FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AMONG ISLAMIC DEGREE STUDENTS: EXPLORING ITS IMPACT ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL INSTITUTION

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Abstract:

This study explores the prevalence and impact of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among Islamic degree students at a tertiary level institution in their English language learning journey. FLA is commonly characterized by uneasiness associated with learning a new or additional language and has been recognized as a psychological barrier in language learning. The study's primary objectives are to identify FLA levels among Islamic degree students and study the correlation between FLA and students' exam grades using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Employing a quantitative approach, the study administered FLCAS questionnaires to 181 participants, and data analysis was conducted using SPSS. Results revealed that communication apprehension recorded the highest mean (3.43), signifying a high degree of anxiety among the respondents. Conversely, the remaining FLCAS components, namely test anxiety (mean = 3.20), fear of negative evaluation (mean = 3.40), and fear of English class (mean = 3.02), demonstrated an average level of anxiety. Overall, FLA among the Islamic degree students was generally rated at a moderate level (mean = 3.28). Furthermore, the subsequent correlation analysis between FLA and students' exam grades displayed a weak positive relationship (r = 0.184), suggesting that FLA may offer facilitative insights into language learning performance.

Introduction

Language barriers have been a significant challenge for individuals residing in countries where a different language is used for work or study purposes. To address this issue, non-English-speaking European countries have taken proactive measures by offering classes and degree programs taught in English at higher education institutions (Kehm, 2005). This global trend has facilitated students' mobility, breaking language barriers and promoting efficient knowledge transfer across diverse linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, adopting a specific language as the medium of instruction becomes crucial in the educational sector, particularly in accommodating students with varying language proficiencies.

The undeniable prevalence of English as a global language in the education system can be attributed to its widespread use in economic and political spheres, granting it significant influence (Anderson, 2010). As a result, many countries have adopted English as the primary instructional medium in their education systems, aiming to produce graduates with the necessary competence to thrive in a globalized and competitive world. Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013) highlight the importance of English proficiency for international students seeking higher education, as universities worldwide commonly employ English as the language of instruction and assessment.

Despite the undeniable importance of second or foreign language learning, it is not without its challenges and anxieties (Zhang, 2000). One prominent aspect of language learning that often gives rise to difficulties is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). FLA is a prevalent phenomenon observed among students undertaking the challenge of learning a foreign language. It encompasses the stress and apprehension experienced by individuals when engaging with a foreign language (Alaofi & Russell, 2022). This psychological aspect has garnered considerable attention within the realm of foreign language education, becoming a subject of extensive research.

The Foreign Language Anxiety theory was introduced by Horwitz and colleagues in 1986. Within an academic context, FLA relates to performance evaluation and comprises three standard components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Recognized as a psychological barrier in foreign language learning, FLA can hinder the language acquisition process and significantly impact academic performance (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Kráľová, 2016; Gopang, Bughio, & Pathan, 2018). Numerous research studies have consistently demonstrated the detrimental effects of anxiety on second or foreign language achievement and performance (Von Worde, 2003), garnering attention from language learning communities worldwide. As assessments through quizzes, tests, and exams are standard practices in tertiary-level institutions, this study aims to explore FLA among Islamic degree students studying the English language using their exam grades as a key indicator.

Literature Review

Anxiety, as defined by Spielberger (1983) and cited in Horwitz et al. (1986), refers to the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an autonomic nervous system arousal. This psychological phenomenon can be categorized into three types: 1) trait anxiety, 2) state anxiety, and 3) situation-specific anxiety, each having distinct characteristics and implications in language learning (Speilberger, 1983).

Trait anxiety represents a stable tendency in individuals to experience anxiety across various situations and is considered a general personality trait (Phillips, 1992). On the other hand, state anxiety involves emotional reactions specific to situations perceived as personally threatening, regardless of objective danger (Spielberger, 1972; Phillips, 1992). Lastly, situation-specific anxiety occurs at particular times and in response to specific situations, presenting itself uniquely in certain circumstances (Spielberger, 1983; Maclntyre and Gardner, 1991).

Within the context of language learning, language anxiety is defined as a complex interplay of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning, arising from the unique challenges of the language learning process (Horwitz et al., 1986). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) also characterize anxiety in language learning as tension and apprehension associated with second language acquisition.

