

# Investigating Anxiety in Speaking English as a Foreign Language for Female Students in Yemen

دراسة القلق لدى الطالبات اليمنيات عند تحدث اللغة  
الانجليزية كلغة اجنبية

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## Investigating Anxiety in Speaking English as a Foreign Language for Female Students in Yemen

### Abstract :

This study aims at identifying the levels and potential causes of anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language among Yemeni female students. To achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher adopted the Horwitz et al's (1986) *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale* and distributed it to 31 female English students at an English department at Hadramout University, Yemen. Generally, the study found that the majority of the respondents scored

“average” level of anxiety in speaking English. Additionally, a number of causes affected on provoking their general anxiety with fear of negative evaluation. Finally, the study presented a set of recommendations for the professors, curricula designers and developers, and English learners.

**Keywords:** Foreign language anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, gender.

### المخلص :

النتائج، إجمالاً، إلى أن مستوى القلق "متوسط" عند معظم الطالبات، مع وجود عدد من العوامل تسبب لهذا القلق أساسها الخوف من التقويم السلبي. وعلى ضوء النتائج قدمت الدراسة عدد من التوصيات للأساتذة ومصممي المناهج وطلاب اللغة الإنجليزية.

يهدف هذا البحث لتحديد المستوى والأسباب المحتملة للقلق لدى الطالبات اليمنيات عند تحدث اللغة الإنجليزية كلفة أجنبية. لتحقيق الهدف استخدمت الدراسة "مقياس القلق الصفي للغة الأجنبية" لهارويتز (1986)، وقد تم توزيعه على 31 طالبة بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة حضرموت -اليمن. وأشارت

## 1. Background of the Study

Though Yemen is an Arabic speaking country, the status of the English language has been increased in the last decades as it becomes the most dominant foreign language used in the official, educational, occupational and commercial fields (Al-Quyadi, 2000). The increased status of English in the country has been reflected, for instance, on the increasing number of learners getting enrolled to the English language programmes at public and private universities and institutions (Ali, 2007). Notwithstanding such concerns, research studies have reported that the bulk of Yemeni EFL learners could hardly speak decent English despite years of spoken English training (Zuheer, 2008; Al-Sohbani, 2013). The issue becomes more complex, even at the tertiary educational level in Yemen, as many students have experienced detrimental levels of language anxiety, fear, apprehension, insecurity and unwillingness to communicate particularly when it involves speaking in the English classrooms (Al-Tamimi, 2010; Ezzi, 2012).

Current theories and research in language learning suggest that the problem of foreign language anxiety (hereafter FLA) is a serious impediment to ESL/EFL learners' learning and performance in the English language classrooms (Scovel, 1978; Horwitz et al 1986; Campbell and Ortiz, 1991; Aida, 1994; Dörnyei, 2005; Na, 2007; Alrabai, 2014). FLA as an important affective factor has been found to be correlated with English-learning achievement among different groups of learners in various contexts (Aida, 1994; Alrabai, 2014; Na, 2007). It has been reported that FLA could impair cognitive functioning, disrupt memory, prompt avoidance behaviors, and have other deleterious effects (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

From a different angle, Horwitz et al. (1986: 127-128) proposed that FLA is "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". They argued that FLA is a complex and multidimensional

phenomenon, which manifests itself in students quite differently depending on ethnic background, prior language experience, learner personality and classroom circumstances (Ibid). In the same vein, Zheng (2008) noted that one's uppermost limit of FLA threshold is anything but fixed; it varies from culture to culture, from individual to individual, or even from moment to moment. This view has been advocated by empirical data from a plethora of research among EFL learners in different contexts (Aida, 1994; Kitano, 2001; Na, 2007; Toth, 2008; *Cheng, 2009*; Maouche, 2010; Atef-Vahid & Kashani, 2011; Shabani, 2012; Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013; Oda & Khammat, 2013; Qaddomi, 2013; Alrabai, 2014; Batiha et al., 2014; Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2004; Javid, 2014; Hasan & Fatimah, 2014). These studies found various contributing FLA causes depending on the targeted context and concluded that FLA is a distinct and unique phenomenon that can be distinguished from other types of anxiety and have a negative effect on the language learning process.

