25 Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	HPG	76	1.9211	1.0167	3.109	138	.002	p < 0.05
	LPG	64	1.4688	.6164	3.236	126.15	.002	
31 I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	HPG	76	2.6711	1.1706	-.914	138	.362	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	2.8438	1.0423	-.923	137.55	.358	
33 I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	HPG	76	3.4079	1.2020	-.893	138	.374	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.5938	1.2563	-.889	131.78	.375	

Table 4 above comprehensively presents the descriptive analysis as well as the data generated by independent-samples t-test regarding the next subtheme of EFL anxiety. In terms of the significance of negative evaluation anxiety, Coa (2013) has posited that “fear of negative evaluation is likely to be manifested by a student’s over concern with others’ criticism or judgments about his or her performance in foreign language classroom” (p. 86). Broadly speaking, it is evident from the overall results that HEPG bear low negative evaluation anxiety as compared to LEFG who have assigned higher mean values to nearly all the items of this category indicating their higher level of anxiety. The participants of this study showed concern while interacting in English in front of their teachers and class mates, and thus conveying a sense of low intrinsic motivation. The current findings are partially in line with the findings of Al Asmari and Javid (2011) and Javid, Al Asmari and Farooq (2012) who investigated the Saudi non-PYP freshmen and reported that the participants were found extrinsically motivated and wanted to learn the target language for certain social, cultural and pragmatic reasons. Out of the total 9 items, there was only one item that showed HEPG’s higher level of anxiety as compared to their counterparts. Interestingly, both groups have assigned the lowest values to this item as well, indicating that they may not be conscious about lagging behind in their language classes.

Highest mean by HEPG was noticed for the last item indicating their high level of anxiety if they have been asked to answer those questions which they have not prepared well for. The same has been confirmed by LEFG as they have allotted the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest mean to this item. This seems to suggest that it is advisable for English language teachers to enhance the possibilities of their students' participation in class activities by letting them know in advance about upcoming topics so that they are able to be prepared for them. “I get upset when I don’t understand what the teacher is correcting” is the item that was ranked the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest by HEPG and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest by LEFG. This might be a positive indication that Saudi EFL preparatory year students want to understand well before moving on to the next point. Accordingly, EFL teachers are required to carefully consider the level of their students while explaining various points so that they assure their understanding. An item that clearly distinguishes language learning behavior of language learners of high and low proficiency level is that students with low English level proficiency feel embarrassed to volunteer to answer in their language classes, whereas learners with higher level of proficiency readily volunteer. This finding partially contradicts with Na's study (2007) which has reported that EFL learners displayed high fear of negative evaluation. Similarly, this notion was as indicated by Qaddomi (2013) that “their fear of being evaluated by the teacher was not as big as their fear of being evaluated by their classroom mates” (p. 1549).



Based on the present study results, it might be extremely important for good language teachers to engage all the students and motivate the weaker ones as well to actively participate in classroom activities. Low-difficulty questions with stimulating hints may particularly be directed to these weaker students in the classroom to attract their engagement. The remaining items of this category have been assigned medium mean values. There are only 2 items out of the total 9 ones that showed significant differences in the perception of both groups, partially rejecting the 3<sup>rd</sup> hypothesis of this study (i.e. there does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEPC of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of negative evaluation anxiety".

#### 6.4 English Classroom Anxiety

Table 5. Data analysis of English classroom anxiety

Questionnaire Items	Group	n	M	SD	T	df	p value	
4 It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	HPG	76	2.5395	1.1248	-1.492	138	.138	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	2.8438	1.2875	-1.475	126.20	.143	
5 It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	HPG	76	3.7500	1.4526	.495	138	.621	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.6250	1.5275	.493	131.45	.623	
6 During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	HPG	76	2.5526	1.0881	-2.719	138	.007	p < 0.05
	LPG	64	3.0625	1.1251	-2.712	132.35	.008	
11 I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	HPG	76	3.0263	1.1428	-.182	138	.856	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.0625	1.2068	-.181	131.21	.857	
12 In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	HPG	76	3.6842	1.0858	.712	138	.478	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.5625	.9063	.723	137.99	.471	
16 Even If I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	HPG	76	1.9868	1.0770	-1.633	138	.105	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	2.2813	1.0461	-1.637	135.18	.104	
17 I often feel like not going to my language class.	HPG	76	2.6711	1.2584	-1.387	138	.168	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	2.9688	1.2720	-1.386	133.48	.168	
22 I <i>don't</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	HPG	76	3.6316	1.1529	-1.836	138	.068	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.9688	.9915	-1.860	137.93	.065	
26 I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	HPG	76	1.9474	1.0819	-1.942	138	.054	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	2.3125	1.1391	-1.933	131.38	.055	
28 When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	HPG	76	3.1447	1.1040	.451	138	.652	p > 0.05
	LPG	64	3.0625	1.0370	.454	136.32	.651	

