

## **ANXIETY IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE AT A TERTIARY STAGE: CAUSES AND SOLUTIONS**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study aimed at exploring the causes of anxiety that freshmen English as a second language college students may feel when they transfer from secondary education to tertiary education. The sample of the study consisted of 70 female students enrolling in Level 1 Foundation ESL Center in the Community College of Qatar. To collect the data, a Five-Likert 40 item questionnaire was designed by the researcher. Its items were based on Horwitz's battery for anxiety detection, with some adaptation to the specific situation in CCQ. Means and standard deviations of the subjects' answers revealed that their anxiety was due to three main domains: communication apprehension due to discrepancy between secondary education and college education, test anxiety due to the unfair breakdown of grades, and the unified tests and fear of negative evaluation. The researcher suggests several recommendations for instructors, students, and administrators to solve the problem of students' anxiety.*

**KEYWORDS:** Stress-Free Classroom, ESL Classroom Anxiety, Community College Of Qatar, Anxiety

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### **INTRODUCTION**

There are many factors that affect learners' receptivity to all subjects in general and to a second language in specific. These factors include attention span, anxiety, classroom procedures, self-esteem, anomie (Cultural shock), competitiveness, motivation, and classroom climate. A point to emphasize, here, is that "these factors are correlated and intertwined in the sense that each affects the others and is affected by them.: (Brown, 2001:150). In this study, the researcher investigated one of the affective factors that plays a great role in college students' feeling of security. It is anxiety that is said to be the factor which influences students in different ways.. Researchers have found that one-third of foreign language learners experience at least a moderate level of foreign language anxiety (Bailey, 1983; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Young, 1991; Macintyre & Gardner, 1994; Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 2001; and Le, 2004). Researchers have also pointed out that anxiety has a double-sword influence. It might be motivating or debilitating to students (Young 1991, Horwitz, 2001). This depends on how teachers, parents, and administrators perceive this challenge and deal with it. The current study investigated the factors that lead to the feeling of anxiety of Foundation Level 1 students who learn English as a second Language (ESL) in the Community College of Qatar.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Anxiety, as one of the affective factors that have a great impact on foreign language learners has been studied since 1970s. Anxiety is described by psychologists as a "state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object" (Hilgard, Atkinson, & Atkinson, 1971 cited in Scovel, 1991: 18). It has been known to have a serious effect not only on students' language performance but also on their further L2 learning processes. Horwitz,

Horwitz and Cope (1986:125) define anxiety as “The subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. In fact, anxiety is a complex multidimensional phenomenon, which involves many other independent variables.” It is intertwined with attention, self-esteem, motivation (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope 1986:125)

Psychologists used the term “specific anxiety reaction” to differentiate people who are generally anxious in a variety of situations from those who are anxious only in specific situations ( Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope 1986: 128) . On the other hand, researchers found out that the kind of anxiety which affects foreign language learners is of a special kind called by Horwitz et al (1991: 27) “*Foreign language Anxiety.*” Language anxiety “is seen as a stable personality trait referring to the propensity for an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking...in the second language” (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993:5; Mitchell & Myles, 2004:48). Researchers have talked about "transitional anxiety and nesting patterns as sorts of anxiety associated with students' moving from a country to another to learn languages or transferring from a college to college or class to class. This anxiety causes inability of setting into a new environment. This, of course, leads to students' inability of concentration. Researchers have also identified anxiety associated with school tasks such as test-taking, speaking English, and working in groups. Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, ( 1986: 127) described the some symptoms that can be observed on anxious students. These include worry, difficulty in concentrating, forgetfulness, sweat, and palpitations. Students frequently exhibit avoidance behavior such as missing class, avoiding speaking, and postponing homework..

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) were some of the remarkable pioneers to study the relationship between anxiety and language. They offered an anxiety inventory called “the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)” to measure foreign language anxiety. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety comprises three componential sources, especially in relation to various kinds of L2 activities that the learners perform in the classroom:

- 1) communication apprehension
- 2) test anxiety
- 3) fear of negative evaluation.

Communication apprehension, which generally refers to a type of anxiety experienced in interpersonal communicative settings, is relevant to second/foreign language learning contexts. and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teacher and peers (Horwitz et al., 1986). Some students may get anxious in speaking in class or be reluctant to participate in any task as they might be afraid of being mocked at by their teachers or classmates; this is fear of negative evaluation.

Young (1991) also offered an extensive list of the potential sources of language anxiety; some of which are associated with the learner, some with the teacher, and others are related to the instructional practice. Young argues that language anxiety can arise from:

1. personal and interpersonal anxieties;
2. learner beliefs about language learning;
3. instructor’s beliefs about language teaching;

4. instructor-learner actions;
5. classroom procedures; and
6. language testing.

