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Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety of Jordanian Freshman English Learners

Kebimbangan Bertutur dalam Bahasa Asing oleh Pelajar Bahasa Inggeris Tahun Pertama Jordan

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ABSTRACT

Mastering English language skills is significant, particularly with respect to speaking for Jordanian undergraduates because the English language is becoming vital in some sectors in Jordan like tourism, foreign affairs, and higher education. Generally, it has been acknowledged that foreign language (FL) speaking anxiety hinders the attempts of language learners to become involved in speaking activities. Nevertheless, some studies have been conducted to probe language anxiety in general and anxiety pertaining to other language skills in Jordan. However, none of these studies was designed intentionally to address the specific FL speaking anxiety. Thus, the current research was meant to address the factors contributing to English FL speaking anxiety in the Jordanian context. To do so, in-depth, one-to-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with twenty freshman students attending Jadara University in Irbid, Jordan. NVivo software was used to manage the coding procedure in analysing the data, and respondents declared twelve factors leading to an increased level of speaking anxiety. All were like the findings of previous empirical studies except four new sources: fear of being perceived as showing-off, cultural barrier between male and female students, fear of impromptu questions and previous experience in school. The first two of these factors highlight the importance of considering the cultural backgrounds of learners when teaching English in an Arabic and/or Muslim context like Jordan. The other two factors reveal the inadequacy of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching in schools, and universities too. The results support the theory that cultural differences are significant in addressing the issue of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). Identification of these factors could lead future research, language teachers, and educators in better understanding of English language learning in the context of Jordan and move forward to develop strategies and tactics to overcome the difficulties triggered by speaking anxiety.

Keywords: Foreign language; anxiety; speaking; Jordan; qualitative research

ABSTRAK

Menguasai kemahiran berbahasa Inggeris menjadi semakin penting dalam beberapa sektor di Jordan seperti pelancongan, hubungan luar dan pengajian tinggi. Secara amnya, ia telah diiktiraf bahawa kebimbangan bertutur bahasa asing (FL) menjadi penghalang kepada usaha pelajar bahasa untuk terlibat dalam aktiviti pertuturan. Walau bagaimanapun, beberapa kajian telah dilakukan untuk mengkaji kebimbangan berbahasa secara umum dan kebimbangan berkaitan kemahiran dalam bahasa lain di Jordan. Walau bagaimanapun, tidak ada satu pun daripada kajian-kajian tersebut dilakukan secara khusus untuk menangani kebimbangan bertutur dalam bahasa asing yang tertentu. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kebimbangan bertutur dalam bahasa Inggeris sebagai asing (EFL) dalam konteks Jordan. Untuk berbuat demikian, wawancara separa berstruktur satu lawan satu yang mendalam dilakukan ke atas dua puluh pelajar tahun pertama di Universiti Jadara, Irbid, Jordan. Perisian NVivo digunakan untuk prosedur pengkodan dalam menganalisis data, dan responden memaklumkan dua belas faktor yang membawa kepada peningkatan tahap kebimbangan bertutur. Semua itu menyamai dapatan kajian empirikal terdahulu kecuali empat sumber baru: kebimbangan dilihat sebagai menunjuk-nunjuk, halangan budaya antara pelajar lelaki dan perempuan, takut pada soalan yang tidak dijangka, dan pengalaman silam di

sekolah. dua faktor pertama ini menekankan betapa pentingnya mengambil kira latar belakang budaya pelajar ketika mengajar bahasa Inggeris dalam konteks bahasa Arab dan Islam seperti Jordan. dua faktor yang lain mendedahkan kelemahan pengajaran EFL di sekolah-sekolah dan juga universiti. Dapatan ini menyokong teori bahawa perbezaan budaya adalah penting dalam menangani isu FLSA (Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety). Pengenalpastian faktor-faktor tersebut boleh menggalakkan kajian pada masa hadapan, guru-guru bahasa, dan warga pendidik untuk memahami dengan lebih baik pengajaran bahasa Inggeris dalam konteks negara Jordan dan untuk bergerak maju ke hadapan dalam membangunkan strategi dan taktik untuk mengatasi masalah yang dicetuskan oleh kebimbangan bertutur

Kata kunci: Bahasa asing; bimbang; bertutur bahasa asing; Jordan; kajian kualitatif

INTRODUCTION

Foreign language anxiety is a specific kind of anxiety related to the language classroom that affects a learner's behaviour and cognition. A correlation between anxiety and performance has been shown to exist (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016; Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). Anxiety, behaviour, and cognition are the three components that are recursive in the Foreign Language (FL) classroom, each affecting the other. A learner may feel anxious if he/she has been urged to answer a question in a FL, and, at that moment, a general feeling of anxiety and a specific feeling of speaking anxiety will lead the learner to feel worried and frustrated. In turn, the divided attention of a learner will diminish his/her cognitive performance, leading to a negative self-evaluation and an impaired cognition that will adversely affect his/her performance (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2014). When such an occurrence becomes associated with the language experience, this association will definitely establish anxiety, thus, leading the learner to become apprehensive or anxious with respect to FL learning or communication (Tripamides & Keramida 2009).

