

The Level of Arabic Language Anxiety based on Student's Academic Background in Learning Arabic Language

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to investigate the level of language anxiety among Arabic as a Foreign Language students at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), focusing on the following variables: the level of anxiety for the students in general and the differences in anxiety levels between students with an academic background in learning Arabic Language and students with no prior experience learning Arabic Language. The study sample includes 149 students, including 73 from the Faculty of Business and Management, 38 from the Faculty of Health Sciences, and 38 from the Faculty of Accountancy. They were given a questionnaire on the phenomenon of language anxiety, the Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (MFLCAS), which was then analysed using SPSS IBM Statistics. The findings indicate that the average level of language anxiety among students is moderate. In addition, students with no academic background in the Arabic Language have a higher level of language anxiety than those with an academic background in the Arabic Language.

Contribution/Originality: This study discovered the level of language anxiety among students studying Arabic as a foreign language focusing on the effect of student experience or background in learning the language on the level of language anxiety.

1. Introduction

Considering its significance in the fields of psycholinguistics and language instruction, the discourse on linguistic anxiety has intensified over time. Linguistic anxiety is

regarded as one of the obstacles that students must overcome when learning foreign languages. Anxiety is literally defined as restlessness, and it does not remain in one place. Anxiety is defined by the Oxford dictionary as a disturbing mental state resulting from fear and uncertainty about the future. As a term, anxiety refers to apprehension and turmoil, some of which can lead to excruciating pain, despair, and panic. The primary objective of this study is to identify students' linguistic anxiety. The scholars focused on multiple definitions of linguistic anxiety, including [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#) who defined anxiety as a complex type of perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors associated with language learning in foreign language classes. Young added that linguistic anxiety is a type of anxiety that is primarily associated with learning a language other than one's native tongue. [MacIntyre and Gardner \(1989\)](#) define linguistic anxiety as the student's fear or apprehension regarding the potential outcomes of foreign language learning. It is also a state of tension and turmoil caused by fear of the unknown as students begin to learn the language, surrounded by conflicting emotions that are dominated by the apprehension of the new environment and the outcome of the learning process.

In Arabic as a foreign language class at UiTM, students are coming from various schools and academic backgrounds. There are students with experience in studying the Arabic language in school and students with no experience in studying the Arabic language. Thus, in this study, researchers focused on determining the level of Arabic language anxiety in general and the effect of students' academic background on the level of Arabic language anxiety.

2.Literature Review

2.1. Arabic as a Foreign Language

Foreign language refers to the language a person learns after their mother tongue, but not in the language's native environment. This word is used when a language is not employed as a means of communication or as an intermediary medium ([Zaini et al., 2019](#)).

Arabic is one of the foreign languages taught in secondary schools in Malaysia, particularly to the Muslim population. The teaching and learning of Arabic in this nation began long before the country's independence in local institutions known as "Madrasah" and "Pondok" and has continued to the present day in secondary schools. The Arabic Language is now taught as a formal subject in secondary schools, as a foreign language course, and as an elective subject in religious institutions ([Mokhtar, 2020](#)).

Furthermore, through the Education Act of 1996, Arabic became an official foreign language in the Malaysian education curriculum 1996. It is taught as one of the subjects in school. Today, the Arabic language is not only taught at 280 schools of Arabic streams but also as a required subject in boarding schools and universities ([Mustapa & Arifin, 2012](#)). Arabic is now taught at all levels of official education, including preschool, primary, secondary, as well as college, and university levels. It is no longer reserved just for children attending religious institutions to acquire the language ([Zaini et al., 2019](#)).

2.2. Foreign language anxiety

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a complex of feelings, attitudes, behaviour, and self-perceptions caused by disparities in the language acquisition process. Therefore, FLA may have a negative effect on language learners and may cause a delay in the overall process of learning English (Ali & Anwar, 2021). Similarly, language anxiety also had been defined as a sensation of tension, uneasiness, emotional reactivity, and anxiety associated with second or foreign language acquisition (Naser & Nijr, 2019).

