



Influence of Teacher/Instructor Foreign Language Anxiety Reduction Strategies on Students' Foreign Language Anxiety: The Case of Saudi Students' English Language Learning in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of teachers' strategies focused on mitigating foreign language anxiety on the levels of anxiety experienced by Saudi students studying English as a foreign language in Saudi Arabian universities. The data for this study was collected from a sample of 403 students attending public and private universities in Saudi Arabia who had chosen to study English as a foreign language. The researchers employed the quantitative survey method to gather numerical data, which was subsequently analysed using SPSS software. Regression analysis was utilised for hypothesis testing. The findings of the analysis indicated that various strategies aimed at reducing anxiety, including enhancing students' self-confidence, providing mentorship and guidance from instructors, discouraging unhealthy competition among students, and demonstrating personal care for students, all had a significant impact on reducing foreign language learning anxiety in students studying English as a foreign language. This study makes a significant scholarly contribution by addressing the growing interest among Saudis students in learning the English language to access global markets. It highlights the limited research conducted in Saudi Arabia on foreign language anxiety and the strategies employed to alleviate such anxieties. Furthermore, this study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by conducting an empirical evaluation of the instructional strategies that can be employed by foreign language instructors to mitigate the negative effects on student performance and foster a positive learning environment.

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Keywords: foreign language anxiety, anxiety reducing strategies, English as a foreign language, second language acquisition

1. Introduction

The contemporary era characterised by heightened globalisation, internationalisation, and escalating societal expectations necessitates individuals to transcend their comfort zones and acquire proficiency in foreign languages. This imperative arises from the need to facilitate effective communication among individuals worldwide. The acquisition of a foreign language expands the potential, prospects, and perspective of an individual, enabling them to transcend the confines of their native language and explore the world and

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its myriad opportunities. The English language, being the most widely utilised and universally accepted language globally, holds paramount significance as a means to enhance one's communicative capabilities (Laachir, El Karfa, & Ismaili Alaoui, 2022).

Consequently, a considerable number of individuals worldwide are endeavouring to acquire English as an additional language in order to transcend their familiar boundaries and foster a more global perspective. However, acquiring proficiency in a foreign language is a challenging endeavour. Learners encounter numerous challenges when acquiring a completely unfamiliar language from its foundational level, often resulting in a demoralising effect that undermines their self-assurance and belief in their aptitude. The convergence of these factors can engender emotions of apprehension and unease among learners regarding their capacity to acquire knowledge and achieve satisfactory performance. The field of second language acquisition has witnessed extensive research and investigation in the realm of anxiety over an extended period of time (Doqaruni, 2022; Dzhumayov, 2020; Tang, 2022; Tasaki, 2020; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019; Zheng, Wang, & Chai, 2023).

Foreign language anxiety, commonly referred to as the anxiety experienced in the process of acquiring a second language, is a well-established concept in academic literature. It is traditionally defined as "a distinct set of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom" (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986). Foreign language anxiety encompasses various manifestations, such as apprehension and unease when engaging in group communication, challenges in comprehending and processing spoken language, as well as performance-related anxiety stemming from the fear of failure.

Additionally, it involves anxiety regarding the evaluation and judgement of others, leading to the avoidance of situations involving evaluation and the apprehension of negative evaluations from others (Djafri & Wibarti, 2018; Hidayati, 2018). Research has substantiated that the presence of foreign language anxiety hinders the learning capabilities of learners. Specifically, students who exhibit higher levels of foreign language anxiety are more prone to underperforming and achieving lower grades. Consequently, it is important to prioritise the development of techniques and strategies aimed at mitigating and diminishing the adverse consequences associated with this phenomenon (Dewaele, 2017; Doqaruni, 2022). The significance of foreign language instructors should not be disregarded in this context, as they possess the ability to establish a conducive and enabling atmosphere for learners.

Moreover, they have the capacity to inspire and stimulate learners to engage in the learning process, even in the face of limited self-assurance and uncertainties (Hashemi, 2011). It is the responsibility of the instructors to lessen the anxiety that students experience by putting strategies into practice, such as creating a relaxed and accommodating learning environment in the classroom (Guo, Xu, & Liu, 2018; Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2019). Educators bear a significant burden in their role, as they are tasked with discerning the underlying factors contributing to anxiety and formulating effective approaches to mitigate such anxieties. Taking into consideration the aforementioned discourse, the current study seeks to examine the impact of instructors' strategies for reducing foreign language anxiety on students' foreign language anxiety. This study examines the impact of various strategies on reducing foreign language anxiety among Saudi Arabian students learning English as a second language.

