Balancing Motivation and Fear in Learning: The Case for Learning Arabic Language

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Abstract
Motivating students is crucial for ensuring that their interest level remains positive. This is because students' focus is often disrupted by external factors that interfere with the learning process. Therefore, a study was conducted to measure the level of motivation and fear of students in learning foreign languages, especially Arabic, through a questionnaire consisting of six sections, which are demographic information, sources of student motivation, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. A total of 62 students from government and private universities in Malaysia participated in this study. The questions were measured using Cronbach's Alpha with a reliability of 0.928. The results showed that most students felt motivated when attending classes regularly with a mean of 4.4 and asking their friends when they did not understand the lesson with a mean of 4.2. They also did not feel lazy to attend classes with a low mean of 3. However, they easily felt nervous when they did not understand every word spoken by the language teacher (3.7 mean) and the mean of the feeling that their use of the target language was inferior then other students in the class was higher (4.1). This shows that students experience linguistic anxiety in learning a foreign language.
Keywords: Motivation, Fear, Foreign Language

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Motivation has a close relationship with students' achievement in learning. According to Tito Rusady (2018), motivation is a strong desire of humans to achieve goals. Goals cannot be achieved without any effort and action (Sardiman AM, 1990). This is in line with the definition of motivation proposed by Hermawan (2011), that motivation is a desire that shapes a person's behavior to achieve goals. Therefore, the formation of students' attitudes is influenced by the strength of motivation within them. High motivation has a positive impact on students' excellence (Guat, 2016). Mursi (1977), believes that humans can do more than usual when they are highly motivated. Thus, students with strong motivation can overcome challenges and difficulties during the process of learning Arabic(Tito Rusady, 2018). However, some students also experience difficulties when learning a foreign language, known as xenoglossophobia, which affects their courage and motivation. This linguistic anxiety is the cause of language learning that does not develop(Naser Oteir & Nijr Al-Otaibi, 2019). According toMacIntyre & Gardner (1989), linguistic anxiety is the fear experienced by students when learning a foreign language. This perceived fear is seen as a negative drive that unintentionally arises from a tense and pressured situation due to fear of something(Al-Tanqari, M.S., 2017).

Therefore, there are several benefits and advantages to studying these extralinguistic factors. According to Seven. M.A. (2020), through research like this, teachers and educators can identify several factors that often disrupt the process of learning the target language among students. Teachers need to understand the learning process and adopt different and strategic approaches to encourage students' motivation to remain high and prepared. Indirectly, strategic learning methods with the main motive of attracting interest and motivating students can help eliminate negative emotions and fear in practicing the language. Therefore, positive learning can be established (Nguyen. C.H., 2019). Tense, flat, and gloomy learning processes should be avoided by every teacher or educator. With good motivation, students can overcome their nervousness and fear of challenges and subsequently apply the target language in daily communication. Thus, an improvement in language outcomes can be realized (Yue. Z., et al., 2022).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Munoz-Restrepo, et.al.(2020) reported that learners who are motivated have a great sense of autonomy over what they are learning. They also feel the need to be competent in their learning success. They also need to see the relatedness of what they have learn with their future use. Learning a foreign language can be stressful for many. Fear of learning is not uncommon although many foreign language learners experience this fear, if left unattended may snowball to effect other performances in language related learning (Rahmat, 2020). This is because the fear may paralyse learners to explore other learning activities can may lead to success in learning. Hakim (2019) suggested further studies to be done to explore other related causes of fear of foreign language learning.

1.3   Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore learners' motivation and fear of learning a foreign language ; particularly Arabic language.. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How do learners perceive their motivation to learn a foreign language?
- How do learners perceive their fear of learning a foreign language?