Studies in the field of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) have revealed that among all language skills, speaking has been the most anxiety-provoking situation for learners (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016; Melouah 2013; Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). Speaking activity involves more than one interlocutor, and any failure to deliver the intended message has been deemed to be an anxiety-causing factor. FLA impedes the performance of learners in speaking with interlocutors. These learners claim that anxiety divides their attention and interferes with their ability to comprehend what is being said in the target language, to generate ideas, to retrieve words, and, consequently, to impede their attempts to speak (Tóth 2006). The manifestations

of this anxiety vary according to the cultural or educational context.

Understanding cultural differences is essential when addressing the relationship of classroom practices and anxiety. For example, classroom practices that one group may be comfortable with may simultaneously be stressful for other learners possessing a different cultural background. That is because they have been habituated to different norms of classroom learning (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016; Horwitz 2001). Such an impact of cultural background was observed in Woodrow's (2006) study in which English language learners with a Confucian Heritage were more apprehensive than others without such a heritage. Zhiping and Paramasivam's (2013) study found comparable results with respect to the impact of culture. They found that Iranians and Algerians (Middle Eastern learners) were anxious when speaking English due to a fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension, while those from Nigeria did not show anxiety reactions. Thus, clearly, different contexts of study can result in different anxiety-provoking factors. For that reason, this current research addressed FL speaking anxiety in a new context of English learners, that of Jordanian freshman students.

In Jordan, the government has considered the English language to be fundamental in promoting the country's education, technology, economy, and even its cultural relationships with the world at large. Today, the use of the English language in Jordan seems to be more important than the use of Arabic in sectors like airports, tourism, foreign affairs, and higher scientific studies (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016; Drbseh 2013; Hamdan & Hatab 2009). Hence, Jordanian undergraduates must master English speaking skills to be part of this globalized world (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal 2014). The Jordanian Ministry of Education has

set the linguistic level that students must achieve, and, among these goals, learners are expected to communicate effectively using a variety of language functions and structures based on daily life situations. School graduate students in Jordan are expected to develop a fluency in English that allows them to communicate freely, efficiently, and confidentially about a wide range of related topics. However, empirical research conducted in Jordan has revealed that the goals the Ministry of education has set are not being realised and seem ambitious (Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid 2014).

An immense amount of interest has been paid towards learning English in Jordanian schools and universities. Yet, students attend university with many general language problems and with specific English oral communication problems (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal 2014; Al-Sawalha 2016).

Because of these issues, several studies have been conducted successfully in the context of Jordanian English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to probe anxiety. In 2012, Muhaisen and Al-Abed Al-Haq addressed general EFL anxiety among secondary school students; while in 2013 Al-Shboul et al. conducted a study to examine English language reading anxiety among undergraduate students. Other research like that of Al-Sawalha (2016) discovered English listening anxiety in the context of undergraduate students, and others were conducted among undergraduate students to investigate general English language anxiety (Abu-Melhim et al. 2015; Huwari & Badawi 2016).

All of these studies seem to have arrived at the conclusion that the causes of English language anxiety in Jordan remain debatable and need further research. In addition, these studies agree that language educators and lecturers should pay more attention to the problems faced by English language learners in Jordan, especially the problem of English language speaking anxiety. These studies were conducted to address different aspects of language anxiety but not specifically EFL speaking anxiety. On the other hand, Batiha, Noorizah and Rosniah (2016) conducted their study to determine the main sources of FL speaking anxiety. As a result, they identified four main sources responsible for the increased level of FL speaking anxiety which were: fear of negative evaluation, unpreparedness, fear of being in public and shyness, and speaking-class anxiety. However, the reasons behind these factors remain vague and require further research (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016). Because of this, new

research is required to reveal the reasons behind the factors of FL speaking anxiety in the Jordanian context. Therefore, this study is concerned with exploring the factors affecting English language speaking anxiety among Jordanian freshman students by answering the following question:

1. What are the factors that cause anxiety for freshmen students in Jordan when speaking the English language?

METHODOLOGY

Twenty freshman students from Jadara Private University in Irbid, Jordan were interviewed in this study. These participants were a normal part of the freshman population at the university; hence, the study utilised purposive homogenous sampling selection because it fulfilled the purpose of the research. Thus, the researchers intentionally selected these individuals to learn and understand their perspectives.

This study was conducted qualitatively using one-to-one, in-depth, and semi-structured interviews. A one-to-one interview is a method wherein the researcher meets one respondent at a time, asks questions, and records answers (Creswell 2012). A researcher can choose several respondents to be interviewed, and one-to-one interviews seem ideal in interviewing respondents who can share ideas comfortably (Creswell 2012). This instrument was used with the intention of collecting as much information as possible. The data were transcribed manually and NVivo software was used to analyse the data yielded.