Specifically, the study investigates the effectiveness of strategies such as fostering self-confidence, providing mentorship and clear instructions, discouraging excessive competition, and demonstrating genuine concern for students. The aim is to assess the role of these strategies in alleviating foreign language anxiety in this particular context. This study makes a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge by addressing the growing interest among Saudi students in learning the English language in order to access global markets. It is worth noting that there is a lack of research on foreign language anxiety and the corresponding strategies to alleviate such anxieties, specifically within Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, this study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by conducting an empirical evaluation of the instructional strategies that foreign language instructors can employ to mitigate the negative effects on student performance and foster a positive learning environment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Foreign Language Anxiety

The seminal definition of foreign language anxiety was presented by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), wherein they characterised foreign language anxiety as "a distinct set of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings in response to foreign language learning in the classroom" (p. 130). Anxiety can be broadly classified into three distinct forms (Horwitz, 2017; Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). The first factor to consider is trait anxiety, which refers to an individual's inherent predisposition or personality trait towards experiencing anxiety. This form of anxiety is not dependent on a specific circumstance and therefore does not vary across various situations, exhibiting stability and consistency. The second manifestation of anxiety is known as state anxiety,

which pertains to the emotional condition experienced by an individual. This concept pertains to an individual's subjective evaluation of a given situation as being potentially hazardous or perilous, regardless of the presence or absence of an objectively identifiable source of harm. The experience of nervousness and anxiety has the potential to vary across different temporal and situational contexts.

An exemplary manifestation of this form of anxiety is test anxiety, wherein students experience anxiety in response to a specific examination or test. However, it is important to note that test anxiety can vary over time and is contingent upon the extent of one's preparation. The third manifestation of anxiety is characterised by its situational specificity, as it occurs persistently in response to a particular set of circumstances. This particular form of anxiety is associated with a specific circumstance, such as anxiety arising from the acquisition of an unfamiliar language or anxiety specifically related to mathematics. Foreign language anxiety can be classified within this particular category, as it is context-dependent and not linked to an innate characteristic of an individual (Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). Foreign language anxiety encompasses various manifestations, such as apprehension and distress when engaging in group communication, challenges in comprehending and interpreting spoken language, as well as performance-related anxiety characterised by the fear of failure.

Additionally, it encompasses anxiety pertaining to the evaluation and judgement of others, resulting in the avoidance of situations that may involve assessment and the apprehension of negative evaluations from others (Djafri & Wimbari, 2018; Hidayati, 2018). The phenomenon of foreign language anxiety has been a subject of extensive research for many years. Researchers have explored various factors that are associated with students' experiences of foreign language anxiety. These factors include students' motivation to learn, attitude towards the foreign language, personality traits, background knowledge and exposure to the foreign language, differences in linguistic nuances, writing styles, and phonological systems compared to their native language, error correction practices, and the quality of interaction between students and teachers (Alyaz & Genc, 2016; Djafri & Wimbari, 2018; Duxbury & Tsai, 2010; Dzhumayov, 2020; Schaefer, Salbego, & Lorenset, 2019; Tasaki, 2020; Zheng, Wang, & Chai, 2023).

Moreover, the aforementioned factors, social elements were found to be correlated with language anxiety. These factors encompass the classroom environment, the dynamics between students and teachers, interpersonal relationships among students, apprehension of social humiliation, and the availability of opportunities to engage with individuals who speak the target language (Gregersen & MacIntyre, 2014). The process of acquiring a foreign language differs from that of acquiring other subjects, as it encompasses communicative and interactive tasks, speaking exercises, interpersonal interaction, and extensive error correction. These factors contribute to learners experiencing anxiety and a decline in their self-perception, self-confidence, and self-esteem (Hidayati, 2018). The primary source of anxiety among students is frequently attributed to speaking exercises. This apprehension stems from concerns regarding their ability to effectively communicate their intended message, a reluctance to make errors in a public setting, and a perceived lack of mastery over the content being conveyed (Abrar et al., 2018; Sayuri, 2016).

The presence of foreign language anxiety can have detrimental effects on learners, as it hinders their language acquisition capabilities (Doqaruni, 2022). The negative impact of this phenomenon on an individual's learning potential and motivation can lead to significant consequences, as it may cause the individual to perceive the material as futile and deem even the most effective instructional techniques as inefficient (Hidayati, 2018; Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019). Existing literature has established a correlation between foreign language anxiety and foreign language acquisition or learning, indicating that higher levels of anxiety in students are associated with a reduced likelihood of achieving their maximum potential in learning or acquiring the language, ultimately leading to higher dropout rates (Ali & Fei, 2017; Doqaruni, 2022; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Teimouri, Goetze, & Plonsky, 2019).