Young (1991:428) pointed out that there are three phases of anxiety, which in relation with the desire to success construct a great source of hindrance to students' receptivity of a foreign language.

- 1. If a person guarantees success and finds that there is no possibility for success, he will start to have debilitating anxiety and so he will not do his best to succeed.*
- 2. If the person knows that success is not guaranteed but that making a real effort will make him succeed, here anxiety will spur on him and so he may do better.*
- 3. If the learner likes to succeed but feels that no matter hard he tries, he is most likely to fail, then his anxiety makes the matter more difficult.(p.428).*

One may get surprised when knowing that some sort of anxiety is needed for success. This is called "Facilitating Anxiety" or 'helpful anxiety' as Oxford (1999) called it. This is a sort of anxiety that is needed to accomplish a task. Researchers emphasize the fact that facilitative anxiety correlates positively with language learning (Ehrman and Oxford, 1995). On the other hand, Brown (2001: 151) stated that a learner might be "wishy-washy" lacking this facilitative tension. Brown says that this may lead to another kind of anxiety, the debilitating anxiety or harmful anxiety in the sense that it gets in the way of learning. As Brown (2001: 152) points out, anxiety lies in a continuum of two extremes. Any extreme might be dangerous. Although many students are afraid of tests in general, those who are required to take them in a foreign/second language might feel more pressure, challenged by the fact that they need to recall and coordinate many grammar points at the same time during the limited test period. As a result, they may put down the wrong answer or simply "freeze up" due to nervousness, even if they know the correct answer (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1994). All this is due to debilitating anxiety. Debilitating anxiety may work as a mental block to cognitive performance at all three cognitive stages: Input, Processing, and Output (Brown, 2001). Researchers have found out that foreign language anxiety has a wide range of potential negative effects on foreign language learning (Luo, 2013). In Krashen's (1985) affective filter hypothesis, anxiety is said to prevent Language learners receptivity in the classroom from acquiring language properly.

A study by Macintyre and Gardner (1994) in which they investigated 97 college students learning French revealed that compared with more relaxed learners, those with anxiety found it more difficult to express their own views and tended to underestimate their own abilities. They also found out that in the three stages of language acquisition, that is, input, processing and output, anxiety and learning achievement are negatively correlated. Gardener and MacIntyre (1994) also found out that the more debilitating anxiety learners have, the less likely they do well at speech skills. They also concluded that the older the learners are and the further they get in the compulsory school system, the more anxious they will be.

The matter will get worse if students have "Trait Anxiety". This anxiety is relatively permanent personality feature that some people are predisposed to be anxious easily. But "State Anxiety" is less stable and is evoked by a particular set of temporary circumstances. Once these circumstances are removed or reduced, the learners' receptivity will be enhanced. As for

language learning, State anxiety is an acknowledged feature. Language teaching is known as a factor that deprives learners of their normal means of communication. It also takes something away from their humanness especially when they are forced to speak the new language, banishing their native language. The inability to express themselves well and the inability to show their own personality and intelligence lead them to anxiety. Thus, for learning to happen, debilitating anxiety needs to be minimized and replaced by a state of relaxed concentration. This needs much effort from teachers to help their students to stop being anxious. (Gardener and MacIntyre (1994).

As Gardner and MacIntyre (1993:5) also noted, such feelings of apprehension can be characterized by "derogatory self-related cognition, feelings of apprehension, and physiological responses such as increased heart rate.

Researchers also identified the causes of language anxiety:

1. Learners' self - perceptions about others (peers, teachers, interlocutors, etc.) and target language communication situations, his/her beliefs about L2/FL.
2. insufficient command of the target language (Sparks and Ganschow; cited in Horwitz, 2001: 118). L2learners may find it difficult to acquire the four language skills properly due to the fact that their secondary teachers were not pedagogically professional (Sparks and Ganschow; cited in Horwitz, 2001: 118)
3. Sometimes, such feelings as ethnicity, foreignness, inferiority and superiority (Gardner cited in Horwitz & Young, 1991: viii) may cause anxiety that hinders language learning
4. Gender, social status, job positions may also cause anxiety. In some countries, the co-educational classes may cause female students to be anxious.
5. Lack of adequate exposure to the target language as many colleges and schools may use students' native language and translation in teaching.
6. Even in small group discussions, for instance, some learners might feel anxious for fear of negative evaluation from their peers, possibly resulting in being quiet and reticent, contrary to their initial intention to participate. Such psychological dilemmas of L2 learners between willingness to speak up in the classroom and fear of losing their self-esteem in front of others seems to be a ubiquitous phenomenon in second/foreign language classroom settings (Bailey, 1983; Cohen & Norst, 1989)