The factors identified in this study were classified into four categories based on the literature, namely, 1) factors attributed to fear of negative evaluation, 2) factors attributed to unpreparedness, 3) factors attributed to fear of being in public and shyness, and 4) factors attributed to speaking-class anxiety (Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results confirm that new factors responsible for elevating learners FL speaking anxiety were discovered in this study, namely, Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off, Impromptu Question, Cultural Barriers with Regard to Female Students, and Previous Experience at School. In addition,

eight factors were found to contribute to classroom-based FL speaking anxiety and these matched with the literature. These factors were: Fear of Being Ridiculed, Lecturer Demeanour, Peer Correction and Fear of Making Mistakes, Language Proficiency, Low Self-Esteem, Self-Perceived Ability in Speaking English, Fear of Interaction, and Negative Attitude.

Cultural differences were observed in this research. In 2001 one of the founders of FL anxiety research, Elaine K. Horwitz, stated that anxiety reactions differ based on context and that some classroom practices that are considered motivating to some learners in one context could be anxiety-producing factors in a different context. This statement was confirmed in this current research in which new factors responsible for FL speaking anxiety were discovered among Jordanian English learners. These factors are: Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off, Sudden Questions, Cultural Barriers with regard to Female Students, and Previous Experience at school. The existence of factors like Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off and Cultural Barriers regarding female students are attributable to cultural backgrounds as the respondents of this study stated that previous literature has discussed (Horwitz 2001; Kauser & Tlais 2011; Xie 2009). The other two factors of Sudden Question and Previous Experience in School were attributed to the educational system according to the responses of the respondents in this current study and previous literature (Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal 2014; Byrne, Flood & Shanahan 2012; Sadeghi, Mohammadi & Sedaghatghofar 2013). The following sections discuss the findings in detail.

FACTORS ATTRIBUTED TO FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION

The factors Fear of being Ridiculed, Lecturer Demeanour, and Peer Correction and Fear of Making Mistakes are recognized in the literature as manifestations of the fear of a negative evaluation as a source of anxiety (Aida 1994; Batiha, Noorizah & Rosniah 2016; Melouah 2013; Sadeghi, Mohammadi & Sedaghatghofar 2013); Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). Table 1 shows Factors attributed to Fear of Negative Evaluation with sample excerpts from the respondents' answers to the interviews.

Regarding the Fear of Being Ridiculed, these learners have shown constantly feelings of apprehension because of peer evaluation regarding oral performance (Melouah 2013; Sadeghi, Mohammadi & Sedaghatghofar 2013); Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). In this current study, learners felt apprehensive and shy, lost confidence and therefore avoided involvement in oral activities because their peers would criticise and ridicule their performance. They believed that a lecturer's purpose in evaluation was to help enhance their performance, but that the evaluation by their peers was more about showing weakness and ridiculing their performance. Thus, they became shy, reluctant, and apprehensive in speaking. They were willing to learn and speak English; however, other students who ridiculed and laughed at them provoked their anxiety and deterred their attempts to speak.

The second factor that this group of respondents mentioned was lecturer demeanour. The relationship between learners and their instructor has a vital effect on a student's level of anxiety. Establishing a connection between lecturer and students, giving them support and feelings of security in the classroom are the golden rules for reducing students' fear of negative evaluation (Khairul Anuar 2012; Sadeghi, Mohammadi & Sedaghatghofar 2013). Learners in this research demonstrated that the level of comfort during an oral session depended on the lecturer's demeanour. Lecturers who criticised to show mistakes provoked an increased level of anxiety in learners. These students believed that a harsh or bad-tempered lecturer led to an enormous amount of apprehension. Because of this apprehension, some learners might become unable to ask a question to clarify either an assignment or the material given to them. Although they might need help from a lecturer, they do not request that help because they consider seeking help a manifestation of incompetence, immaturity or weakness (Aida 1994). As a result, they feel anxious about exposing a problem to their teachers.

The third factor noted in this study was Peer Correction and Fear of Making Mistakes. According to Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) as a manifestation of student fear of negative evaluation, the perceptions of learners concerning their low ability that their peers criticised and the fear of making mistakes are the main factors that incite English speaking anxiety. Students in this study believed that other peers would evaluate their performance negatively when they made