FLA is a specific theory proposed by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), distinguishing it from general anxiety. FLA comprises three interconnected components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Communication apprehension entails anxiousness when interacting with others in the target language and a fear of not comprehending spoken language. On the other hand, test anxiety emerges from the fear of failure, particularly when learners impose high demands on themselves. Fear of negative evaluation involves learners' concerns about being negatively judged by others, leading them to strive for a favourable social impression (Von Worde, 2003; Salehi, Masoomeh, & Fahimeh Marefat, 2014).

The development of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) by Horwitz et al. (1986) has played a vital role in identifying anxious students and measuring their anxiety, facilitating subsequent FLA research. In language learning contexts, public speaking in the target language has been identified as a prominent anxiety trigger, even for students with low anxiety levels in other language learning aspects (Horwitz, 1995). This anxiety can lead English language learners to become hesitant to participate in class communication, further exacerbating their anxiety over time (Jackson, 2002; Liu, 2006). Furthermore, test-anxious students may encounter more challenges in foreign language classrooms (Horwitz et al., 1986), and fear of negative evaluation extends beyond test-taking situations, affecting learners' social interactions, such as job interviews and conversations in the language class.

While the three components serve as the foundational framework for understanding FLA, it is crucial to recognize that FLA is a multifaceted construct encompassing a complex interplay of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours in the language learning context (Horwitz et al., 1986). This has paved the way for various developments in subsequent F.L.A. research, shedding light on the study of foreign language learning anxiety among learners (Horwitz, 1995; Budin, 2014; Salehi, Masoomeh, & Fahimeh Marefat, 2014; Liu & Huang, 2011).

Studies on the relationship between language anxiety and language performance have categorized language anxiety into debilitating (harmful) anxiety and facilitating (helpful) anxiety (Alpert & Haber, 1960). The prevailing view suggests that language anxiety predominantly manifests as debilitating anxiety, with many studies reporting a negative association between anxiety and language achievement (Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986; Philips, 1992; Aida, 1994; Elkhafaifi, 2005). However, some research argues for the existence of facilitating anxiety, although its impact and documentation in the learning environment remain limited (Kleinmann, 1997; Phillips, 1992).

In addition to exploring the theoretical framework of FLA, it is essential to understand the significant implications of FLA on language learners. Prior research has established a significant link between FLA and adverse effects on language learners' academic performance, social interactions, cognitive processing, affective factors, and well-being (Horwitz, 2001; Hilleson, 1996; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Liu & Huang, 2011; Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). Students with high anxiety levels are more likely to perform poorly academically and drop out of language courses. Moreover, language anxiety can hinder learners' willingness to communicate with others, leading to reduced participation in classroom interactions. Cognitively, FLA can impede information processing, hindering comprehension and expression in the target language. Additionally, language anxiety impacts learners' motivation and attitudes toward language learning, leading to decreased enthusiasm for studying and negative attitudes toward the language. FLA also gives rise to various unease symptoms in language learners, underscoring the urgent need to assist anxious learners in reducing and overcoming their uneasy feelings to foster a more positive language learning experience (Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019; Liu & Huang, 2011).

Research Methodology

Participants
The study involved 181 Islamic degree students from a tertiary-level institution. The widely recognized method proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was employed to determine the appropriate sample size. According to Krejcie and Morgan's table, considering the total eligible population of 339 students, a sample size of 181 participants was deemed suitable to provide a representative cross-section of the population.

Instruments
This study utilized the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaire, originally developed by Horwitz et al. in 1986, to evaluate the levels of anxiety experienced by individuals while learning a foreign language in a classroom setting. The FLCAS questionnaire remains widely used in recent research due to its comprehensive nature (Javed, 2022; Almesaar, 2022; Paneerselvam & Yamat, 2021). These studies have reported highly reliable Cronbach alpha values of 0.729, 0.932, and 0.894, respectively, indicating the questionnaire's robustness. The FLCAS employs a five-point Likert scale with 33 items, where respondents provide their responses on a numerical scale ranging from strongly agree (scored as 5) to strongly disagree (scored as 1). Notably, for specific items (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28, and 32), the scoring was inverted because they were negatively worded, ensuring that lower scores indicate lower anxiety levels among the participants, following the approach outlined by Aida (1994).