As far as Yemeni EFL learners are concerned, there is a scarcity of research that investigated Yemeni EFL learners' FLA. The only reported study was that by Ezzi (2012) which conducted among 163 Yemeni English majors at Hodeidah University. The findings revealed that although the majority of the participants have a high level of FLA, female students scored higher than their male counterparts. However, Ezzi's study overlooked the potential causes of FLA that could affect Yemeni English majors' performance. This gap in the literature besides the growing concern about the deterioration of Yemeni EFL learners' English communication skills have prompted the researcher to analyze the issue at a public university in southern Yemen. The study tried to probe into the causes of FLA among Yemeni female English majors at Hadhramout University. Understanding what specific situations that learners' FLA can possibly stem from, could raise their awareness and help provide pedagogical implications to alleviate their anxiety and, hence, improve their performance abilities in the target language.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

As seen, a growing mass of research in language learning demonstrates that FLA has been experienced by many students when speaking English as a foreign language. Yemeni EFL learners are no exception as shown in a recent study by Ezzi (2012) concerning FLA in speaking English among Yemeni EFL students at Hodeidah University. Similarly, being experienced teaching university students for more than ten years, manifestations of FLA have been observed by the current researcher among female English undergraduates at the Women College of Education, Hadramout University. This informal observation was supported by preliminary interviews with ten of the students. Generally, the findings indicated that most of the interviewees opined that they do experience anxiety and fear when speaking English inside the classroom. As a result, they declared that their feeling of anxiety and apprehension do hinder their performance in presentation activities, small group discussions, negotiating and answering questions in class as well as demonstrating ideas and commenting on certain topics.

Though learner's gender has been recognized as a significant variable in FLA, as revealed by past researchers (e.g. Na, 2007; Al-Saraj, 2014; Hasan and Fatimah, 2014; Rafek et al., 2014, 2015), the study focused on a group of Yemeni female English students at the Women College of Education, Hadramout University. This could be justified as Yemeni female EFL students appeared to be more anxious than males and they constitute the majority of the students in the English departments in almost all the Yemeni universities, as shown by Ezzi (2012). In addition, the targeted context, which could affect students' FLA, may differ from other EFL contexts even in the same country. This segregated system of education reflects the specific educational, social and cultural nature of this Islamic Arabic conservative society. Being in an all-female classroom, issues related to FLA among this group of

female undergraduates could be unique based on their specific language learning experiences and behaviour.

In view of the problems explained above and despite the importance of addressing the potential causes of FLA associated with speaking English, no study has been conducted among Yemeni EFL students, in general, and female undergraduates, in particular. Therefore, the researcher endeavored to carry out this study which could bridge the gap and contribute to provide new information regarding the levels and potential causes of anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language among Yemeni female students at Hadramout University. The findings could also help to alleviate and decrease students' FLA as this complex issue can inhibit their efforts, reduce their motivation, and debilitate their learning of the target language.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The current study aims to identify the levels and potential causes of FLA among Yemeni female English students at Hadramout University.

### **4. Questions of the Study**

**This study attempts to answer the following research questions:**

1. What are the levels of FLA among Yemeni female English students at Hadramout University?
2. What are the potential causes of FLA as perceived by Yemeni female English students at Hadramout University?

### **5. Significance of the Study**

The current investigation is significant because it addresses an important issue which has not been researched before regarding Yemeni female EFL students' FLA. The findings will contribute to provide novel insights which could be added to the current literature in this EFL context. The data will also contribute to provide pedagogical recommendations for the respective professors, curricula designers and English learners. This would be beneficial so that future learning may be improved if courses and teaching techniques are adapted to help this group of female English undergraduates to successfully cope with the anxiety

provoking situations, if any, and make the learning context less stressful and more conducive and comfortable. Although this study deals with unique population and will yield results that cannot always be generalized to other learning contexts, it is hoped that it might help to identify promising areas for more systematic investigation in the future.