Basically, there are three types of anxiety, namely: 1) communication apprehension: 2) test anxiety, caused by the control of knowledge and skills; and 3) fear of negative evaluation by other students and the teacher (Horwitz et al., 2010). Al-Shboul et al. (2013) mentioned that a communication apprehension is a form of shyness characterised by fear or concern about interacting with others. It refers to a person's level of nervousness in interpersonal communication. Those who foresee having difficulty communicating with others will certainly struggle to maintain control of the situation. Test anxiety is a sort of performance anxiety caused by a fear of failing in an academic evaluation situation. It refers to the nervousness that students ordinarily feel during tests in a foreign language lesson. It is a delicate position in which students must either succeed or fail. Fear of negative evaluation is apprehension regarding the evaluations of others, as well as the avoidance of evaluative circumstances. Concern about making mistakes in a language class, fear of being constantly corrected and laughed at, feeling that other students are better at English than they are, fear of being left behind, a sense of embarrassment that prevents students from volunteering answers, and physical symptoms like a racing heart, sweaty palms, shaking hands, etc. are the most prevalent symptoms of this type of anxiety that students experience and mention (Lisnychenko et al., 2020).

Many factors led to foreign language anxiety. Hanifa (2018) emphasises three major factors which are cognitive factors, affective factors, and performance factors. Certain cognitive aspects include the topic, the genre, the interlocutors, and the processing requirements. Cognitive elements are primarily concerned with the previous knowledge of pupils since it affects their speaking performance. Affective elements, on the other hand, are associated with the emotions and personalities of the students. Meanwhile, performance factors related to communication apprehension, planning and preparation time, environmental conditions, and pedagogical objectives. Research conducted by Marwan (2008) found out the vast majority of learners have encountered some level of anxiety at some point during their time spent studying a foreign language. Their worry is mostly driven by factors such as insufficient self-assurance, an absence of adequate preparation, and a fear of performing poorly in class.

2.3. Foreign language anxiety in learning Arabic language

In Arabic classes, anxiety over learning a foreign language has been the subject of research. In their study, Mokhtar and Haron (2021) evaluated the levels of anxiety among students learning Arabic Language as a Foreign Language, concentrating on three dimensions: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. It has been observed that anxiety emerges in all three dimensions and that the level of anxiety documented in all three dimensions is significant. Among the three dimensions, learners are more apprehensive about peer evaluation than external evaluation. This is

concerning since it relates to the psychological and emotional components of the learners.

According to [Mokhtar \(2020\)](#), students learning Arabic as a foreign language frequently experience worry regarding their ability to speak the language. This study reveals that speech anxiety among Malaysian pupils in lower secondary schools is considerable and should be decreased. Speaking is a useful skill in the discipline of linguistics since practising the skill demands confidence and understanding. Malaysia's education system has influenced and contributed to the country's foreign language literacy rate.

Another study on the elements of anxiety in speaking Arabic Language and the fourth industrial revolution identifies four casual aspects of speaking anxiety: self-esteem, competitiveness, social anxiety, and interaction between educators and students. The first one is self-esteem, when students believe and recognise the significance of language acquisition, they are more likely to be successful in the process of acquiring a second language. The second component is competitiveness, which refers to a circumstance in which students compare themselves to another person in language acquisition, which affects the students' competition among themselves. Social anxiety occurs when students avoid group contact out of fear of receiving negative feedback from their peers. Regarding the interaction between teachers and students, it has been suggested that teachers must care about their students and know how to lessen their language anxiety, as well as enhance their ways of correcting students' mistakes ([Mokhtar & Haron, 2020](#)).

The researchers came across linguistic anxiety in Arabic language classes, which was about the linguistic anxiety experienced by students learning Arabic as a foreign language, using a Malaysian student as the sample. 210 students from the Qur'an Language Division at the International Islamic University Malaysia were chosen at random to participate in the study. The research founds that the students' linguistic anxiety was moderate and obtained from various sources. These sources included the students' fear of the exam, their anxiety in linguistic communication, and their anxiety in having a negative attitude toward the target language ([Eltingari et al., 2017](#)).