TABLE 1. Factors Attributed to Fear of Negative Evaluation

| Factor | Example of student responses | Original quotation |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Fear of Being Ridiculed | Respondent 1 Interviewee: Nervous and scared if my language is deficient and scared if other students will ridicule my performance and laugh at me. The lecturer might ask, and the students laugh at me. | الطالب: متوترة: خوفي من انه لغتي ركيكة وخوفي من ان ينتقدني أحد الطلاب او خوفي انهم يضحكوا، ممكن الدكتور يسأل و الطلاب يصيروا يضحكوا |
| 2. Lecturer Demeanour | Respondent 12 Interviewer: Do you think that the lecturer has a role? Interviewee: It depends on the lecturer's demeanour. If he is correct and doesn't criticize it will be okay, but if he corrects to show my weakness I would never participate. Interviewer: So, are there lecturers who...? Interviewee: If he is just like this. Interviewer: So, is there any lecturer who criticizes? Interviewee: Yes, if he is harsh I wouldn't answer, especially if he criticizes my mistakes I would never take part | الباحث: طيب المحاضر اله دور؟ الطالب: حسب، يعني إذا ما بدقق عالاجابة، بصح وعادي يكون الوضع عادي اما لما يصح وهو مستهتر ما بجواب هيك !..الباحث: يعني في محاضرين بحسوسكي انه الطالب: اذا كان فقط الباحث: يعني في محاضر بحكي بعلق زيادة؟ الطالب: نعم، إذا كان لسانه سليلط ما بجواب، خاصة إني اذا غليطت يصير بعلق، ما بجواب ابدأ |
| 3. Peer Correction & Fear of Making Mistakes | Respondent 11 Interviewee: It is embarrassing to make mistakes, because not all students understand that people make mistakes... but rather they ridicule or laugh at you. Interviewer: How? Interviewee: Some students' intention is to show that they are better than you, they try to give correction with lecturer, and they make you feel embarrassed and get upset. | الطالب: اه احراج، مش كل الطلاب بيْفهم انه الانسان دايمًا بيغلط لا هم بيصيرو استهزاء الباحث: كيف يعني؟ الطالب: يعني في طلاب بيحسبوا انه هم أكثر منك شطارة او اشي زي هيك يعني انه هم بيصحولك مع الدكتور بيحسوسوك بالحرص بنتضايق منهم |
| 4. Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off | Respondent 11 Interviewer: Do you speak English with students inside the classroom? Interviewee: No, no chance. Interviewer: Why? Interviewee: Because if you speak English in the classroom students will think I've been a show-off, so I avoid using English. Interviewer: So, the reason is? Interviewee: Students will say that I'm trying to show off Interviewer: Where does this attitude come from? Interviewee: It is the culture of shame, if he speaks English it means he shows-off. | الباحث: طيب بتحكي انجليزي مع الطلاب بالقاعة؟ الطالب: لا ما في فرصة الباحث: ليش؟ الطالب: لانه إذا بتحكي باللغة الانجليزية داخل الكلاس بيصير ويحكوا شايفة حالها فلذلك انا بحاول اقلل من استخدام الانجليزي الباحث: يعني السبب؟؟ الطالب: انه الطلاب بيحكوا شايفة حالها مع احنا كلنا طلاب انجليزي الباحث: من وين جاي هالشعور او التفكير؟ الطالب: ثقافة العيب اذا بيحكي انجليزي معناه شايفة حالة بيحب انه يبين |

mistakes, and, consequently, this elicited their embarrassment. They considered peer correction as a method to reveal their weaknesses rather than a means of providing helpful assistance by friends. Fear of making mistakes is the reason why they do not speak, and they prefer to keep silent. If they speak and make mistakes they cannot continue; otherwise, they will make more mistakes and do not speak well.

In this research, a new factor was discovered, namely, Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off. Such a new finding is expected in the field of anxiety because the classroom practices with which one group of learners may be comfortable may be

stressful for other learners of a different cultural background who have been habituated to different cultural norms of classroom learning (Batiha, Noorizah Mohd Noor & Rosniah Mustaffa 2016). These students feel embarrassed, awkward, and unable to speak English inside the classroom so as not to look as if they are showing-off in front of other students. They degrade their abilities, which makes them afraid that their attempts to speak may not create meaningful message or that other students will perceive them as showing-off whenever they use English to communicate. As a result, they avoid using English so as not to appear to be an attention-seeker. According to these learners, the reason

for the negative evaluation from their peers can be ascribed to a culture of shame in which using English is considered to be an attempt to show-off. They cannot tolerate the negative evaluation of peers; thus, this factor is listed under the fear of negative evaluation source of anxiety.

Aligning with this finding of the current study, students in China was found to be reluctant to participate in a language classroom, which Xie (2009) ascribed to the effect of Confucian values and the culture of face. These students do not take part in speaking activities but rather wait for other students to speak up first. This was explained via the rationale that they were avoiding looking as if they were showing off. In the Chinese context, learners learn through listening and are required to keep silent and wait to be called on (Xie 2009). Therefore, learners' fear of showing-off has been seen as a culturally related reason for learners to avoid being involving in speaking activities in China.