## 6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

There are a number of limitations which should be highlighted so as to avoid any overgeneralisations and misinterpretations of the results. First, due to financial and time concerns, the present study was confined to 31 fourth year female English students in the academic year 2014-2015 at Faculty of Women, Hadramout University. Therefore, the findings might be a reflective of the perceptions of those participated in this research regardless of the fact that the number of current subjects exceeds the minimum sample size as stated by Cohen et al. (2006). Second, all the participated subjects were final year students. Senior students were selected to have better judgment regarding their FLA as they were expected to be competent enough in the English language and their achievement level was higher than those students at the lower levels. Also, they were about to graduate and could represent the output of the English programme at the Women College of Education. Taking up this point, students at lower levels were excluded to ensure that “differing levels of language proficiency would not affect the results” (Salehi, 2014: 933). Third, due to time constraints, this study did not take into consideration a number of learning and socio-cultural factors that might have an impact on learners’ FLA. Therefore, the generalisation from the findings should be made with caution. Finally, the pedagogical implications of this study are limited to those which can be based on the participants’ responses.

## 7. Research Methodology

The design of this research is quantitative and descriptive in nature. It employs the survey as a method to collect data to identify



the levels and potential causes of FLA among female English majors at Hadhramout University.

### 7.1. Population and Sampling

The population of the study included all Yemeni EFL female students in the English Department at the Women College of Education, Hadramout University. Senior students (fourth year students) in the academic year 2014-2015 were purposively selected as a sample. They were 31 female English majors, aged from 22-24.

### 7.2. Research Instrument

A survey questionnaire is used as the only instrument for data collection. It consists of two sections. The first section is developed to collect information regarding the participants' background. The second part was an Arabic version of Horwitz *et al.*'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The FLCAS is adopted because it has been considered as the most reliable and valid method used by many researchers all over the world to investigate FLA among ESL/EFL learners (e.g. Horwitz *et al.*, 1986; Young, 1991; Lei, 2004; Cheng, 2009; Qaddomi, 2013; Alrabai, 2014; Yuliana, 2014). The FLCAS consists of 33 items on a five-point Likert scale (5 being "*strongly agree*").

### 7.3. Data Analysis

In the analysis, the Likert scale of the FLCAS has been quantified by assigning points to each of the responses. The scores of the **positive** items were calculated using a 5-point scale with 1 being "strongly disagree" and 5 being "strongly agree". However, to reflect increasing anxiety, the pointing system is reversed (5 being "*strongly disagree*") for the **negative** questions (items: 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, & 32). As a result, the higher score obtained indicates a high level of FLA and vice versa.

## 8. Results and Discussions :

The results of this study were two folds: 1) determining the students' levels of FLA among the participants, and 2) identifying the potential causes of their FLA. For ease of reference, the

findings are presented and discussed according to the order of the survey questions.

### 8.1 Levels of Anxiety

Regarding the participants' level of FLA, the data in Table 1 below reveal that the overall mean score of the FLCAS items is **2.9316**. Based on Horwitz et al.' (1986) interpretation, this indicates that the majority of the current female English majors have a tendency to feel moderately anxious. This finding contradicts that of Ezzi (2012) in which she reported that the majority of female English majors at Hodeidah University had high levels of FLA. A plausible interpretation of such a difference might be due to the social context because, unlike Ezzi' research, the present study was conducted among female students in a women college of education. The social dynamics (e.g., competitiveness) in an all-female classroom might differ from that in a male-female classroom (Al-Saraj, 2014). Also, in the latter classroom, causes related to confidence, security and superiority should be taken into consideration as female students are found to feel more anxious when it comes to oral presentation especially in front of male students (Tom *et. al*, 2013; Rafek *et. al*, 2014).

To recapitulate, the quality of teaching, learners' cultural and educational background and a number of variables might also cause such a difference between the students' FLA levels in the two Yemeni universities which needs further research.

**Table 1: The overall mean of the participants' FALCAS scores**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
<b>Participants` Scores</b>	31	2.000	3.8387	2.9316

### 8.2 Causes of Anxiety

To answer the second research question, the results of the descriptive analysis and the percentages of the participants who selected strongly agree or agree (SA+A), neutral (N), and disagree or strongly disagree (D+SD) are presented and discussed. The items with the highest means and/or percentages could identify the

most effective causes that provoke anxiety as perceived by the participating female English majors.