The issue under consideration can be described as a cyclical pattern in which a student's anxiety pertaining to a foreign language impedes their capacity to acquire linguistic skills. This occurs as the cognitive faculties of the individual become preoccupied with processing anxiety, thereby diverting cognitive resources away from the learning process. Consequently, the learner's performance is negatively affected, leading to a deterioration in their overall language proficiency (Salynskaya, Tuchkova, & Yasnitskaya, 2021).

Hence, it is crucial to ascertain the underlying factors contributing to anxiety related to foreign language acquisition and effectively address these concerns and causes. This approach is essential in creating an environment that fosters optimal learning conditions and facilitates improved academic performance for students.

2.2 Teachers' Foreign Language Anxiety Reducing Strategies

Previous research has extensively examined the significance of the instructor and the interaction and relationship between the instructor and learner in the context of foreign language learning anxiety (Hashemi, 2011). The lack of clear instructions and guidance from the instructor, the rigid classroom environment, and

the instructor's classroom management techniques, including publicly calling out students and correcting errors, all contribute to the heightened stress and anxiety experienced by students in the process of learning a foreign language (Capan & Simsek, 2012; Hidayati, 2018; Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). Occasionally, students experience heightened levels of anxiety when teachers deliver instructions in a foreign language that is not comprehensible to them, thereby exacerbating their anxiety.

Numerous nations across the globe prioritise the acquisition of English as a secondary language owing to its significant role in facilitating international communication. Arabai (2015) identified several instructor-related factors that contribute to the anxiety experienced by foreign language/English language learners. The individual noted that certain instructors adhere to conservative and conventional teaching methodologies, prioritising the completion of the syllabus and exam preparation. In the instructional setting described, students often experience a lack of motivation to actively participate in English language activities beyond the confines of the classroom.

Conversely, educators who exhibit a positive disposition towards the instruction of the English language cultivate an amicable atmosphere within the classroom, actively involve students, and motivate them to employ English in their daily interactions, thereby promoting enhanced learning outcomes. Therefore, an educational setting that prioritises the learner and positions the instructor as a facilitator rather than a lecturer is more favourable for the process of acquiring knowledge. In this manner, the students assume an active role in their learning experience, engaging both with the instructor and their peers to actively cultivate and refine their English language proficiency. According to Al-Saraj (2014), it has been established that the interaction between instructors and students, as well as the attitude displayed by instructors within the classroom setting, are significant factors that can potentially elicit anxiety among students.

As previously stated, and supported by research, foreign language learning anxiety has been found to have negative consequences, including decreased academic performance, demotivation, and difficulty retaining acquired knowledge. Therefore, it is crucial to identify effective strategies to reduce or mitigate students' anxiety in order to enhance their language learning experience (Kao & Craigie, 2013). The significance of instructor characteristics and attitude should not be overlooked in order to accomplish this objective (Dewaele, Chen, Padilla, & Lake, 2019). The instructors bear the responsibility of mitigating the anxiety experienced by learners through the implementation of various strategies, such as establishing a classroom environment that is conducive to relaxation and promotes a positive learning experience (Guo, Xu, & Liu, 2018; Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2019).

These strategies are termed as the “foreign language anxiety-reducing strategies” and can be defined as “the techniques used by the foreign/second language teacher to help language learners diminish, reduce, or at least cope with the feelings of anxiety they experience when learning a foreign/second language” (Arabai, 2015). For example, individuals who experience elevated levels of anxiety tend to perceive error correction not as an integral component of the learning process but rather as detrimental to their self-perception and social status within their peer group. Hence, it is imperative for educators to devise appropriate methodologies for addressing the errors and mistakes made by students, with the aim of fostering an understanding that such corrections are integral to the learning journey and not indicative of personal criticism (Tang, 2022).

Instructors have the ability to establish guidelines that prohibit students from engaging in ridicule towards a fellow learner who commits an error. Alternatively, instructors may opt to refrain from immediately correcting the learner, as this could potentially undermine their self-assurance. In a similar vein, the presence of a stressful and stringent classroom setting can induce anxiety in students. Consequently, it is imperative for instructors to prioritise the establishment of a friendly and supportive classroom environment. Such an environment serves to mitigate the apprehension associated with negative evaluation, thereby promoting enhanced learning outcomes and bolstering students' self-assurance (Tang, 2022).