The FLCAS items in this study were classified into four distinct components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English class. The first three components, proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986), serve as the foundational elements to characterize FLA. However, it is essential to acknowledge that FLA encompasses more than just these three components. As highlighted by Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA is defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to the classroom learning setting, arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." This broader definition calls for the inclusion of an additional component, namely the fear of English class, in this study to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence of FLA among Islamic degree students. This categorization is adapted from a study by Salim, Subramaniam, and Termizi (2017). The breakdown of the components and the corresponding items within each category are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: FLA Components in FLCAS

FLA Component	Item No	Total Item
Communication apprehension	1, 3, 4, 9, 14, 15, 18, 20, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33	13
Test anxiety	8, 10, 21, 22	4
Fear of negative evaluation	2, 7, 13, 19, 23, 24, 31	7
Fear of English class	5, 6, 11, 12, 16, 17, 25, 26, 28	9

Exam grades of the participants were collected to complement the assessment of anxiety levels. The inclusion of students' exam results alongside the evaluation of anxiety aims to examine the impact of anxiety on their academic performance directly. By comparing students' anxiety levels, as measured by the FLCAS questionnaire, with their exam scores, the study explores any potential correlation or relationship between anxiety and academic performance outcomes. This approach allows for a more comprehensive investigation into how anxiety may influence students' ability to perform well in exams or academic assessments.

Participants
The participants comprised 181 Islamic degree students enrolling at a tertiary-level institution.

Procedures and Data Collection
The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) questionnaires were distributed to Islamic degree students enrolled at a tertiary level institution. Alongside the FLCAS items, the questionnaires included a section where students were requested to provide their exam scores. Prior to completing the questionnaires, a brief explanation was provided to the students, informing them of their participation in a research study. A total of 181 questionnaires were finally obtained, forming the basis of the study's dataset.

Data Analysis
The participants' responses to the FLCAS questionnaire, categorized into the answer choices (strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree), were carefully analyzed and assigned corresponding scores, following the research methodology. Utilizing descriptive statistics within the SPSS software, the mean and standard deviation were calculated for each item in the FLCAS, providing insights into the extent of

students' anxiety pertaining to their English language learning experience. Furthermore, the correlation between FLA and students' exam grades was examined to explore any potential influence of FLA on academic achievement or vice versa. This provided significant findings into the relationship between the student's anxiety and academic performance.

Results and Discussion

The study sample consisted of 181 Islamic degree students, with 75 (41.4%) identified as male and 106 (58.6%) as female. Most participants (77.3%) fell within the age range of 21 to 23 years. Detailed demographic information is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Students' Demographic Background

Demography	Frequency N=181	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	75	41.4
Female	106	58.6
Age		
18-20	20	11.0
21-23	140	77.3
24-26	21	11.6
Course		
Syariah	130	71.8
Usuluddin	51	28.2

The internal reliability of the FLCAS questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, and a high value of $\sigma = 0.89$ was obtained, indicating that the FLCAS instrument used in this study demonstrated excellent reliability. To interpret the students' level of anxiety, mean score interpretation was adapted from Alias (1997), as presented below.

Table 3: Interpretation Scale Mean Score

Score	Interpretation
1.0-1.80	Very low
1.81-2.60	Low
2.61-3.40	Average
3.41- 4.20	High
4.21-5.00	Very High

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of FLCAS Items

	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English	3.27	0.911
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in English class	2.87	1.019
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class	3.28	0.978

4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English	3.41	0.937
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English language classes	2.76	0.923
6	During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	2.60	0.874
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am	3.95	0.996
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my English class	3.20	0.821
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class	3.91	0.990
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my English class	3.97	0.885
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes	2.91	0.939
12	In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	3.31	1.045
13	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class	3.39	0.928
14	I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers	3.01	0.803
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	3.75	0.995
16	Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it	3.63	0.844
17	I often feel like not going to my English class	2.39	1.030
18	I feel confident when I speak in my English class	3.32	0.787
19	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make	2.70	0.919
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my English class	3.56	0.896
21	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get	2.85	0.986
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class	2.79	0.775
23	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do	3.94	0.926
24	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	3.68	0.941
25	English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	3.23	0.889
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes	3.28	0.909
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class	3.40	0.848
28	When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed	3.03	0.756
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says	3.52	0.958
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English	3.37	0.961
31	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English	3.29	1.062
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English	2.92	0.806

33	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	3.85	0.906
	Total	**3.28**	**0.916**

Table 4 presents the mean and standard deviation for all 33 items based on the respondents' responses to the distributed FLCAS questionnaire. The total mean score obtained was 3.28, indicating that the student's overall anxiety level regarding English language learning is at a moderate level.