Palacios (1998) found out that speaking caused the most anxiety among the learners. Price (1991) reported that the most anxiety-provoking thing in learning a foreign language, according to her students, was to speak the target language in front of their peers. Experiencing peer rejection can produce heightened anxiety (e.g. worry over being teased or left out) which interferes with concentration in the classroom and impedes children's acquisition and retention of information (Nansel, Overpeck, Pilla, Ruan, Simons- Marton, & Scheidt, 2001)

A study conducted by Kota Ohata (2006) explored the nature of language anxiety from the perspective of five Japanese learners of English (ESL), especially in reference to their self-reflective accounts of emotional difficulties encountered in the U.S. college settings. Through the use of an in-depth qualitative interview format, Ohata's study attempted to identify potential sources of anxiety relevant to their affective needs or concerns as Japanese ESL

learners in a cross-cultural learning environment. As the interview findings indicated, characteristics of language anxiety exhibited by the participants seem to be quite influenced by Japanese cultural norms or expectations acquired through numerous socialization processes in Japan. Using Young's (1991) six sources of language anxiety as a theoretical guideline for data collection and analysis, Ohata also discussed some of the influences or impacts of those anxiety-provoking factors on L2 learning, along with some implications for further research on language anxiety and for ESL teaching. Other studies (Lei, 2004; Tang, 2005; Wang, 2003; Xue, 2005) also found out strong debilitating impact of Anxiety on second language learners' achievement. It is worth noting that most of the previously-mentioned studies used Horwitz's FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) to investigate learners' anxiety.

In an Iranian context, Hashimi (2011) investigated the causes of anxiety of 60 university students enrolling in EFL classes majoring in English translation and literature. He used structured interviews and focus groups. The results revealed high levels of language anxiety in most of the learners due to highly strict classroom environment. The subjects of Hashimi's study blamed the classroom environment for their anxiety as they feel more anxious and under stress in the classroom environments that follow the traditional learning systems where the learners have to constantly drill or repeat some tiresome tasks like machines (e.g. audio-lingual language teaching method), whereas they feel relaxed and less stressful in collaborative classroom. Hashimi found out that the lack of exposure and some cultural consideration also cause students' anxiety. Tanveer (2007) pointed out that teachers who focused on rehearsals and rote learning make students anxious to remember everything by heart as they were taught. On the other hand, some other studies revealed no relationship between language achievement and anxiety. In Zhang Baoyan's (1996) study of English learners in Taiwan, the results showed that there was no relationship between anxiety and learning achievement.

Kartini (2017) used a questionnaire to investigate the factors that make a sample of 31 students of English in UMM feel anxious in learning English in ESP speaking program. The sample was 31 students of English at UMM. The finding showed that the students' anxiety in learning English of ESP speaking program was attributed to many factors: the difficulty in speaking English and feeling worried about making mistakes when they speak in front of class; factors related to the classroom procedures; factors related to the instructor's accent; factors students feeling that their classmates are smarter than themselves; students feeling of lack of ability and lack of confidence due to their low achievement in their exams.

In an Indonesian context, Batiha, Noor, Mustafa (2014) used a mixed-method approach to investigate the factors that cause EFL classroom anxiety from the perspective of Arab postgraduate students in UKM. The sample study consisted of thirty four postgraduate Arab students majoring in English. Their study instruments were The FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) and focus group interviews. The Results of the study suggested that test anxiety, fear of failing the course, instructor-learner interaction, vocabulary, negative evaluation, and high expectations were factors that provoked the general FL classroom anxiety the most.

In Jordan, Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin & Abdel-Rahman (2013) explored the effect of anxiety on EFL reading skill of EFL students at Yarmouk University. They used observation, semi-structured interviews and diaries to collect data from six informants with different levels of English language proficiency. The findings of the study revealed that there were two aspects of foreign language reading anxiety: personal factor and text feature. Under the concept of personal factor there were also two main sources of foreign language reading anxiety: fear of



making errors and worry about reading effects. On the other hand, there were three main sources of foreign language reading anxiety under the concept of text feature: unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture. The five main sources of foreign language reading anxiety were arranged according to their occurrences and percentages in the study. Implications to the study and recommendations for further research were considered.

Kress's (2015) study investigated Arabic speaking high school students and teachers' perceptions of the factors that correlate with reading anxiety. A five point Likert scale survey adapted from the research of Ahmad et al. (2013) was implemented to investigate student perceptions. Observations and interviews were conducted to investigate teacher perceptions. Strategy instruction was examined through observations to see whether or not teachers were incorporating strategies within the classroom to reduce reading anxiety. It was found that the Arabic students were suffering from reading anxiety and that teachers found it difficult to generate effective strategies to alleviate their reading anxiety.

On a sample of 100 university students from the college of Education at Princess Nora University in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sadiq's study (2017) answered the questions: what is the level of language anxiety among EFL students in the faculty of education at Princes Nora University? 2) Are there any significant relation between the level of language anxiety and the following variables: (a) year in the specific program, and (b) students age? Sadiq utilized the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). The researcher found out there is a significant correlation between the study variables and anxiety.