Generally, the descending order of the mean scores in Tables 2, 3 and 4 below demonstrated that 14 out of 33 FLCAS items obtained mean values higher than 3. This indicates that significant FLA is experienced by many students in response to at least some aspects of foreign language learning. The fourteen items could be clustered around the three main domains which may have a vital impact on the participants' FLA as revealed by previous researchers (e.g. Horwitz et al., 1986; Na, 2007; Chia-Hu, 2009; Maouche, 2010; Shabani, 2012; Akbari & Sadeghi, 2013; Oda & Khammat, 2013; Qaddomi, 2013; Alrabai, 2014; Javid, 2014). The anxiety domains include, **fear of negative evaluation** (items 3, 7, 13, 15, 23, & 33), **communication apprehension** (items 1, 9, 18, 24 & 27), and **test anxiety** (items 2, 12 & 19).

As seen, six out of 14 items which highly ranked by the participants are classified under the **fear of negative evaluation** domain indicating that it has been viewed as the most effective FLA domain for these EFL learners. Fear of negative evaluation refers to apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate one-self negatively (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). It usually occurs when EFL learners assume that they are not capable to achieve the appropriate social impression (Xiaoyan 2009; Williams & Andrade, 2008). In the current survey, analysis of the six highly-ranked items, as shown in Table 2 below, demonstrated that students' *fear of negative evaluation* arises from certain classroom practices, such as *speaking in front of the class*, or *being asked to answer questions without preparation* (items 3, 13 & 33).

**Table 2: The means and percentages of the FALCAS scores related to “Fear of Negative Evaluation” FLA domain**

No.	FLCAS Item	Mean	Percentages (%)		
			SA+A	N	D+SD
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	3.8387	77.4	9.6	13
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	3.5484	61.3	12.9	25.8
33	I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.	3.5161	67.7	6.5	25.8
23	I always feel that the other students speak the language better than I do.	3.4839	58.1	16.1	25.8
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	3.3548	51.6	22.6	25.8
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.3226	51.6	16.1	32.3
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	2.8387	35.5	12.9	51.6
31	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.	2.8065	45.2	6.5	48.4
25	Language class move so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	2.2581	16.1	19.4	64.5

Moreover, personal concerns of *being negatively evaluated by teachers* (item15) or *being less competent than other students* (items 7 & 23) are also highlighted by the majority of the subjects. Similar to the current study, former research among EFL learners in the Asian countries (e.g. Aydin, 1999; Cheng et al, 1999; Na, 2007; Effiong, 2013; Rafek et al, 2015) and in the Arab World (e.g. Javid, 2011; Batiha et. al.,2014; Javid, 2014) found that EFL students experienced more fear of negative evaluation than any other kind of anxiety.

**Communicative apprehension** was the second type of anxiety most experienced by the respondents. It has been defined as a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people (Horwitz et al., 1986). As demonstrated in the

following table, the participants assigned the high mean scores to five items (i.e. 1, 9, 18, 24 & 27) related to this FLA domain.

**Table 3: The means and percentages of the participants' FALCAS scores related to "Communication Apprehension" FLA domain**

No.	FLCAS Item	Mean	Percentages (%)		
			SA+A	N	D+SD
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	3.5806	67.7	6.5	25.8
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	3.2581	54.8	16	29.1
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	3.2258	29	29	42
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.	3.1290	38.7	25.8	35.5
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.	3.1290	54.8	9.7	35.5
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	3.0000	51.6	6.5	41.9
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.	2.9355	35.5	19.3	45.2
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.	2.9032	41.9	6.5	51.6
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	2.6452	51.6	29	19.4
14	It would not be nervous speaking in the foreign language with native speakers.	2.5484	48.4	45.2	16.1

The results in Table 3 show that item 9 (*I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class*) was ranked first with a mean value **3.5806** indicating that *speaking extemporaneously* without prior preparation has been perceived as a significant cause of FLA for many of the subjects. This fear of communicating in foreign language classes because of lack of preparation has also been

established by previous researchers as a major cause of ESL/EFL students' anxiety, apprehension and nervousness (Horwitz *et al.* 1986; Tsui, 1996; Marwan, 2007; Hamouda, 2013; Alrabai, 2014; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014). Marwan (2007), for instance, investigated Indonesian students' FLA and found lack of preparation as the main cause of anxiety among all learners irrespective of their language proficiency. Extemporaneous speaking is still considered as an anxiety provoking challenge for native speakers of the English language (e.g., Daly, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1990). Other related items which were highly endorsed by the subjects are: “*I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class*” (M=3.2581), “*I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class*” (M=3.2258), “*I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students*” (M=3.1290) and “*I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class*” (M=3.1290). They are reflective of students' **low self-confidence** when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking in front of the whole class. This finding is in line with prior researchers which reported that speaking “on the spot” or in the presence of other people is seen as an influential anxiety-provoking situation of many ESL/EFL students (Horwitz *et al.* 1986; Chan & Wu, 2004; Ebrahimi, 2013; Alrabai, 2014).