Table 5: Students' Communication Apprehension

	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English	3.27	0.911	Average
3	I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class	3.28	0.978	Average
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English	3.41	0.937	High
9	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class	3.91	0.990	High
14	I would not be nervous speaking English with native speakers	3.01	0.803	Average
15	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	3.75	0.995	High
18	I feel confident when I speak in my English class	3.32	0.787	Average
20	I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my English class	3.56	0.896	High
27	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my English class	3.40	0.848	Average
29	I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says	3.52	0.958	High
30	I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English	3.36	0.965	Average
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English	2.92	0.806	Average
33	I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance	3.85	0.910	High
	Total	**3.43**	**0.906**	**High**

Table 5 provides an insightful analysis of the students' communication apprehension levels. Notably, Item 9, "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class," obtained the highest mean score (mean = 3.91), indicating that students experience heightened anxiety when engaging in impromptu speaking during English class. Similarly, Item 33, "I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance" (mean

= 3.85), and Item 15, "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting" (mean = 3.75), reflect the students' evident unease during classroom interactions.

Further shedding light on students' anxiety, Item 20, "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my English class" (mean = 3.56), Item 29, "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says" (mean = 3.52), and Item 4, "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English" (mean = 3.41), underscore their apprehension when responding to the teacher without a pre-prepared response or when struggling to comprehend instructions.

Interestingly, Item 32, "I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English" (mean = 2.92), demonstrated the lowest mean score. This suggests that students feel more at ease speaking their native language when interacting with other international students in their country, making them less anxious when communicating with native speakers of English. This can be attributed to the student's awareness that they are in their home country, where not being fully fluent in English when conversing with other international students is considered normal, allowing them to resort to their native language for communication.

The data from Table 5 reveals that the students' communication apprehension levels exhibit a substantial degree of anxiety, with a mean score of 3.43. This finding underscores the considerable level of unease and nervousness experienced by students when it comes to engaging in English communication.

Table 6: Students' Test Anxiety

	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
8	I am usually at ease during tests in my English class	3.20	0.821	Average
10	I worry about the consequences of failing my English class	3.97	0.885	High
21	The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get	2.85	0.986	Average
22	I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class	2.79	0.775	Average
	Total	**3.20**	**0.867**	**Average**

Presented in Table 6 are the items pertaining to test anxiety. Notably, item 10, "I worry about the consequences of failing my English class," obtained the highest mean score (mean = 3.97), indicating a substantial level of anxiety among students regarding the fear of failing the English class. Among the items related to test anxiety, only item 10 exhibited a high level of anxiety. In contrast, the remaining items, including item 8, "I am usually at ease during tests in my English class" (mean = 3.20), item 21, "The more I study for an English test, the more confused I get" (mean = 2.85), and item 22, "I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class" (mean = 2.79), indicated an average level of test anxiety, with item 22 obtaining the lowest mean score.

These findings suggest that students are particularly apprehensive about the prospect of failing the English class, likely due to the awareness that failure could necessitate repeating the subject

in order to graduate. Despite this fear, students seem to display a proactive approach in preparing for the English tests. Overall, the data indicates that the student's test anxiety is at an average level (mean = 3.20).

Table 7: Students' Fear of Negative Evaluation

|	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
2	I don't worry about making mistakes in English class	2.87	1.019	Average
7	I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am	3.95	0.996	High
1 3	It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class	3.39	0.928	Average
1 9	I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make	2.70	0.919	Average
2 3	I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do	3.94	0.926	High
2 4	I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students	3.68	0.941	High
3 1	I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English	3.29	1.062	Average
	Total	**3.40**	**0.970**	**Average**

Table 7 shows the students' fear of negative evaluation, where three items notably exhibit a high level of anxiety. Leading the list is item 7, "I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am" (mean = 3.95), closely followed by item 23, "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do" (mean = 3.94), and item 24, "I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students" (mean = 3.68). These three items signify an intense fear of negative evaluation, indicating that students harbour low self-esteem and an inferiority complex concerning their English language proficiency. This sense of inadequacy leads them to constantly compare themselves to their peers and, consequently, experience a decline in self-confidence. As a result, they may become reticent in class to avoid speaking English in front of their classmates, hindering their progress in language fluency.