Table 5 shows data analysis of 10 items of the subtheme "English classroom anxiety" which seems to follow nearly the same pattern as was evident from the data analysis of 'negative evaluation anxiety'. The majority of the items have been allocated medium values indicating that Saudi EFL preparatory year students as represented by the participants of this study suffer from medium level of classroom anxiety. Unlike the previous categories, there are three items (5, 12, & 28) for which HEPG assigned higher mean values as compared to LEPC, indicating their higher level of classroom anxiety. The remaining 7 items followed the same pattern in which higher anxiety level has been reported by LEPC.

Item 5 "It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes" has been assigned the highest mean by HEPG and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest by LEPC. These results confirm the findings of Javid et al. (2012) which suggested offering more English classes to improve English language proficiency. Generally speaking, it seems quite encouraging that EFL preparatory year students bear satisfactory levels of motivation and are ready to take more language classes to help them overcome their academic problems in learning English. This positive attitude can be exploited by EFL teachers who are strongly recommended to utilise the whole class time properly and efficiently. Additional classes may also be arranged for the weaker students as well. In addition, policymakers may consider increasing the instructional hours of EFL courses.

A high mean was reported (2<sup>nd</sup> by HEPG and 3<sup>rd</sup> highest by LEPC) to the item which states that in language classes they get so nervous that they forget the things they already know. This finding offers valuable insights into the fact that English classes do create anxiety among Saudi preparatory year students to an extent that they tend to forget even the things they might be familiar with in the target language. This suggests that a more

relaxed atmosphere needs to be facilitated in English classes. The data analysis of item 22 also transpires that both groups assigned higher mean to the fact that they feel under pressure when intending to prepare well for their language classes. The items which have elicited their responses about feeling anxious in language classes even when they are prepared well and feeling more tense in their language classes as compared to other classes have been assigned the lowest mean values. Such results suggest that their level of anxiety is directly associated with their preparation and it is not subject-related. This finding strongly suggests that the students should be encouraged to assume proper preparation for their language classes even beyond the classroom walls. The present comparative analyses rejected the 4<sup>th</sup> hypothesis (i.e. there does not exist any significant difference in the perceptions of HEPG and LEFG of EFL preparatory year students regarding the underlying factors of English classes anxiety), as no significant difference was found in the perceptions of both groups in 9 out of the total 10 items of this category.

## 7. Findings and Recommendations

The results of the present study have revealed that Saudi EFL preparatory year students suffer from medium level of FL anxiety. Among four types of FL anxiety, the participants have reported that they often experience communication anxiety the most, followed by negative evaluation anxiety, anxiety of English classroom and test anxiety respectively. The current findings have not exhibited any significant differences in the perceptions of Saudi preparatory year students regarding FL anxiety because of their English language proficiency. Considering this situation, it is recommended that EFL teachers try their level best to decrease anxiety level by making their classroom proceedings interesting and stress free. It is also recommended that Saudi EFL learners be taught skills of managing unknown vocabulary during their classes because it was found that unknown items create anxiety among them. The results also indicate that the use of target language in front of the teachers and peers is also a major source of FL anxiety that needs a close attention of English language teachers. As such, EFL teachers need to exert efforts to employ appropriate strategies like group/pair work to enable them practice the target language more frequently without feeling negative evaluation anxiety. EFL preparatory year students should also be encouraged to interact in the target language within the classrooms.

A pedagogical significant finding of the current study was that Saudi EFL preparatory year students are not over-conscious about making mistakes in their language classes. It is recommended that English language teachers provide them with extra doses of practice in the target language and help them achieve fluency rather than accuracy. The cohort of this survey did not show high level of test anxiety and were usually at ease while taking tests in their language classes. Another important finding of this study is that Saudi preparatory year students suffer from high level of anxiety if they are involved in EFL classroom activities without prior preparation. In this regard, EFL teachers need to enhance the possibilities of their students' participation in class activities by offering them ample engagement opportunities on a regular basis.

While the present study findings revealed that Saudi EFL preparatory year students prefer to understand well before proceeding to the next point, it is highly recommended that teachers assess their students' level of understanding while explaining various points. It has also been found out that students with low English proficiency level feel embarrassed to provide answers voluntarily in their language class. Therefore, it is recommended that EFL teachers attempt a proper strategy of engaging and motivating all the students, especially the weaker ones in classroom proceedings. As the present study findings display that Saudi preparatory year students seem to bear moderate level of FL anxiety in general, appropriate teaching techniques to help them overcome their anxiety and perform better in their language classes need to be tailored accordingly.