Consequently, drawing upon prior research findings, this study proposes a set of strategies that foreign language instructors can employ to mitigate foreign language anxiety among learners (Arabai, 2015; Tang, 2022):

- Build self-confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem of students.
- Guide and mentor with clear instructions, practical goals, and open communication
- Tolerate students' errors and give positive feedback on learning tasks.
- Avoid unfavourable and unhealthy competition among students.
- Create a friendly and relaxed classroom environment conducive for cooperation and learning.
- Giving extra personal care to the students to demonstrate concern and positive behaviour.

Tang (2022) classifies anxiety-reducing strategies into three distinct categories: individual factors, other factors, and situational factors. The individual factors encompass the strategies pertaining to the cultivation and establishment of self-confidence, self-worth, and self-esteem. Within these instructional approaches, educators play a pivotal role in facilitating learners' self-awareness and acknowledgement of their capabilities. Additionally, instructors provide validation for learners' emotions and anxieties while also delving into the underlying causes of such anxieties.

Furthermore, educators employ methods of encouragement, praise, and rewards to reinforce students' dedication and progress in the learning process. Regarding the remaining factors, the strategies falling within this category encompass positive assessment and feedback on assignments, effective communication and interaction with learners, facilitating opportunities for learners to actively participate in the English language, embracing a tolerant attitude towards errors and utilising examples to rectify them, assisting learners in deriving valuable lessons from their mistakes, ensuring equitable and impartial treatment of students, demonstrating care and respect towards students, refraining from fostering unhealthy competition or making unfavourable comparisons among students that may potentially demotivate them or undermine their self-worth.

Finally, the strategies encompass the establishment of a calm, nurturing, and amicable classroom atmosphere, the implementation of collaborative groups within the classroom, and the cultivation of affable connections with students. Situational factors encompass the establishment of explicit evaluation criteria, the provision of adequate time for students to complete quizzes and tests, and the facilitation of students' comprehension of the cultural aspects associated with the English language. Based on the aforementioned anxiety-reducing strategies designed to minimise foreign language learning anxiety among English language learners in Saudi Arabia, the following hypotheses are put forth:

H1: *Instructor's strategy to build self-confidence of learners is negatively associated with foreign language anxiety of learners of English in Saudi Arabia.*

H2: *Instructor's strategy to guide and mentor learners with clear instructions is negatively associated with foreign language anxiety of learners of English in Saudi Arabia.*

H3: *Instructor's strategy to avoid unhealthy cutthroat competition among learners is negatively associated with foreign language anxiety of learners of English in Saudi Arabia.*

H4: *Instructor's strategy to demonstrate personal care and concern about learners is negatively associated with foreign language anxiety of learners of English in Saudi Arabia.*

| Items | References |
|--|----------------|
| Building Self-Confidence of Students | Alrabai (2015) |
| Our instructor uses tangible rewards to encourage learning. | |
| Our instructor uses effective praise to encourage learning. | |
| Our instructor celebrates learners' success and achievement | |
| Our instructor provides learners positive notes on their written work | |
| Our instructor provides learners with positive feedback after they complete tasks | |
| Our instructor encourages learners as they work on tasks. | |
| Our instructor reinforces students' ability | |
| Guiding and Mentoring | Alrabai (2015) |
| Our instructor helps learners establish clear goals | |
| Our instructor helps learners understand the nature of language anxiety | |
| Our instructor helps learners understand the nature of language learning | |
| Our instructor gives students sufficient time to finish quizzes/tests | |
| Our instructor makes grading criteria clear | |
| Our instructor makes test instructions clear | |
| Our instructor gives students practice tests | |
| Our instructor arranges feedback sessions to correct learner errors | |
| Our instructor corrects learner errors using modeling | |
| Our instructor helps learners to learn from their errors | |
| Our instructor tolerates learner errors | |
| Our instructor allows students to practice self-talk | |
| Our instructor gives learners opportunities for oral practice | |
| Our instructor monitors learners carefully when they are involves in oral activities | |
| Avoiding Competition | Alrabai (2015) |
| Our instructor avoids involving learners in competition | |
| Our instructor avoids making comparisons between learners | |
| Our instructor builds a community of learners in class | |
| Demonstrating concern about students | Alrabai (2015) |
| Our instructor responds properly when students ask for help | |
| Our instructor gives clear instructions | |
| Our instructor brainstorm with students | |
| Our instructor creates a relaxed and less stressful atmosphere in classroom | |
| Our instructor is supportive and helpful | |
| Our instructor shows concern about students' progress | |
| Our instructor shows personal concern, respect, and acceptance | |

Foreign language anxiety

Al-Saraj (2014)