The other study that was done at the International Islamic University Malaysia was on the level of linguistic anxiety among students who are studying Arabic as a foreign language. This study used the International Islamic University Malaysia as a model to find out what causes linguistic anxiety, how sexuality affects language anxiety, and the relationship between the duration of the study and the level of language anxiety and the samples are made up of 60 students from the Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and 60 students from the Faculty of Languages and Management, this research found that students have a moderate level of linguistic anxiety, and that fear of evaluation what makes them anxious ([Tingari & Jamel, 2017](#)).

The focus of these studies was on the various variables, including the origins and types of language anxiety, the gender factor, and the relationship between the study period and language anxiety. The researchers discovered that there was no study on linguistic anxiety that examined the association between a student's history in Arabic learning and their level of linguistic anxiety and compared the amount of language anxiety between students with school-based Arabic learning experience and those without such experience.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

To determine the level of language anxiety, the researchers rely on the quantitative approach, which entails collecting data using quantitative measurement instruments on a sample representative of the original community to attain a specific result that is consistent with the research objectives (Kothari, 2004). This strategy was utilised by the researchers to determine the general level of language anxiety among pupils. After analysing the data, the researchers display the results using descriptive analytics. To achieve the second objective of this research article, which is to determine the influence of students' background in learning Arabic on their level of language anxiety, the researchers rely on correlation studies, a descriptive method for determining the relationship between two or more variables.

3.2. Participants

The researchers chose a sample at random for their investigation. The sample consists of 149 students enrolled in classes for Arabic as a third language. Faculty of Business and Management: 73; Faculty of Health Sciences: 38; Faculty of Accountancy: 38. These students represent three distinct levels: TAC401 (Level 1), TAC451 (Level 2), and TAC501 (level 3). (Level 3). Without regard to race or nationality, the researchers pick non-Arabic-speaking pupils learning Arabic as a foreign language.

3.3. Instrument

The data were collected using the Modified Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (MFLCAS), a modified version of the Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). This scale was developed to measure the level of language anxiety among Arabic language students enrolled in a foreign language course. This Likert scale includes five points: Strongly Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Strongly Agree (5). The questionnaire has 33 questions written in Malay to facilitate responses from Malay-speaking students. The Cronbach's Alpha result for this questionnaire's Malay translation was 0.90. In terms of questionnaire distribution, the researchers rely on Google Forms because it is more efficient and time-saving for gathering the essential data. To analyse the data, the researchers used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS IBM Statistics) to extract the mean and standard deviation to determine the level of language anxiety among students in general and the relationship between students' background in Arabic language learning, and the level of language anxiety. Using Cross-Tabulations and One-Way ANOVA in SPSS, the researchers interpreted the analysed data and established the following criteria (Table 1):

Table 1: The level of language anxiety based on the mean score

Level of Language Anxiety	Mean Score
Highest Level of Language Anxiety	5.00 – 4.21
High Level of Language Anxiety	4.20 – 3.41
Medium Level of Language Anxiety	3.40 – 2.61
Low Level of Language Anxiety	2.60 – 1.81
Lowest Level of Language Anxiety	1.80 – 1.00

4. Findings

4.1. The Level of Language Anxiety among Students of Arabic as a Foreign Language Class

The mean and standard deviation were calculated to determine the degree of language anxiety to provide an answer to the previous question. According to the findings presented in [Table 2](#), the level of language anxiety experienced by students taking Arabic as a foreign language was determined to be moderate among 149 students.