Similarly, in this research, some learners ascribed their elevated level of anxiety as a product of not wanting to look as if they were showing-off. Respondents ascribed this to a culture of shame in which using English is considered as a prideful or show-off way of exposing one's personality. The Xie's (2009) research and others of the same ilk support the statements of the learners in this study

(See, for example, Cortazzi & Coleman 1996). They also support the finding of this research that the fear of showing-off should be considered a speaking anxiety factor that hinders any attempt of these students from engaging in speaking activities. According to the respondents' responses in this current study and what has been discussed above, the Fear of Being Perceived as a Show-off is a manifestation of the fear of negative evaluation.

FACTORS ATTRIBUTED TO UNPREPAREDNESS

Language proficiency is a compelling reason why some of these learners did not take part in English-speaking activities. Respondent 1, for instance, said that she sometimes has the answer but cannot utter it in English ascribing the reason to her lack of vocabulary. Respondent 13 faced difficulties when structuring English sentences that led her to think that English was a difficult language to learn. Respondent 9 did not like when the lecturer asked questions in speaking class because she did not have enough vocabulary. Moreover, if she was asked as a question by the lecturer, she would have tried to avoid answering in any way possible. Table 2 shows the factors attributed to Unpreparedness with sample excerpts from the answers of respondents to the interviews.

TABLE 2. Factors Attributed to Unpreparedness

| Factor | Example of student responses | |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| | English Translation | Original quotation |
| 1. Language Proficiency | <p>Respondent 1</p> <p>Interviewer: What could make you afraid or apprehensive when speaking English?</p> <p>Interviewee: When I like to say something, and I know what to say, I can say it in Arabic, but I cannot say it in English.</p> <p>Interviewer: What is the reason?</p> <p>Interviewee: I don't have enough vocabularies.</p> | <p>الباحث: شو ممكن يثير قلقك او خوفك عند التحدث بالانجليزية الطالب: لما اكون حاية احكي وعارفة شو بدني احكي، يعرف احكيه بالعربي لكن بالانجليزية ما بقدر الباحث: شو السبب؟ الطالب: ما عندي مخزون كلمات</p> |
| 2. Sudden Question | <p>Respondent 12</p> <p>Interviewer: In general, what practice makes you apprehensive or worry inside speaking classroom?</p> <p>Interviewee: It is when I am speaking without preparing, when the lecturer suddenly asks me to participate.</p> | <p>الباحث: بشكل عام، بمحاضرة المحادثة شو اكثر شيء بسببك قلق و ارباك؟ الطالب: انه اطلع اجاوب و انا مش مجمعة، انه فجأة يحكي لي الدكتور انتي شاركي</p> |

In previous studies, language difficulties were documented as factors that provided FL speaking anxiety. For example, as a manifestation of Unpreparedness, Sadeghi, Mohammadi and Sedaghatghofar (2013) said that Limited Vocabulary Knowledge and Language Proficiency were two factors that increase a learner's level of speaking anxiety. Moreover, Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) stated that language accuracy was a reason why learners have anxiety while speaking in the target language.

The sudden asking of a question in this current study was another new reason why these learners felt confused, apprehensive, and forgot the information they knew. They showed a high level of anxiety when suddenly receiving a question because of which they failed to recall their knowledge. According to Respondent 12, for example, the most apprehension-producing practice was answering without preparation or when she was asked something suddenly by the lecturer. Respondent 20 mentioned that he could volunteer to participate if he knew the answer, but he would become confused if he was asked something suddenly. Moreover, Respondent 3 also claimed that, when he was asked something suddenly, he would forget all the information he knew and would never answer the question at hand.

From this perspective, preparedness is a key issue in foreign language learning.

Byrne, Flood and Shanahan (2012: 21) highlighted the critical role of preparation for FL learners in helping them not to "look stupid". Thus, some learners appreciate the vital role of preparation for improving communication and practice ahead of specific settings like meetings, presentations, or even public speaking. In addition, Sadeghi, Mohammadi and Sedaghatghofar (2013) highlighted that preparedness and language difficulties are factors contributing to FL speaking anxiety. In their study, the targeted respondents appreciated the role of preparation for the lesson at hand in reducing their feelings of anxiety. Such results supported what the respondents of this study mentioned and affirmed a sudden question as a factor inciting the speaking anxiety of FL learners.

FACTORS ATTRIBUTED TO FEAR OF BEING IN PUBLIC AND SHYNESS

Two factors that have been documented in the literature as manifestations of shyness are fear of interaction, and low self-esteem (Occhipinti 2009; Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). See Table 3. Regarding low self-esteem, students keep thinking about their language weaknesses and difficulties, become unfocused because of their negative thoughts, and cannot concentrate on language tasks (Occhipinti 2009).