- I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in the foreign language.
- I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.
- I feel nervous and confused when the language teacher is unsuccessful in explaining the lesson.
- I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.
- I feel anxious when listening to a passage in my listening/speaking class.
- I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class.
- I feel nervous using the foreign language outside of the college or class
- I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.
- I get nervous when I arrive late to class or the day following my absence.
- I get anxious when there are too many foreign language students registered in my class
- I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.
- I feel comfortable in speaking with my foreign language teacher
- I feel anxious in reading/writing and grammar class
- I get upset due to the method of testing in the foreign language class
- I get anxious when I feel that I can't speak well in front of other language students not in my class
- I get nervous when looking at my grades.
- I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
- During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
- I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
- I feel nervous when talking in the foreign language to someone I just met
- I feel overwhelmed by the number of grammatical rules I have to learn in the foreign language
- I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.
- I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class
- I feel nervous when I am around more experienced foreign language users
- I feel anxious when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
- I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.
- I feel nervous when standing or giving a presentation in front of the class
- I feel nervous at English exam time”

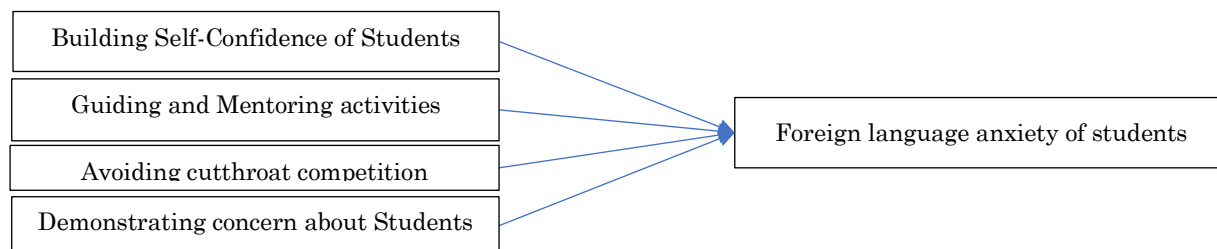


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the Study

3. Methodology

3.1 Measures

The study's variables were assessed using previously validated measurement questionnaires. Alrabai (2015)'s research served as the basis for the measurement scales used to evaluate the variables of student self-confidence, guiding and mentoring strategies, avoidance of unhealthy competition, and demonstration of concern for students. By modifying the Al-Saraj (2014) instrument, it was possible to measure foreign language anxiety. The variables were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale. Table 1 below presents the measurement items and statements for each variable, along with their respective sources.

Table 1. Measurement Tools

| Variable | Mean | SD | Cronbach's alpha | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|------------------|------|------|------|------|---|
| Building self-confidence of students | 3.25 | 2.01 | 0.764 | 1 | | | | |
| Guiding and Mentoring | 3.01 | 1.64 | 0.766 | 0.64 | 1 | | | |
| Avoiding unhealthy Competition | 3.22 | 1.55 | 0.801 | 0.24 | 0.60 | 1 | | |
| Demonstrating concern of Students | 2.98 | 1.97 | 0.847 | 0.13 | 0.34 | 0.21 | 1 | |
| Foreign Language Anxiety | 3.42 | 2.22 | 0.834 | 0.34 | 0.44 | 0.30 | 0.58 | 1 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
 **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

3.2 Data Collection

In order to fulfil the aims of the research, data was gathered from students enrolled in various Saudi universities, encompassing both government and private institutions within Saudi Arabia. Prior to distributing the questionnaire, the participants were provided with informed consent, ensuring that they were fully aware of the voluntary nature of their participation in the study. They were also informed that the collected data would be used solely for academic purposes, with strict measures in place to protect their confidentiality. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed among the student population, and after undergoing data cleaning and sorting processes, 405 completed questionnaires were deemed suitable for analysis. The data that had been processed to remove any errors or inconsistencies was subsequently subjected to analysis using the SPSS software. Initially, descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the key characteristics of the study variables. Following this, regression analysis was performed to test the hypotheses under investigation.

4. Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The following table presents the descriptive statistics for the study's variables, encompassing independent variables such as the enhancement of students' self-confidence, the provision of guidance and mentoring activities, the discouragement of unhealthy and competitive behaviour among students, and the demonstration of concern for students. The dependent variable examined in this study is foreign language anxiety. The table reveals that the reliability statistics, specifically Cronbach's alpha, for all study variables surpass the acceptable threshold of 0.7. This indicates that the study variables exhibit internal consistency and reliability. Furthermore, the table presents the correlation statistics for all variables in the study, indicating that the variables exhibit a satisfactory level of correlation without reaching excessive levels that may give rise to complications. In addition, the study provides the mean and standard deviation for all variables, offering a comprehensive summary of the data.