**Test anxiety** is the last component of FLA which could be a contributing cause to the negative attitudes with which EFL learners frequently approach their English language classes. Though test anxiety is likely to be a general anxiety problem rather than being specific to foreign language learning (Jones, 2004), three statements (2, 12 and 19) related to FLA received high mean scores by the present subjects as shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4: The means and percentages of the participants' FALCAS scores related to “Test Anxiety” FLA domain**

No.	FLCAS Item	Mean	Percentages (%)		
			SA+A	N	D+SD
12	In language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know.	3.6774	61.3	22.6	16.1
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.	3.1935	29.1	22.5	48.4
19	I am afraid that my language teacher is	3.0323	45.2	12.9	41.9

	ready to correct every mistake I make.				
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	2.8710	35.5	25.8	38.7
28	When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	2.8710	38.7	38.7	22.6
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	2.8387	32.3	29	38.7
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	2.7097	32.3	51.6	16.1
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	2.6774	48.4	25.8	25.8
6	During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	2.6129	22.6	16.1	61.3
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	2.2903	71	9.7	19.3
16	Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	2.2581	22.6	6.5	71
17	I often feel like not going to my language class.	2.2581	19.4	16.1	64.5
21	The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	2.1290	9.7	12.9	77.4
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.	2.0000	22.6	3.2	74.2

The data reveals that item 12 (*in language class, I can get so nervous when I forget things I know*) got the highest mean value (mean= 3.6774) indicating that learners' apprehension could be attributed to the *inability to retrieve prior knowledge from memory*. This could be attributed to a number of causes among them is their **lack of vocabulary** (Horwitz et al, 1986; Phillips, 1992; Batiha et al, 2014). According to Batiha et al (2014), having enough vocabulary will certainly help ESL/EFL learners to feel more confident and being deficient in vocabulary, on the other hand, will definitely elevate their level of unpleasantness and frustration while speaking in English. The remaining two items (2 & 19), which have being endorsed by many of the participants, revealed

that the students also develop a tendency to feel anxious due to reasons such as *fear of committing mistakes* (item 2), and *anxiety over getting corrected by the teacher* (item 19). On this regard, Tóth (2011) argued that EFL learners' fear of mistakes is not only the indicator of anxiety but it emphasizes learners' negative feelings of being incessantly corrected, monitored and tested by the teacher, particularly in front of peers. Such apprehension of committing mistakes and the continuous evaluation and overcorrection of learners' errors have been empirically tested as significantly contribute to raise EFL students' FLA when communicating in the target language inside the class (Tóth, 2011; Alrabai, 2014; and Batiha et. al., 2014).

Contrariwise, the lowest ranking FLCAS items could help identify the causes that contribute the **least** in provoking general FLA as perceived by the students represented in this study. As depicted in Table 4, five items (i.e. 26, 21, 16, 17 & 22) obtained mean values lower than 2.5. These items could reveal interesting trends towards the potential aspects of EFL learning in which learners might feel more comfortable with. For instance, as items 21 & 26 have received negative endorsement by the majority of the subjects, they indicate that despite whatever level or type of anxiety the cohort of this study has, they are positive about attending the English language class. Moreover, the low rankings for items 16, 17 & 22 suggest that as the students considered speaking extemporaneously as a nightmare, most of them explicitly stated that having adequate time to prepare well prior being involved in any activities inside the classroom would definitely help increasing their confidence level and decrease their FLA.