Learners in this study doubted their answers even though they knew the answer; thus, they hesitated to participate and sometimes did not answer. Furthermore, others viewed the speaking skill as the most difficult among English language skills, and they doubted their abilities, including structuring a sentence properly and choosing the correct words or pronouncing them correctly. According to Wilson (2006: 312), a lack of knowledge is not the reason why some students do not speak or hesitate to answer in the language class but is the result of "a temporary or habitual lapse of linguistic faculties associated with apprehensiveness". When comparing highly anxious learners with low anxious learners in the classroom, students who are more anxious are involved in "rumination over self-degradation or poor performance" that reduces their readiness to elaborate any knowledge received in the FL class (Occhipinti 2009: 62). Thus, any attempt to participate in a FL conversation will debilitate and threaten a person's self-esteem and bring to light that the person's ability to communicate in the FL is limited compared to his/her first language ability (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986).

In this current research, learners self-deprecated their abilities which, in turn, prevented them from presenting themselves in front of the class because they were unsure of their abilities and that their utterances might not convey a meaningful message.

TABLE 3. Factors Attributed to Fear of Being in Public and Shyness

| Example of student responses | | |
|--|---|--|
| Factor | English Translation | Original quotation |
| 1. Low Self-Esteem | Respondent 12 Interviewee: I speak but not much; I participate when I know the answer. Even when I know the answer I doubt my answer whether it is correct or not, so I answer sometimes and sometimes I don't. | الطالب: بحكي بس مش كثي، بشارك مرات لما اكون عارف الاجابة، حتى لما اكون عارف الاجابة بشكك بحالي صح اولاً، لهيك مرات بجابوب و مرات لا |
| 2. fear of Interaction | Respondent 13 Interviewee: If I don't understand during the class, I keep silent. I will ask the lecturer after the class or at his office but not during class. Interviewee: I don't to ask or answer. I just talk to myself unless the lecturer asks me. Interviewee: I don't like if the lecturer asks me about anything about the class. Interviewee: Maybe if a class that I took before is okay, but if it is a new lecture I don't like if the lecturer asks me. Generally, I don't like to be asked about something. I really get embarrassed. | الطالب: عادي بس لو ما فهمت بسكت خالص اما بساله بعد المحاضرة او بروح عليه عالمكتب اما خلال المحاضرة لا الطالب: لا ما بجابوب ولا بسال بس بيني وبين حالي بحكي الا إذا الدكتور وجه الي سؤال مباشر الطالب: لا ما بحب يعني إذا كانت يسألني عن معلومات بتخص المحاضرة لا ما بحب الطالب: محاضرة اخذتها ممكن اما جديدة ومايعرفها لا ما بحب وع الاغلب ما بحب يسألني اصلاً بخاف يسألني عن اشي ما اكون انتبهته او حاطة تحته خطف بنحرج عنجد |
| 3. Cultural Barrier with Regard to Female Students | Respondent 8 Interviewee: Because this is something that we acquired from our culture and especially because I'm a girl. Some male guys criticize and ridicule much; thus, a girl should be quieter. Interviewer: Is this shy feeling because of our culture or because of being female? Interviewee: Females are shy by their inborn and our culture fosters this feeling, don't go out, don't speak, don't do and so on. Interviewee: For example, if one male from my hometown studies the same subject with me and I read the power point slides for the lecturer he looks at me as I am doing something wrong, I suspect myself; he makes me feel bad. | الطالب: لانه هذا اشي اكتسبناه من ثقافتنا ولاني بنت بالاصح، بالاضافة انه الشباب كثير بعلقوا وكثير بتهزئوا، عشان هيك لازم البننت تكون أهدأ الباحث: هل الشعور بالخجل و الحياء بسبب انك انثى أم بسبب انك في مجتمعنا؟ الطالب: البننت في طبيعتها تشع بالخجل والحياء، بالاضافة ان مجتمعنا يعزز هذا الشعور لدى الفتاة؛ لا تطلعي لا تقعلي لا تتكلمي ومن هذا القبيل الطالب: بكل تأكيد، مثلاً إذا طالب من عندنا من البلد اخذ معي محاضرة وقرأت سلايد للدكتور بصير الطالب يتطلع على بنظرة غريبة بشكني بحالي!!! بشعر حياها بالسوء |

The Fear of Interaction in English language speaking activities has been shown to be an anxiety-inciting factor in other studies as well. Some students avoid communication activities as they are dissatisfied with their level of speaking because they have set an idealistic level of achieving and composing "faultless sentences" (Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009: 41). Anxious learners fear that they will not grasp all of the language input. They consider that every uttered word must be

understood to be successfully comprehended in a target language (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986).

The respondents of this study said that they were still first-year students and did not have sufficient language abilities and because of this deficiency they would never answer voluntarily. Respondent 13, for example, stated that she would never ask about any issue that was vague during class, and she would prefer to ask after the class had finished or at the lecturer's office.