Conversely, the remaining items indicate an average level of fear of negative evaluation. Item 19, "I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make" (mean = 2.70), exhibits the lowest mean, followed by item 2, "I don't worry about making mistakes in English class" (mean = 2.87), item 31, "I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak English" (mean = 3.29), and item 13, "It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English class" (mean = 3.39). These findings suggest that students are generally not overly concerned about making mistakes in class or having their errors corrected, as they view such interactions as part of the learning process. However, they remain preoccupied, believing that their peers possess superior English language skills, creating a sense of unease. Nonetheless, the fear of negative evaluation among the students is generally at an average level (mean = 3.40).

Table 8: Students' Fear of English Class

	Item Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
5	It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English language classes	2.76	0.923	Average
6	During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course	2.60	0.874	Low
11	I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes	2.91	0.939	Average
12	In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	3.31	1.045	Average
16	Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it	3.63	0.844	High
17	I often feel like not going to my English class	2.39	1.030	Low
25	English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind	3.23	0.889	Average
26	I feel more tense and nervous in my English class than in my other classes	3.28	0.909	Average
28	When I'm on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed	3.03	0.756	Average
	Total	**3.02**	**0.912**	**Average**

Table 8 reveals students' fear of English class. Item 16, "Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about it", displayed the highest mean (mean = 3.63), indicating notable anxiety in this aspect and is the sole item displaying a high level of anxiety. Conversely, two items, Item 6, "During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course" (mean = 2.60), and Item 17, "I often feel like not going to my English class" (mean = 2.39), demonstrate a low degree of fear of English class among the students. The remaining items in Table 8 reveal an average level of anxiety. The data suggests that while students may not harbour significant concerns about attending English classes, they still experience anxiety before and during class sessions, particularly when they have homework to discuss or anticipate being called upon to answer questions. Nevertheless, students appear attentive in English class, as evident from the mean score obtained for Item 6, indicating their focused effort to comprehend the English teacher's instructions. Overall, the data indicates that students' fear of English class is at an average level (mean = 3.02).
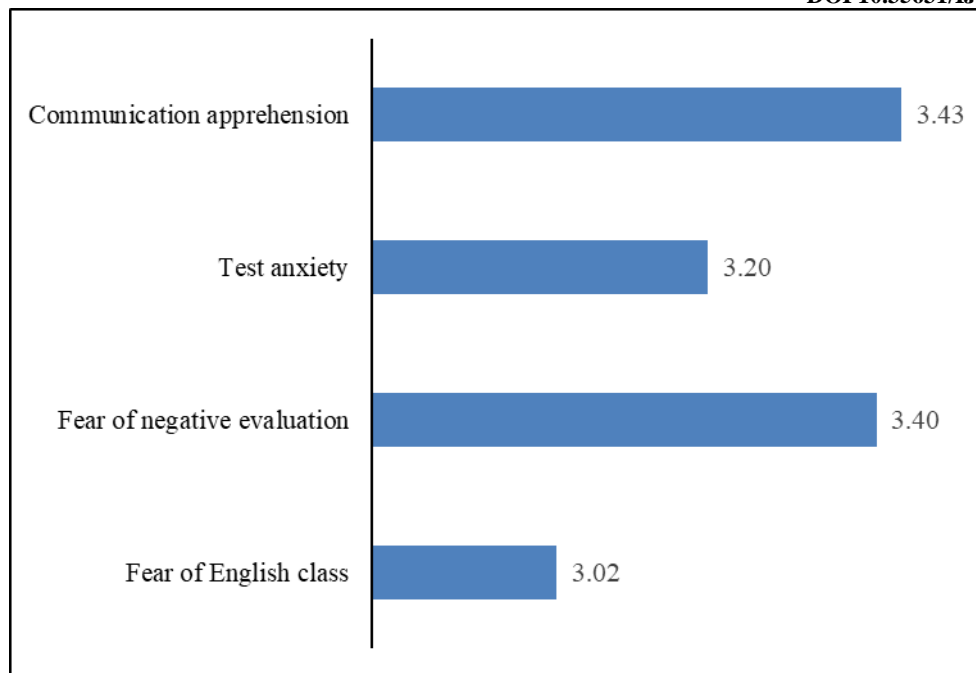
Figure 1: Students' Foreign Language Anxiety Factors