In an attempt to explore the sources of anxiety in the Jordanian academic context and to measure the extent of those sources in the Jordanian EFL context, *Ahmad, Al-Shboul, Nordin, Abdul Rahman, Burhan, and Madarsha (2013)* used A cross-sectional survey of 408 undergraduate students who were taking Basic English courses. The proposed theoretical framework was tested to measure the prevalence of the sources of foreign language reading anxiety to reveal that there were two aspects of foreign language reading anxiety: personal factors and text features. Under the concept of personal factors, there were two main sources of foreign language reading anxiety: fear of making errors and worry about reading effects. On the other hand, there were three main sources of foreign language reading anxiety under the concept of text features; unknown vocabulary, unfamiliar topic, and unfamiliar culture.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In the current study, the researcher aimed to investigate the causes of anxiety of Level 1 English as a Second Language students in the Foundation level in the Community College of Qatar.

### **Problem of the Study**

There is a general consensus among most scholars, educationalists, and educational psychologists that there is a great influence of affective factors on students' achievement and attitudes towards their educational institution. In fact, conducting the current study came as a result of two main problems. First, there is a noticeable gap in research conducted on the interrelationship between affective factors and learning English as a second language in the Gulf in general and in the State of Qatar in particular. The other rationale behind conducting the current research is related to local specific needs and dilemmas that have been raised up in

the Community College of Qatar, the educational institution that the current researcher works at. There is a wide and noticeable complaint in CCQ that most of Foundation Level 1 students showed signs of discomfort, apprehension and anxiety in the English classes. They leave the classroom to the restroom many times; they absent themselves on the exam days, they pretend having headache or stomachache to leave the class, especially during the speaking activities; they always keep silent, they avoid asking questions; they ask to drink water through exams; they ask for tissues to wipe their sweating palms; and finally they got bad grades in their exams. This is a wide-spread challenge to teachers that has made the researcher of the current study, who is an instructor in CCQ, to investigate this psychological phenomenon. Hopefully, the findings of the study will help the researcher to suggest solutions to this problem.

### Question of the Study

The research attempted to answer the following question:

What are the causes of English as a second language Level 1 students' anxiety?

### Definitions of Terms

**Anxiety:** Medical News Today on <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/info/anxiety> uses **anxiety** as a general term for several disorders that cause nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worrying. These disorders affect how we feel and behave, and they can manifest real physical symptoms. Horwitz (1986) defines anxiety as 'a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system' There are three types of anxiety: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. Trait anxiety, as Scovel (1978) (cited in Ellis, 1994: 479) noted is a stable personality characteristic that refers to "a more permanent predisposition to be anxious", while state and situation-specific anxiety refers to the persistent and multi-faceted nature of some anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a: cited in 2001: 113). It is aroused by a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation (Ellis, 1994: 480; Brown 2001).

**Second or Foreign Language Anxiety** is a term used by researchers to refer to anxiety that is associated with learning a new language. It refers to the apprehension experienced when the learner is forced to use the language he is learning in speaking, writing, and tests (Young, 1991).

**Level 1 students** are those students who pass the placement test as a prerequisite to register in the Foundation Program in the Community College of Qatar. They are placed in Level 1 as their score in the college Accuplacer placement test is 150-225 out of 500.

### Significant of the Study

To the researcher's amazement, the intensive literature review conducted for this study revealed that there is no single study conducted in Qatar to investigate the sources of ESL college students and its expected relationship to students' achievement. Thus, the current study is the first one in the State of Qatar Secondary and Tertiary education to investigate the sources of ESL/EFL learning.

The findings of the study will hopefully benefit the students, college instructors, Qatari secondary schools teachers, college administrators, the college counseling department, and the college Students' Affairs Committee -The SAC. First, secondary teachers can realize that their

roles, pedagogical strategies and classroom techniques inevitably affect their students' psychological attitudes to learn English. They can increase students' anxiety or lessen it. The college instructors can get familiar of the causes of their students' anxiety to learn English, so they can easily use this study recommendations to create non-stressful classroom environment in their teaching techniques and classroom management procedures and improve their students' self-confidence and enhance their self-esteem in different classroom activities. The SAC would hopefully decree some general community-level co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that help level 1 students mingle in the college life and feel they are significant members in their college community. Students themselves will be told about the results in hoping that clarifying the inner sources of their anxiety, they will be able to feel relaxed. Administrators and college counseling department will definitely use the results of this study to design programs, such as lectures, case studies, or anxiety-reduction strategies to help students lessen such feelings of worry, fear, or obsession.

## **Study Methodology**

### **Study Population and Sample**

The study population consisted of all PM and AM female students studying English as a second language in the foundation level (1) "the freshmen" in CCQ- C-Ring Campus- in the Second Quarter of the academic year 2017-2018, considering that studying in the foundation level five quarters. Thus the population was 229 students.