Cultural barriers regarding female students were documented in this research as a strong new factor that inhibited female learners from becoming involved in speaking activities. These girls felt shy about answering a question asked by the lecturer because the behaviour of girls is monitored carefully in this society, and any mistake would be criticised. They perceive their society as being one in which the activities of females are often criticised based on cultural teachings.

Kausar and Tlaiss (2011) explained that women struggle with the patriarchal nature of society in Arab countries. Social practices, stereotypical viewpoints of the role of women and the cultural values in Arab countries impact all aspects of life, including learning English. Because of this, these learners believe that their culture leads their society to pay more attention to males and whatever a girl does has less value. Therefore, girls should keep themselves away from situations that offer any opportunity for criticism. According to Abdel-Khalek and Alansari (2004: 653), "As far as the Arab countries are concerned, Arab researchers (have) hypothesized that both child-rearing practices and orthodox Arab traditions have an impact".

These practices and traditions might be added to the reasons why girls believe that they should remain quiet. According to the respondents in this current study, girls are shy by nature, and this nature is fostered by a culture in which girls are restricted by certain teachings and are not allowed to engage in some social practices. The society believes that the words and accounts of girls should be well-thought-out, so they should speak carefully and ask questions outside the classroom when necessary so as not to be misjudged. Based on the answers of respondents and what was discussed above, cultural barriers relative to female students should be considered as a source of anxiety with respect to shyness.

FACTORS ATTRIBUTED TO SPEAKING-CLASS ANXIETY

Factors like attitude and self-perceived ability in speaking English are documented in the literature as indicators of speaking-class anxiety (Xiaoyan Du 2009; Subaşı 2010; Suleimenova 2013; Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009; Xie 2009). As shown in Table 4, self-perceived ability in speaking English provokes speaking anxiety in FL learners and stems from

comparing a person's self-perceived unsatisfactory ability to someone who is perceived as having a higher level. Normally, students set an idealistic level to achieve, and any lower performance is considered a failure (Tsiplakides & Keramida 2009). From this perspective, FL anxiety will be elevated when a learner compares his or her language ability with that of a student with a higher level.

Learners in this study admitted that they did not speak English with their peers because they felt that others could perform better than they did. They were uncomfortable speaking English in front of others who they felt could perform better than them. Of considered interest is that their evaluations of the level of others are often not based on a real classification but are rather derived from their negative self-perceptions about their abilities in speaking English.

The anxiety derived from feelings of inferior leads to issues in FL learning. That is because, according to Occhipinti (2009), anxious students keep thinking about their language weaknesses and difficulties, become unfocused because of their negative thoughts, and cannot concentrate on language tasks.

Such was clearly evident in this current study. For example, Respondent 9 said that "I feel their level is better than mine", which was not based on an objective evaluation. Students such as Respondent 9 merely think that others can perform better than they do, which, in turns, provokes FL speaking anxiety and affect speaking performance negatively.

A learner with a positive attitude will have a lower level of anxiety, while those with a negative attitude will have a higher level of anxiety. In addition, a learner with a positive attitude and a low level of anxiety will allow more input into his/her brain and vice versa (Xiaoyan Du 2009; Krashen 1982, 1989).

In this current research, some learners demonstrated a negative attitude towards learning English, which, in turn, would be negatively reflected in the process of learning English in general and in speaking skills in specifically. Respondent 12, for example, stated that she never understood English inside the classroom and that was why she did not like it. Furthermore, she claimed that she still cannot accept English, and she studied English not because she likes or interested in it. Respondent 13 preferred to study a different major, although