4.2 Testing of Hypotheses

The results of the regression analysis, conducted to examine the study hypothesis, are presented in [Table 2](#). The researchers employed simple linear regression analysis to examine the linear association between the independent and dependent variables. The initial component of the regression analysis reveals an adjusted R square value of 0.70. This indicates that the independent variables examined in the study, specifically the enhancement of students' self-confidence, the implementation of guidance and mentoring activities, the prevention of unhealthy and competitive behaviour among students, and the demonstration of care towards students, account for 70% of the observed variability in the dependent variable, namely foreign language anxiety among students. The remaining 30% of the variance remains unexplained and could potentially be attributed to other variables. A contribution of 70% is considered substantial in explaining the dependent variable.

The subsequent phase of the regression analysis, namely ANOVA, demonstrates the statistical significance of the tested model. Consequently, the relationships examined in the regression analysis are also deemed significant, allowing for the derivation of meaningful inferences from the obtained results. The concluding section of regression analysis entails the presentation of regression coefficients alongside their corresponding standard errors and significance values. The data presented in the table demonstrates a statistically significant negative relationship between the development of students' self-confidence and their experience of foreign language anxiety. This finding provides support for the first hypothesis (H1) of the study. This implies that as foreign language instructors in Saudi Arabian universities strive to enhance the self-assurance of Saudi students in their capacity to acquire the English language, their apprehension towards learning English as a foreign language diminishes.

Educators must devise strategies and approaches to foster a sense of self-assurance among students in the context of foreign language acquisition. It is imperative to prevent the erosion of their self-esteem and mitigate any apprehension or uncertainty regarding their aptitude for learning. It is imperative for educators to consistently promote student initiative within the classroom setting while simultaneously expressing appreciation for those who demonstrate such proactive behaviour. Moreover, it is crucial that instructors refrain from publicly shaming students for their errors in front of their peers. By utilising this approach, the preservation of the student's self-confidence can be ensured, leading to an enhanced sense of self-assurance. Consequently, this heightened self-assurance will facilitate a more effective acquisition of the English language, devoid of any apprehensions associated with the learning process.

The table reveals a negative and significant correlation between the guiding and mentoring activities of instructors and the foreign language anxiety experienced by students, thereby providing support for

Hypothesis 2 of the study. This implies that by incorporating instructional strategies such as providing clear objectives and assessment criteria, acknowledging student anxieties, administering practice assessments, facilitating feedback sessions, promoting error analysis, and monitoring oral activities while offering corrective guidance, foreign language instructors in Saudi Arabian universities can potentially reduce the anxiety experienced by Saudi students when learning English as a foreign language. It is essential for educators to provide comprehensive guidance to students, demonstrating empathy and a willingness to comprehend their apprehension when confronted with the task of acquiring a completely unfamiliar language.

It is imperative for instructors to demonstrate patience towards their students and provide mentorship in a manner that effectively reduces their anxiety levels. Furthermore, the data presented in the table demonstrates a clear association between the avoidance of unhealthy and cutthroat competition among students and the presence of foreign language anxiety. This finding provides support for Hypothesis 3 of the study. This implies that by minimising unhealthy and competitive dynamics among students, foreign language instructors in Saudi Arabian universities can potentially reduce the levels of anxiety experienced by students when learning English as a foreign language. Competition can have detrimental effects on students' self-esteem, as it often diverts their attention away from their own learning journey. Instead, they become entangled in comparing their progress to that of their peers, leading to feelings of discouragement when others outperform them. This counterproductive dynamic underscores the importance for instructors to actively manage and mitigate excessive competition among students, ensuring it remains healthy and motivational rather than unhealthy and demoralising.

It is imperative for instructors to refrain from making comparisons and contrasts regarding students' progress, instead allowing each student to learn at their individual pace and recognising the inherent diversity among students. The table provides evidence that the instructor's display of concern for English language students is strongly and inversely associated with students' foreign language anxiety, thereby supporting hypothesis H4 of the study. This implies that the level of anxiety Saudi students in Saudi Arabian universities experience when learning English as a foreign language would decrease in direct proportion to the degree to which their foreign language instructors demonstrate personal concern and care. The demonstration of concern within an academic setting encompasses various gestures. These gestures may include showing compassion when students seek help or support.