The sample of the study was chosen by convenient sampling. The researcher visited level 1 classes and distributed the questionnaire to the available students. Thus the sample constituted the female students who answered the questionnaire because they were present in the college on the days the questionnaire was administered. The total of the sample was (70)

### **Data Collection**

#### **Instrument of the study**

To collect the data, the researcher of the current study created a 5-Likert questionnaire, which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree, to explore the reasons of Level 1 students' anxiety to learn English. This study questionnaire consisted of 40 items. The questionnaire adapted many international anxiety questionnaires to meet this study sample specific case and culture. The adapted questionnaires were:

1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) that was designed by Horwitz (1986): Horwitz questionnaire consists of 33 statements, of which 8 items were for communication anxiety (1, 9, 14, 18, 24, 27, 29, 32), 9 items for fear of negative evaluation (3, 7, 13, 15, 20, 23, 25, 31, 33) and 5 items for test anxiety (2, 8, 10, 19, 21). As for the remaining 11 items, they were put in a group which was named anxiety of English classes. The respondents were asked to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strong disagreement") to 5 ("strong agreement").
2. Lee's Anxiety Questionnaire(2014) This is the Chinese version of the FLCAS.
3. Cerbin (2011) Reducing Test Anxiety Scale



### Validity of the Study Instrument

To establish the validity of the study questionnaire that was created by the researcher and to test the questionnaire for clarity and to provide a coherent research questionnaire, a macro review that covers all the research constructs was accurately performed by an academic jury of ESL instructors from the Community College of Qatar and other experts in psychologists and college councilors. The jury was requested to verify the sincerity of the questionnaire items, their wording, their relationship to the topic. The questionnaire was adjusted according to their feedback.

### Reliability of the study instrument

To calculate the stability of the study instrument, the researcher used the equation of internal consistency using test Cronbach's alpha shown in **Table (2)** the test results where the values of Cronbach alpha for all variables of the study and identification of generally higher (60%) which is acceptable in the research and studies, which gives the questionnaire as a whole the reliability coefficient was (0.944).

### Data analysis techniques

To answer the study questions and hypothesis which were formulated to examine the **Causes of ESL Foundation Level (1) students' anxiety to learn English**, a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the collected data and test the research hypotheses was used. The following statistical techniques and tests were used in data analysis:

1. Cronbach's Alpha reliability (a) to measure strength of the correlation and coherence between questionnaire items and highlights the stability of consistency with which the instrument is measuring the concept and helps to assess the 'goodness' of a measure.
2. Descriptive Statistical Techniques: these included means and standard deviations. These techniques were used to illustrate respondents to study fields.
3. The research type scale included five Likert scale as follows:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

Relative importance, assigned due to:

Class Interval =  $\frac{\text{Maximum Class} - \text{Minimum Class}}{\text{Number of Level}}$

$$\text{Class Interval} = \frac{5 - 1}{3} = \frac{4}{3} = 1.33$$

- The Low degree from 1.00- 2.33
- The Medium degree from 2.34 – 3.67
- The High degree from 3.68 – 5.00

### Descriptive Analysis of Study Variable

**Question of the study: What causes foundation level (1) students' anxiety to learn English in in CCQ?**

The researcher used the arithmetic mean, standard deviation, item importance and importance level as shown in *Table (1)*.

**Table (1) Arithmetic Mean, SD, Item Importance and Importance degree of causes of ESL foundation level (1) students' anxiety to learn English**

No	Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation	rank	Importance Level
10	I get worried when I know my grades in the foundation program are determined by midterm, a project and a final.	4.53	0.87	1	High
20	I am glad to learn English because it will help me to understand other subjects.	4.38	1.02	2	High
21	I get worried when the finals are written by all the instructors because they do not teach us in the same way and they do not emphasize the same topics.	4.31	1.26	3	High
1	I felt anxious at the beginning of the foundation program because I was not oriented to the nature of courses being taught there.	4.28	1.05	4	High
35	There is a great discrepancy between the types of test questions I used to take in my secondary education and the foundation program.	4.26	1.17	5	High
39	I worry that I will miss important information during my urgent absences.	4.22	1.12	6	High
6	I worry that my English listening ability is not good.	4.18	1.17	7	High
36	I have never been trained on academic skills necessary for college level.	4.12	1.29	8	High