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## Appendix A

## The Questionnaire (Arabic)

## مقياس القلق في فصول تعلم اللغة الأجنبية

(Horwitz, Horwitz, &amp; Cope, 1986)

## 1-معلومات شخصية (اختياري)

الاسم: .....

جوال: .....

البريد الإلكتروني: .....

التاريخ: .....

## 2-ضع علامة (√) أمام اختيارك.

1= غير موافق بشدة 2= غير موافق 3= غير متأكد 4= موافق 5= أوافق بشدة

5	4	3	2	1	أشعر بعدم الثقة في نفسي عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام زملائي في قاعة الدرس.	1
					أشعر بالارتباك عندما أخطئ أثناء حديثي باللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس.	2
					ارتبك عندما يمين دوري للمشاركة في نشاطات اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء المحاضرة.	3
					أشعر بخوف شديد عندما أجد نفسي غير قادر على فهم ما يقوله محاضر اللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس.	4
					من الطبيعي أن أشعر في وقت ما بحاجتي إلى محاضرات إضافية للتقوية في اللغة الإنجليزية.	5
					كثيراً ما أجد نفسي غير قادر على التركيز في الدرس خلال محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية.	6
					أشعر دائماً أن زملائي أفضل مني في اللغة الإنجليزية.	7
					تكون أعصابي هادئة تماماً خلال فترة الاختبارات في اللغة الإنجليزية.	8
					أشعر برعب شديد عندما يطلب مني المحاضر أن أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية من غير استعداد مسبق.	9
					أشعر بخوف شديد لاحتمال رسوبي في اللغة الإنجليزية.	10
					لا أفهم ماهية الأسباب التي تجعل زملائي يقلقون أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.	11
					أشعر بالقلق عندما أجد نفسي غير قادر على تذكر أشياء كنت اعرفها في اللغة الإنجليزية.	12
					أتردد في أن اتطوع بالإجابة على أسئلة اللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس.	13
					أشعر براحة عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية مع المتحدثين بها أصلاً.	14
					يساورني القلق عندما اعجز عن فهم ما يقصده المحاضر عندما يصحح لي أخطائي في اللغة الإنجليزية.	15
					أخشى من حضور محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية مع أنني احضرت الدرس مسبقاً.	16
					كثيراً ما أجد نفسي غير راغب في حضور محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.	17
					أشعر بثقة كبيرة في نفسي عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس.	18
					أخاف من التحدث في محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية خشية أن يقوم المحاضر بتصحيح كافة الأخطاء التي أقع فيها.	19
					أشعر بقدر كبير من التوتر عندما يدعوني محاضر اللغة الإنجليزية للإجابة عن سؤال أو الاشتراك في مناقشة.	20
					كلما ذاكرت استعداداً لاختبار اللغة الإنجليزية كلما شعرت بالارتباك.	21
					لا أشعر يقلق عندما احضر جيداً لمحاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية.	22
					أشعر دائماً أن زملائي يتحدثون اللغة الإنجليزية أفضل مني.	23
					أشعر بخجل شديد عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية أمام زملائي من الطلاب.	24
					أشعر أن الوقت المخصص لمحاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية يمر سريعاً مما يجعلني أشعر بالقلق خشية أن أكون متأخراً عن زملائي في الاستيعاب.	25
					أشعر بانني عصبي في محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية أكثر من غيرها في المحاضرات.	26
					أشعر بالارتباك عندما أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس أمام زملائي.	27
					أشعر بالثقة في النفس وفي حالة استرخاء عندما يأتي موعد محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية.	28
					أشعر بالقلق الشديد عندما لا أفهم كل كلمة يقولها محاضر اللغة الإنجليزية أثناء الدرس.	29
					تزعجني كثرة عدد القواعد التي يجب أن أتعلّمها كي أستطيع أن أتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.	30
					أخشى أن يثير حديثي باللغة الإنجليزية في قاعة الدرس سخرية زملائي مني.	31
					أشعر بالارتياح إلى حد ما عندما أكون بين أفراد يتحدثون باللغة الإنجليزية من حولي.	32
					أشعر بالقلق الشديد عندما يسألني محاضر اللغة الإنجليزية سؤالاً لم أكن مستعداً له من قبل.	33

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