Additionally, providing clear and unambiguous instructions can help prevent any potential confusion. Creating a relaxed and comfortable classroom environment is also crucial, as it transforms the learning process into an engaging and enjoyable activity rather than a source of stress. Furthermore, displaying concern for each student's progress and treating them with respect and acceptance are additional ways to exhibit care within the academic context. These various gestures have the potential to instil a sense of being nurtured in students, consequently alleviating the apprehension associated with acquiring English as a second language. The results indicate a significant relationship between all independent variables and the dependent variable in the study.

Table 2. Regression Analysis

| Regression Statistics | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-------|---------|---------|---------------|
| Multiple R | | | | | 0.74 |
| R ² | | | | | 0.51 |
| Adjusted R ² | | | | | 0.70 |
| Standard Error | | | | | 0.55 |
| Observations | | | | | 403 |
| ANOVA | | | | | |
| | df | SS | MS | F | Significant F |
| Regression | 68 | 72.64 | 8.36 | 66.87 | 7.1 |
| Residual | 32 | 20.15 | 0.49 | | |
| Total | 100 | 92.79 | | | |
| | Coefficients | SE | t value | P-value | |
| Constant | - 0.034 | 0.38 | 1.96 | 0.012 | |
| Building self-confidence of students | - 0.019 | 0.34 | 2.36 | 0.034 | |
| Guiding and Mentoring | - 0.024 | 0.12 | 3.48 | 0.028 | |
| Avoiding Unhealthy Competition | - 0.030 | 0.28 | 4.97 | 0.033 | |
| Demonstrating Concern for Students | - 0.029 | 0.20 | 2.66 | 0.041 | |

$P < 0.05$ (Hair et al., 2007), $t > 1.96$ (Hair et al., 2007)

5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine the impact of foreign language instructors' strategies for reducing anxiety on the foreign language anxiety experienced by students. This study aimed to examine the

impact of various strategies on reducing foreign language anxiety in Saudi Arabian university students learning English as a second language. Specifically, the study investigated the effectiveness of strategies such as fostering self-confidence, providing mentorship and clear instructions, discouraging excessive competition, and demonstrating genuine concern for students. The study assessed the role of these strategies in alleviating foreign language anxiety among Saudi Arabian university students.

In order to accomplish this objective, data was gathered from a sample of 403 Saudi students attending both public and private universities in Saudi Arabia who have enrolled in English language courses as a foreign language. The data that was gathered was subjected to analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), specifically through the utilisation of regression analysis as a means of conducting hypothesis testing. The findings of the analysis indicate that the instructor's implementation of various strategies, such as fostering self-confidence among students, providing mentorship and guidance, discouraging unhealthy and overly competitive environments, and demonstrating personal care towards students, all had a significant impact on reducing anxiety levels associated with learning English as a foreign language. The anxiety-reducing strategies employed in this study have been derived from existing literature. Consequently, the findings of this study align with previous research that has examined the effects of these strategies on foreign language anxiety among students.

Regarding the development of self-confidence, the act of publicly correcting errors in front of the entire class can have a notably adverse impact in this context. This practice detrimentally affects students' self-esteem and self-perception, leading them to perceive a decline in their social status among their peers. Hence, it is imperative for educators to devise effective strategies that enable them to skilfully address and rectify students' mistakes and errors while safeguarding their self-confidence (Tang, 2022). Instructors have the ability to establish guidelines that prohibit students from engaging in ridicule towards a fellow learner who commits an error. Alternatively, instructors may opt to refrain from immediately correcting the learner, as this could potentially undermine their self-assurance. In addition, it is recommended that educators employ strategies such as offering rewards and expressing commendation to foster a conducive learning environment.

This entails acknowledging and commemorating students' accomplishments when they reach significant milestones in their educational endeavours, delivering constructive feedback on written assignments, and consistently motivating students as they progress through their tasks (Alrabai, 2015). These measures serve to enhance students' self-confidence in their capacity to acquire English as a second language, while also fostering improved performance. In addition to this, the mentoring and guidance provided by instructors can significantly contribute to the mitigation of foreign language anxiety experienced by students who are acquiring English as a second language. These activities encompass various strategies that can be employed to enhance the academic experience of students. These strategies involve effective communication of explicit learning objectives, transparent assessment criteria, empathetic consideration of student anxieties, provision of practice assessments, organisation of feedback sessions, facilitation of error-based learning, and active monitoring and guidance during oral activities to address and rectify mistakes.