## 9. Conclusion and Implications

This survey is conducted to identify the levels and potential causes of FLA among Yemeni female English majors at Hadramout University. Overall, the results reveal that the participants have medium level of FLA and do feel anxious in certain situations most of which associated with learners' *fear of negative evaluation* as shown by six of the top-rated FLCAS statements. This appears to support Gardner's (1985: 34) view in that, not all forms of anxiety



would influence ESL/EFL learning, but “a construct of anxiety which is not general but instead is specific to the language acquisition context is related to second language achievement”.

What is worth noting here is that the participants’ fear of being *put on the spot unpredictably* or being *negatively assessed by teachers*, and their *low self-perceived ability compared to peers* do ignite and intensify their speaking anxiety and unwillingness to communicate inside the class. To help decrease their *apprehension of presenting in front of others*, the students are advised to improve their presentation skills and the related preparation and delivery skills and sub-skills. For the *negative competition with peers*, *cooperative learning practices* might be implemented as they proved to enhance positive competition and helped students build, maintain, and appropriately modify both interdependent and cooperative relationships with others to succeed in achieving goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 2005).

The survey shows that *speaking spontaneously* and *lack of confidence* represent major causes of *communication apprehension* for the current female English majors. However, this does not lead to the conclusion that spontaneous speaking should be avoided in classroom. On the contrary, previous researchers found that implementing interesting spontaneous speaking activities, that involve group interaction with less peers’ evaluation and more on developing cooperation among members, could help students with different performance and anxiety levels to participate in the communicative activities and increase their comfortableness during the process of learning (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Yalçın & İnceçay, 2014).

Finally, the study reveals that *test anxiety* might arise from learners’ fear of *forgetting things they know*, *committing mistakes*, and the *manner in which the errors might be corrected by the teacher*. The present subjects may match those of Batiha et. al. (2014), in which Arab EFL students appeared not to consider language mistakes as a source of negative impression from lecturer and students and an intimidation to their image as well. To overcome this problem, as Horwitz *et al.* (1986) suggested, learners

should be informed that mistakes are not a sign of failure but rather a normal aspect of the language learning process and that it is through making mistakes that one acquires language proficiency. Moreover, as these students appear to be acutely sensitive to target language corrections, the respective teachers are advised to develop rapport with the learners and correct their errors in a supportive manner, i.e., by selecting error correction techniques based on instructional philosophy and on reducing defensive reactions in students (Ibid).

The findings can be used as a beginning point for providing some pedagogical implications and recommendations that should be taken into consideration by professors, curricula designers, and EFL students in the Department of English, Faculty of Women at Hadramout University. The pedagogical implications and recommendations are as follows:

- The English language instructors should acknowledge the existence of the feeling of FLA and take initiatives to reduce its effects by implementing appropriate teaching techniques which could provide a learning-supportive environment for the students. They are advised to use cooperative learning activities, and apply appropriate error correction techniques to help the students to overcome the anxiety-related behaviours, as identified in the current study.
- Curricula developers could help instructors to cater for their learners' specific FLA problems by adapting or designing suitable training courses for the students. In fact, research studies among ESL/EFL learners (e.g. Vest et al.'s, 1996; Radzuan and Kaur, 2010) found that anxiety in speaking English was experienced by only those who had not taken public speaking courses during their university years. Therefore, a public speaking course should be designed and offered as a compulsory subject for all the students in the English Department at Hadramout University. The course could help the students to understand the different anxiety-related situations and develop specific speaking skills on how to prepare and deliver their speech confidently and without blundering.

- As the findings indicated that most of students got worried of negative evaluation by others, therefore, they are advised to be confident on their abilities and to direct their attention away from self-centred worries when they are speaking English inside the classroom, as recommended by Horwitz et al (1986).

## 10. Future Directions

The present study provides some preliminary evidence for the levels and potential causes of anxiety in speaking English as a foreign language among Yemeni female students. Several directions for further research evolve from this first study. For instance, to enhance the generalizability of the results, further research with larger samples, particularly, female English majors, and more data collection techniques could be useful. It would also be of interest to conduct a more comprehensive research which takes into consideration a number of learning and socio-cultural factors that might have an impact on learners' FLA. Learner background, cultural knowledge, and student motivation for studying the language are some of the other factors to be considered in future studies of FLA among Yemen Arabic EFL learners. Furthermore, to gain different perspectives and fully understand Yemeni English majors FLA, male students and teachers from the same university and/or other universities could be involved in future studies.

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