TABLE 4. Factors Attributed to Speaking-Class Anxiety

| Factor | Example of student responses | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| | English Translation | Original quotation | |
| 1. Self-Perceived Ability in Speaking English | Respondent 9 | | |
| | Interviewer: When you speak English inside the classroom, do you think of others around you? | الباحث: لما تتكلمي انجليزي داخل القاعة هل بتفكري بالطلاب الاخرين بالقاعة؟ الطالب: طبعا، بحس انهم مركزين على شو بحكي خصوصا لما اخريط وبحس انهم أحسن مني بالمحادثة | |
| | Interviewee: Of course, I feel like they are concentrating on my speaking especially when I make mistakes. I feel they do better than me. | | |
| | | | |
| | Interviewer: What makes you confused in a speaking class? | الباحث: شو بتحسي انه سبب الريبة عندك سواء بالامتحان او القاعة بمحاضرة المحادثة بالذات؟ | |
| | Interviewee: Those who are better than me in English make me feel uncomfortable because they all know, and I don't. But if the students are at a lower level than me that makes me feel better | الطالب: بحس انه وجود الطلاب حولي شطار ما بظمن لاني بحس انهم كلهم عارفين وانا لا! اما اذا كان معي طلاب مستواي أفضل من مستواهم فهذا الشيء بخليني مرتاحة أكثر الباحث: طيب ليش؟ الطالب: بحس انه مستواهم احسن من مستواي | |
| | Interviewer: Why? | | |
| | Interviewee: I feel their level is better than mine | | |
| | 2. Negative Attitude | Respondent 12 | |
| | | Interviewer: Did you use English inside the classroom? | الباحث: كنتو تحكو انجليزي داخل الصف؟ الطالب: مو كثير، اصلا ما كنت افهم انجليزي ولا كنت احبه وكنت احكي ليه بنوخذه |
| Interviewee: Not much. Actually, I didn't understand English, and I didn't like it. I was always wondering why people like English? | | الباحث: طيب ليه؟ منين اجاكي؟ يعني انتي عشان هيك ما بتحكي؟ الطالب: اه، انا نفسيا ما تقبلت الانجليزي بس انا دخلت التخصص هيك، مش محببنا بالتخصص | |
| | | | |
| Interviewer: So why? Why don't you speak? | | | |
| Interviewer: Yes, I never accept English, I don't study English because I like it. | | | |
| 3. Previous Experience at School | Respondent 8 | | |
| | Interviewer: I want to know the real reason or reasons why you feel apprehensive? | الباحث: انا بس بدي اعرف السبب القطعي او الاسباب الي بتخليك تشعر بالرهبة؟ | |
| | Interviewee: I told you the reasons. If we were adequately taught in our childhood about English, we would be far better than (we are) now. | الطالب: الاسباب حكلك اياها انو من الصغر لو اتأسسنا ان كان هسا بالجامعة كطلاب ممتازين احسن من هسا 100 مرة | |

she is good in the English language, because she hated to study it in school before and hates it even more at the university. Respondent 19 confirmed what Respondent 13 stated, saying that she studies English but does not like it.

All of these statements arrive at one conclusion: that these learners were not happy studying English even though they were admitted to this course. These feelings will be reflected in their learning processes and increase their levels of anxiety. Alrabai (2014), Mak (2011), and Suleimenova (2013) all confirmed that a negative attitude towards the English class is one factor that contributes to the level of learners' FL speaking anxiety.

The respondents of this study noted that previous experience and educational background were factors that elevated their speaking anxiety. For example, Respondent 16 was never interested in the English class during his lower school study, and he used to skip English class at that time. According to his response, he started to learn English when he was five years old. It is known that learning a language at an early age is necessary to acquire a high level of fluency in the target language. Another example was Respondent 13 who studied in a private school in Saudi Arabia, but learning English basics was not part of the teaching and learning process. As she mentioned, this, in

turn, affected her motivation negatively growing to the point at which she never tried to enhance her ability in the English language. Another example was from Respondent 8 who stated that his weak childhood education pertaining to English language was the reason why he was at a very low level of English now.

Thus, a proper learning environment is critical to the learning process. Indeed, Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal (2014) stated that most students who encountered numerous problems in mastering the four language skills lamented the lack of a conducive English-language learning environment and exposure to appropriate speaking strategies in their FL classes. Often these classes do not provide them with opportunities to use and practice English in real-life situations.

School students in Jordan can practice English inside the classroom; however, Arabic is the medium of instruction by lecturers whose mother tongue is Arabic (Al-Zoubi & Abu-Eid 2014; Bani-Khaled 2013). Added to this is the fact that approximately zero opportunity happens outside the classroom to practice English language speaking (Al-Sawalha 2016).

These statements gathered from this current study indicate that school students in Jordan encounter language learning problems in general and in speaking skills specifically. Therefore, they suffer from skill deficit anxiety caused by poor learning habits and unhelpful language learning environments, which is reflected at the output stage when they realise that they are insufficient language knowledge holders. Based on what has been discussed above this factor is seen as a manifestation of a classroom source of anxiety.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion that can be made is the causes of anxiety might differ based on the situation. Although anxiety plays a double role as a cause and effect of language difficulties and individual differences between learners, Horwitz (2001) pointed out that FL anxiety can be conceptualised as the result of poor performance. The challenge is to know the extent to which anxiety is a cause rather than an effect of poor performance.

In this study some learners experienced anxiety due to low ability in the English language. Those learners need support skills and language-learning

strategies to help them to enhance their abilities to cope with the communication demands of English. On the other hand, anxious learners with sufficient aptitude to speak English need relaxation techniques and demonstrations of more sympathy or tender feelings to encourage them to speak better (Woodrow 2006). From understanding of these basic issues, future research should be conducted to develop methods to help these learners by providing convenient interventions or teaching methods that facilitate the development of a friendly learning environment.

The existence of these factors means that FL speaking anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon that should be investigated thoroughly in different contexts and from different perspectives. Based on this, the Ministry of Higher Education in Jordan, instructors, FL teachers, and language scholars must pay more attention to the seriousness of FL speaking anxiety in the context of Jordanian EFL undergraduates. By considering these problems, they can detect anxious students and provide the necessary help to cope with this anxiety.

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