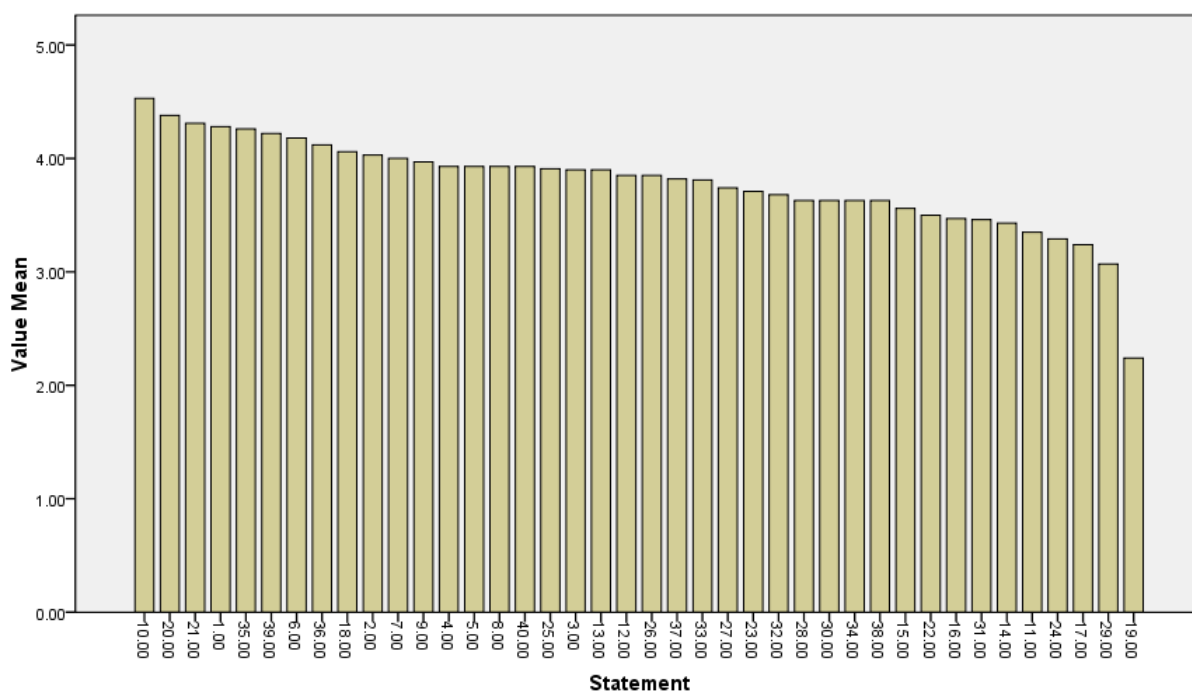
18	I was not trained on academic skills as researching and critical thinking prior to the foundation program.	4.06	1.29	9	High
2	I did not expect the new teaching methods used in the foundation program.	4.03	1.02	10	High
7	I feel shy to speak English with other students because I did not study English speaking and communication skills in the secondary level.	4.00	1.23	11	High
9	I had less homework in the secondary school than I have in the foundation level.	3.97	1.33	12	High
4	The study demands I am required to do in the foundation level are much higher than the requirements in the secondary school.	3.93	1.31	13	High
5	I was not given enough practice on writing skills in my secondary level.	3.93	1.29	13	High
8	I was taught English completely through lecturing and translating not by using games and activities.	3.93	1.11	13	High
40	I am afraid that some teachers want me to study independently without their explanation.	3.93	1.41	13	High
25	I get nervous about possibly not "keeping up" or receiving poor scores when taking English listening comprehension tests.	3.91	1.25	17	High
3	The teaching methods used in the foundation program are completely different from those my teachers used to in my secondary school.	3.90	1.38	18	High
13	I get stressed when I know I'm going to have to speak in English.	3.90	1.29	18	High
12	I worry about my English teachers might have negative feelings about me due to my bad performance on English listening comprehension exercises.	3.85	1.46	20	High
26	I am afraid that I can't complete all the questions within the specified time due to my slow reading speed.	3.85	1.32	21	High
37	I worry that the teachers' anxiety may affect me negatively.	3.82	1.29	22	High
33	I worry I have never been trained on anxiety management skills	3.81	1.33	23	High

27	I worry that my writing speed is too slow when I take English writing tests.	3.74	1.30	24	High
23	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the English class	3.71	1.34	25	High
32	I am afraid I did not get enough practice on written texts comprehension skills prior to my college level.	3.68	1.29	26	High
28	I worry that my promotion or pay raise or job qualification would be negatively affected by my poor English proficiency.	3.63	1.40	27	Medium
30	I have never been trained on the best study habits prior to my college level.	3.63	1.50	27	Medium
34	I worry that I cannot understand the different accents used by my different teachers.	3.63	1.34	27	Medium
38	I worry that my teachers are biased and unfair in correcting our test papers, homework and projects.	3.63	1.47	27	Medium
15	I felt lonely when I found my friends I used to see with me will repeat their level because they failed it.	3.56	1.40	31	Medium
22	I worry that the other students speak English better than I do.	3.50	1.42	32	Medium
16	Some teachers' negative words hinder my progress.	3.47	1.40	33	Medium
31	I have never been trained on test management and college types on tests before.	3.46	1.40	34	Medium
14	I am afraid that my current teachers have a stereotyped negative	3.43	1.31	35	Medium
11	I for fear of being laughed at by others, I don't dare to ask oral questions even when encountering unknown words.	3.35	1.38	36	Medium
24	I get nervous when the teacher calls on me to do the text summary in front of everyone.	3.29	1.51	37	Medium
17	I have no confidence in my English listening comprehension.	3.24	1.47	38	Medium
29	I am afraid that my classmates might laugh at my pronunciation when I bring up questions.	3.07	1.47	39	Medium
19	I hate studying English.	2.24	1.38	40	Low
<b>Total</b>		<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.73</b>		<b>High</b>