Figure 1 provides a clear overview of the mean values for the four components of FLA derived from the FLCAS questionnaire, facilitating easier analysis. The results highlight that communication apprehension exhibits the highest mean score (mean = 3.43), surpassing the other components, making it the primary source of anxiety among the students in this study. Following communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation (mean = 3.40), test anxiety (mean = 3.21), and fear of English class (mean = 3.02) are ranked accordingly.

The analysis of these mean values reveals that communication apprehension shows a high level of anxiety, while the other three components indicate an average level of anxiety. Overall, the students' collective anxiety level indicates an average degree of anxiety (mean = 3.28). These findings offer valuable insights into the specific areas of anxiety experienced by students in the context of English language learning, shedding light on the prominence of communication apprehension as a significant contributor to their language-related anxieties.

To explore the potential impact of F.L.A. on students' academic performance, a correlation analysis between the FLCAS scores and students' exam grades was conducted.

Table 9: Correlation Coefficient Between Students' FLCAS Scores and Exam Grades

Correlation Coefficient	Exam Grades
FLCAS Scores	0.184

Table 9 presents the correlation between the FLCAS scores and students' exam grades. The results revealed a weak positive relationship (r = 0.184, p < 0.013). This finding aligns with prior studies suggesting that FLA may have a facilitative effect on students' academic performance (Kleinmann, 1977; Bailey, 1983; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Furthermore, it aligns with the perspective Tsai and Chang (2013) put forth, suggesting that anxiety can sometimes be beneficial for language learning, acting as instrumental motivation.

Students may become aware of their insecurities and feelings of inferiority regarding their English proficiency, even though they may not realize that such emotions are commonly experienced by anxious learners. However, this realization of feeling anxious can serve as a driving force for students to strive for improvement. It can motivate them to work diligently to enhance their language skills and overcome their anxieties. As students recognize their areas of weakness, they are prompted to take proactive steps in their language-learning journey, which, in turn, fosters academic growth and progress.

As previously depicted in Figure 1, the items related to test-taking exhibit an average level of anxiety. In contrast, the items reflecting higher anxiety levels predominantly pertain to students' experiences within the English classroom. For instance, items such as "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English" (Item 4), "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class" (Item 9), "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting" (Item 15), "I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance" (Item 33), and a few others. These statements indicate that students experience heightened anxiety when engaged in classroom activities that do not occur during examinations. Thus, it becomes apparent that students experience a relatively more favorable state of mind during exams compared to their state of mind in the classroom setting.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on second/foreign language anxiety among Islamic degree students, revealing that it generally falls within an average level (mean = 3.28). The four critical components identified in the FLCAS questionnaire: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and fear of English class, provide valuable insights into the specific areas where students experience varying anxiety levels.

Communication apprehension is the primary source of high anxiety (mean = 3.43), suggesting that students feel particularly anxious during interactions and speaking activities in the English classroom. On the other hand, the components of test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, and fear of English class indicate an average level of anxiety, with mean values of 3.20, 3.40, and 3.02, respectively.

The correlation analysis further highlights the intriguing finding that a positive relationship exists (r = 0.184) between FLA and students' exam grades. This suggests that anxiety can be facilitative in motivating students to study more diligently and perform better academically in their English language assessments. To harness this facilitative aspect of anxiety, it is essential for educators to nurture strategies that encourage students to channel their anxiety constructively. Teachers can create a supportive learning environment where students view anxiety as a motivating force rather than a hindrance. By providing targeted support and guidance, educators can help students build confidence in their language skills and use anxiety as a driving force to improve their English proficiency.

Hence, this study emphasizes the significance of recognizing and managing second/foreign language anxiety among students. By understanding the nuances of anxiety and its impact on language learning, educators can foster a positive and growth-oriented language learning environment, ultimately leading to enhanced language proficiency and academic achievement among these Islamic degree students.

Acknowledgement

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