Research suggests that the establishment of a relaxed, comfortable, and supportive environment by the instructor in the classroom can potentially reduce students' anxiety towards the learning process (Guo, Xu, & Liu, 2018; Oxford & Amerstorfer, 2019). Hence, it is of utmost significance for educators to assume the responsibility of a mentor and guide, consistently available to provide support whenever a student encounters challenges related to the acquisition of the English language. In addition, the adoption of a strategy that discourages unhealthy, cutthroat competition can prove beneficial in mitigating foreign language anxiety among students. Excessive competition has the potential to demotivate students, undermine their self-confidence, and foster a sense of hostility towards their peers.

Likewise, the exhibition of individualised attention and nurturing from the instructor towards the students can also alleviate the apprehension experienced by learners in relation to the acquisition of English as a non-native language. This can encompass actions such as displaying empathetic responses when students seek assistance and support, providing explicit and unequivocal instructions to minimise any potential misunderstandings, fostering a calm and welcoming atmosphere within the classroom to transform the learning process into an engaging and enjoyable endeavour rather than a source of anxiety, demonstrating genuine interest in the progress of each student, and treating and acknowledging students with a compassionate and nurturing approach.

Hence, the lack of clear instructions and guidance from instructors, the rigid classroom environment, and the instructor's classroom management techniques, including student calling and error correction, all have the potential to impact the stress and anxiety levels experienced by students in the process of learning a foreign language (Capan & Simsek, 2012; Hidayati, 2018; Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). Consequently, it is imperative for instructors to acknowledge and address these factors by developing appropriate strategies aimed at reducing students' anxiety related to English language acquisition as a foreign language.

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study makes a significant scholarly contribution by addressing the growing interest among Saudi in learning the English language in order to access global markets. It highlights the limited research conducted in Saudi Arabia on foreign language anxiety and the strategies employed to alleviate such anxieties. Furthermore, this study makes a valuable contribution to the existing body of literature by conducting an empirical evaluation of the instructional strategies that can be employed by foreign language instructors. The aim is to mitigate the negative effects of language barriers on students' academic performance and foster their motivation to engage in the learning process.

5.2 Practical Implications

The English language instructors in Saudi Arabian universities should devise strategies and approaches to ensure that Saudi students who have enrolled in English as foreign language courses experience a sense of self-assurance in the language learning environment. It is imperative that these students do not encounter a decline in their self-esteem, nor do they feel inhibited or uncertain about their aptitude to acquire the language. It is imperative for educators to consistently foster a culture of student initiative within the classroom, duly recognising and commending those who demonstrate such proactive behaviour. Conversely, it is essential that instructors refrain from publicly shaming students for their mistakes in front of their peers. Instructors possess the authority to establish regulations that prohibit students from engaging in ridicule towards a fellow learner who commits an error.

Alternatively, instructors may opt to refrain from immediately correcting the learner, as this approach has the potential to undermine their self-assurance. By utilising this approach, the preservation of the student's self-confidence is ensured, leading to an enhanced sense of self-assurance. Consequently, the student will be better equipped to acquire English language skills, unburdened by any apprehensions associated with the learning process. Additionally, it is imperative for instructors to provide guidance to students during the learning process and demonstrate empathy towards their apprehension about acquiring a completely unfamiliar language. It is imperative for instructors to exhibit patience towards students and provide mentorship in a manner that effectively reduces their anxiety levels.

Additionally, it is imperative for instructors to ensure that the level of competition among students remains within reasonable bounds so as to prevent it from becoming detrimental to their well-being and demotivating. It is important to refrain from engaging in comparisons and contrasts regarding students' progress, instead allowing each student to learn at their individual pace while acknowledging and respecting the inherent differences among students.

Moreover, the English language instructor demonstrates care through various means, such as responding to students' requests for assistance and support with empathy, providing explicit and unambiguous instructions to minimise any potential misunderstandings, fostering a relaxed and comfortable classroom atmosphere that transforms the learning process into an enjoyable and engaging activity rather than a source of stress, displaying genuine interest in each student's academic progress, and treating all students with respect and acceptance in a compassionate manner. These various gestures have the potential to foster a sense of care and support for students, thereby alleviating the anxiety commonly associated with acquiring English as a second language.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is constrained to the specific context of Saudi students who are pursuing English as a foreign language in public and private universities in Saudi Arabia. Future research endeavours may seek to replicate the aforementioned model in diverse contexts, aiming to ascertain the efficacy of these strategies for students from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds who possess different native languages in relation to their apprehension towards acquiring English as a second language. Additionally, the research could be replicated to evaluate the levels of anxiety experienced by students in relation to the acquisition of non-English foreign languages. This research employs a quantitative approach, utilising surveys as a means of gathering numerical data. Future research endeavours may adopt a qualitative methodology, employing in-depth interviews to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis.

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