It's clear from **Table (3)** that the means of the items of the questionnaire (*causes anxiety to learn English in foundation level (1) students in CCQ*), ranged between (4.53– 2.24), where the whole dimension earned a total mean of (3.78), which is a level of High. Item **(10)** (I get worried when I know my grades in the foundation program are determined by Mid-Term, a project and a final) earned the highest mean reaching (4.53), with standard deviation (0.87), which is a level of High, and item **(20)** (I am glad to learn English because it will help me to understand other subjects) ranked second. It earned a mean of (4.38), with standard deviation (1.02), which is a level of High and item (21) ranked third, it earned a mean of (4.31) with standard deviation (1.26) also which is a level of high level, its stipulated (I get worried when the finals are written by all the instructors because they do not teach us in the same way and they do not emphasize the same topics).

Item **(19)** (I hate studying English) ranked last. It scored a mean of (2.24), and a standard deviation (1.38), which is a level of Low, and item (29) (I am afraid that my classmates might laugh at my pronunciation when I bring up questions) ranked penultimate, it earned a mean of (3.07) with standard deviation (1.47) which is a level of medium.

***This explains that Causes of ESL foundation level (1) students' anxiety to learn English was in the high level from the perspective of the study sample and figure (1) shows that.***



**Figure (1): The means of the items in the questionnaire**



## Discussion of the Study Findings

The results of the study subjects' answers reveals that Level 1 ESL foundation students feel anxious at different situations. The items that took the highest means are related to "Fear of Tests". This was expressed in different items. For example, they are anxious mostly because they know that their grades in the foundation program are determined only by midterm, a project and a final, especially as the mid-term and the final are calculated out of 30 per each. Thus, the grades given to course work as quizzes, homework, participation is only 20%. The other most important reason for the subjects' anxiety is due to the fact that the Mid-term test and the final test are written by all the instructors, especially as students' are not taught the same way by different teachers. Therefore, students feel it is unfair to answer questions they might not be trained on in their classes. Also, the study subjects pointed out that they feel anxious at the beginning of the foundation program because they are not oriented properly to the nature of courses being taught there.

Another main reason for the subjects' anxiety, as the study findings revealed, is discrepancy between the teaching methods and techniques used in the secondary classes and those used at the college level. It reveals that the study subjects' lack the necessary schemata to build on their new information. They do not have the necessary basics of English. They had never been trained on academic skills necessary for college level. They did not expect the new teaching methods used in the foundation program. In addition, they had less homework in the secondary school than they have in the foundation level; and they had not been given enough practice on writing skills. They mainly complained that they were taught by translation and lecturing. All this goes under Horwitz's term "Apprehension of comprehension"

The third main reason for the current study subjects' anxiety is consistent with Horwitz's et al. (1986) explanation of the causes of language anxiety. The finding of the current study reveal that the subjects feel stressed when they know they are going to have to speak in English, and that their colleagues might laugh at them when they speak. They also get worried to know that their teachers evaluate them badly, especially as they are not good at listening and speaking skills, according to their answers to the questionnaire items. This is what Horwitz et al. (1986) called "fear of negative evaluation." Jones (2004: 33) explains that this has its origin in the fear of making mistakes and attracting the derision of classmates" Jones also argues that language learners feel afraid because of "a fear of appearing awkward, foolish and incompetent in the eyes of learners" peers or others". As a result of the fear of making mistakes, some learners expressed that learning and speaking a foreign language in the classroom is "always a problem". In line with the study of Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) on „perfectionism“, fear of making mistakes has been found to be strongly linked with the learners' concern to save their positive image or impression in the mind of their teacher and peers.

They also expressed that they are afraid of not being able to understand the accents of the foreign instructors whose native language is English or who speak native-like accents. In one of the questionnaires items, they complained that their teachers in the secondary classes are Arabs, so they are not used to hear different English accents. The current study findings are also compatible with the findings of the study conducted by Al-Shboul, Ahmad, Nordin & Abdel-Rahman (2013) as both studies found out that fear of making errors and worry about reading and speaking effects cause students' anxiety. There is a great consistency between Hashimi (2011) study in an Iranian context and the current study. In both studies, the subjects declared that the traditional teaching methods in the secondary school make them stressed in the college levels.