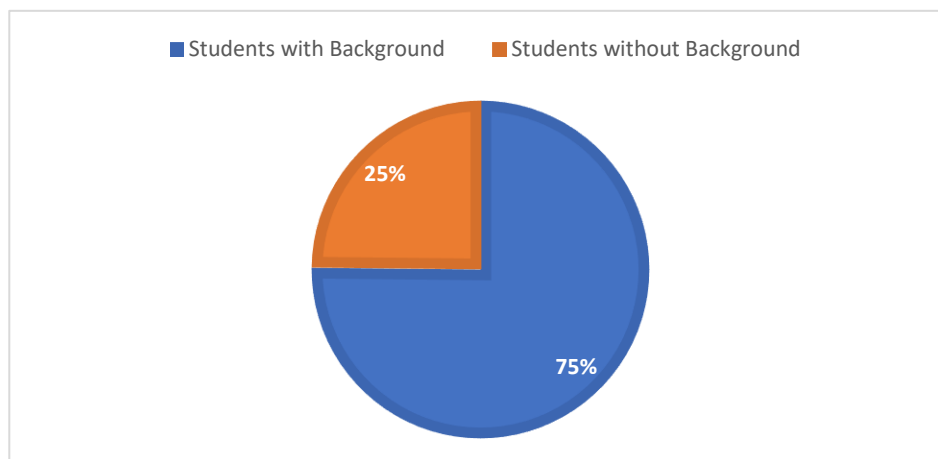
Table 2: Language anxiety level

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Language Anxiety Level
Mean	149	1.36	4.91	2.95	0.82	Moderate
Valid N (listwise)	149					

4.2. The difference between the level of language anxiety among students with a background in learning Arabic and students without a background in learning Arabic.

The accompanying pie chart illustrates these statistics, which show that there are 112 students who have prior experience learning Arabic (representing 75% of the whole student), whereas there are 37 students who do not (representing 25% of the total student) ([Figure 1](#)):

Figure 1: The number of students based on background in learning Arabic



According to the data presented in [Table 3](#) and [Table 4](#), the results suggest that the amount of language anxiety experienced by students who have previous experience studying Arabic is moderate, with a mean score of 2.75. Students who do not come from a history of learning Arabic, on the other hand, have a significantly higher level of language anxiety, with a mean score of 3.57. According to the findings that have been uncovered, the level of language anxiety is determined by the student's prior experience in the study of the Arabic language.

Table 3: Students' background in Learning Arabic Language & Language Anxiety Level

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min	Max
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Yes	112	2.75	0.78	0.74	2.60	2.89	1.36	4.91
No	37	3.57	0.57	0.09	3.38	3.76	1.85	4.36
Total	149	2.95	0.82	0.07	2.82	3.08	1.36	4.91

Table 4: Students background in Learning Arabic Language & Language Anxiety Level

Background in Learning Arabic	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Language Anxiety Level
Yes	112	1.36	4.91	2.75	0.78	Moderate
No	37	1.85	4.36	3.57	0.57	High

5. Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, students who are studying Arabic as a foreign language have a modest amount of anxiety about the language based on the mean value which is 2.95. [Yusri et al. \(2010\)](#) in other research about test anxiety and motivation among Arabic language course students in UiTM uncovered that the level of test anxiety among students is also moderate but nearly a high level.

The second conclusion that can be drawn from the findings is that the amount of language anxiety experienced by students who have no prior experience in the study of Arabic Language is high while those with an academic background in studying Arabic Language is moderate based on the mean value 2.75. Thus, having experience or background in studying Arabic is an effective factor in the level of foreign language anxiety among learners.

The researchers presented a number of potential solutions to the issue of language anxiety in learning Arabic as a foreign language in UiTM, one of which was the formation of support groups both within and outside of Arabic language classes. Second, instructors that make use of productive strategies in the classroom are able to make the Arabic language lessons more engaging for their pupils, which in turn helps to reduce their levels of anxiety. According to [Horwitz et al. \(2010\)](#), educators can aid anxious students either by making the learning environment less stressful or by teaching them how to deal with the anxiety-provoking condition that is already there. Thirdly, the institution ought to try to teach Arabic to students who have no prior experience with the language by providing them with introductory classes in the subject before they enrolled on the subject.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

All procedures carried out in this study that included people were done so with their consent and full acknowledgement, in conformity with all applicable ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors reported no conflicts of interest for this work and declare that there is no potential conflict of interest with respect to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

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