## **Recommendations**

In light with the study findings, the researcher recommended some procedures that can help teachers and administrators to lead students to overcome their anxiety.

### **Recommendations for Teachers:**

1. Teachers should realize that anxiety is a reality and they should apply anxiety batteries to identify the causes of their students' anxiety at different intervals during the academic courses.
2. Teachers should create a stress-free learning context by making the language classroom environment less formal and more friendly. This can be implemented by using communicative activities as role-play, drama, multimedia, motivation-provoking strategies, arousal of sense of achievement and success, and reinforcement strategies. They should also instill self-confidence in their students by stopping any action of sarcasm in the class.
3. They can help students learn to cope with the existing anxiety by lecturing students on the dangerous effects of anxiety on their grades, health, and concentration.
4. Teachers can help students use relaxation exercises; they can allow students to move in class, do group work, and participate in co-curricular activities in the campus and in the outside community.
5. Teachers can advise them on the effective learning strategies. Teachers should teach them effective study skills and habits in an explicit way.
6. Teachers can cooperate with school psychological counselors and therapists to hold seminars to both instructors and students where they can discuss their problems in a more relaxing way.
7. Teachers can select error correction techniques that may reduce students' anxiety.
8. Teachers should utilize various assessment tools, not just tests. They can encourage the use of students' portfolios and performance-based assessment. Students should be given the opportunity to defend their students' rights to ask to enroll in the same class with their friends.
9. The college instructors and administrators should "build students' confidence and self-esteem in their second/foreign language ability via encouragement, reassurance, positive reinforcement, and empathy" (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999: 232).
10. The administrators in the Community College of Qatar Foundation level should reconsider the breakdown of grades among different activities, in the sense that more grade percentages should be given to students' creativity, participation and course work.
11. Students should be given the opportunity to elect a student parliament or senate that can meet classes periodically, understand their problems, and represent them in the higher administrative debates and meetings.

12. More censorship, guidance, and observation should be imposed on teachers to ensure that they are using the appropriate teaching techniques, classroom management and standard English not colloquial dialects.

13. The instructors should be engaged in seminars to understand the students' different personality temperaments and to be trained on different strategies to deal with their students' anxiety or sense of inferiority, if existed.

14. Sense of humor is the key solution to anxiety, sometimes. Thus, instructors should balance between their seriousness and humor.

### **Recommendations for Students**

1. Students need to organize their time and use it wisely.
2. Students should learn different techniques of relaxation and meditation.
3. Students need to develop self-confidence and enhance their self-esteem. This needs their parents' and teachers' assistance. They should not care for their peers sarcasm.
4. They must develop good study habits and try not to imitate their peers just because their peers have got good marks by using their own study habits. In other words, students should develop habits that they feel appropriate and useful for them.
5. With their teachers' assistance, students need to design a timetable for revision
6. Students need to study daily so that materials or homework would not accumulate on the day of the exam.
7. They need to consult the college councilors when they feel an urgent need.

### **Recommendations for Administrators:**

1. College administrators ought to collaborate with teachers to lessen the situations that make students anxious. For example, they can use the unified centralized exams only for the finals, not for the mid-terms. Giving the class teachers the right to write their quizzes and exams gives the students a way to guess some questions from the daily lessons
2. There should be less strictness in applying the college attendance. This means that being flexible in understanding the students' excuses for their absences.
3. Utilizing case-solving approach in counselling students, meaning that general orientation I the beginning of the academic year might not be enough to relief students anxiety. Thus individual conferences, anecdotes, diaries, and self-journals might help in individual cases.

### **Implication to Research and Practice**

In light with the purpose and the findings of the current study, many implications can be suggested to future researchers. First, it would be a good idea to investigate the factors that cause anxiety to college mails and see the difference between these factors and the ones that

cause anxiety for female students. Another suggestion is to investigate the effect of implementing various stress-relieving techniques on students' achievement. In addition, more studies can be conducted on the interrelationship between students' anxiety and classroom management. It would be useful for college stakeholders to explore the impact of the college policies and regulations on students' anxiety. Last but not at all the least, investigating the relationship between anxiety and teaching techniques or teachers' classroom language will be a good study.

## CONCLUSION

Research has proved by evidence that anxiety is one of the affective factors that constitutes a great challenge to students' academic progress. However, some anxiety is needed as to motivate students to work harder. But, when anxiety turns to hinder students' learning and success, it will be a very serious issue. To think deeply in this issue, it can be found out that policies, regulations, faculty, and administrative staff of the academic institution is one of the factors that lead students to be stressed. To demolish the debilitating effect of anxiety on students, all these parts need to cooperate and create strategies to help students feel relaxed.

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