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language

According to a study by (Oxford & Shearin, 1994), successful motivation formation is formed through six factors, which are students' attitudes towards the target language, self-confidence, goals, student involvement in teaching and learning, environment, and self-attributes. Guat (2016) agrees that motivated students' attitudes are easily seen through their positive actions, active participation in class, and willingness to participate in learning activities. Shah Andarin (2017) also agrees that environmental factors, such as support from parents, skilled and creative teachers, and peers, can increase students' motivation levels. Through his study, learning style and environmental factors recorded a very high mean (4.318 & 4.072) in helping to improve students' academic achievement in higher education institutions in Selangor. In addition, good motivation formation also occurs through praise and rewards given to students as a reward. However, the method of punishing and scolding students when they make mistakes is also seen to be able to provide good motivation to students. Nevertheless, this method is seen as less suitable for attracting students' interest in loving the target language (Mursi, 1977). According to Sabri (1996), motivation occurs through three factors. The first is the internal factor (instinct), where students can naturally learn something and do not need other factors. Second, the extrinsic factor, this factor is based on students' interest in learning something. The last factor is external, such as learning to pass a subject, obtaining a certificate, and fearing failure or punishment. As found in (Guat, 2016) study, instrumental motivation factors in learning a language, such as compulsory subjects, career importance, the ability to communicate with other races, and getting a good job, recorded a high mean of 3.99.

2.2   Fear of Learning a Foreign Language

When students feel stressed and anxious during the learning process, they tend to feel afraid of new environments, their heart rate increases, and they sweat (Al-Tanqari M.S., 2017). According to Horwitz, et. Al., (1986), most students experience linguistic anxiety because they are afraid of making mistakes. They are afraid that others will think about their mistakes and give negative perceptions of themselves, such as being laughed at. This fear contributes to a decrease in students' confidence and motivation levels. In addition, according to (Guat, 2016), low exam results also cause fear and anxiety among the students. Students are always carried away by thoughts of unsatisfactory exam results, resulting in insecure perceptions and attitudes towards exams, which in turn disrupt students' learning motivation. Students who are less motivated usually lose focus quickly and have disciplinary problems.

These anxieties, fears, and reduced motivation levels can usually be detected by teachers through observation. Dedicated teachers will do their best to help students overcome difficulties and feelings of fear when learning a language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). This is important because successful skills and learning require time, focus, and a lot of practice (Jamali et al., 2017).

2.3   Past Studies on Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language

Marszalek,et.al. (2022) conducted a study to explore the relationship between intrinsic motivation and dispositional flow in learning a foreign language. 116 participants took part in this study. The instrument used were L2 Motivational Self Scale and the Dispositional Flow Scale-2. The instrument used showed evidence of having construct validity. Data was analysed using factor analysis. Findings showed that there is a significant positive correlation between the constructs chosen in the study. The study thus revealed that dispositional flow is an important factor for intrinsic motivation n foreign language learning.

Next, the study Aljuaid (2021) evaluated the motivation to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) among Saudi Arabian university students. 157 respondents participated in the study. The instrument used is adapted from Wen (1997) and its measures learning motivation. The sub-scales used were integrative, instrumental, effort, valence, expectation, and ability. The study also compared students' motivation across different English Language levels using MANOVA. Findings showed that there was no significant difference among students of different levels of English knowledge when each level was compared separately. Findings also showed that instrumental and integrative motivations were the main contributor to students' motivation learning EFL.

2.4   Past Studies on Fear of Learning a Foreign Language

Hakim (2019) conducted a study using qualitative, semi-structured interview to investigate factors that influence anxiety among Arab learning a foreign language. The study explores learners' learning environment both in and outside classroom setting (via social context). Findings revealed that language anxiety can be caused by the leaners' own self-consciousness. This self-consciousness can be due to their personal perceptions, individual problems, and cultural background. It can also be caused by variations in their social status and their fear of losing self-identity.

Next, Al-Khasawneh,(2016) investigated the level and sources of foreign language learning (FLL) anxiety experienced by Saudi students who were studying at King Khalid University (KKU). The study also looked ta differences between level of language anxiety and the students' study level. 97 students participated in this study. The instrument used in this study was Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scales (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope (1986). The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings showed that respondents experiences a moderate level of anxiety. The students experienced different sources of language anxiety such as communication apprehension, anxiety of English classes, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. Also, no statistically significant differences were found between the students' level of anxiety and their level of study.

2.5   Conceptual Framework

Learning a foreign language can be either a happy or frightening experience. Many began with high motivation but along the way, they get demotivated because of their fear of learning the language. Fear or anxiety in learning is a vicious cycle (Rahmat, 2019). The learner's reaction at one stage can lead to consequences. This study is done to explore both motivation for learning as well as fear of learning a foreign language. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. According to Gardner (2001), motivation includes elements such as effort, desire and also positive affect. However, even motivated learners can be consumed with fear of learning a foreign language. According to Horwitz,et.al.,(1986), fear can come from comprehension apprehension, or even fear of negative evaluation or even test anxiety.
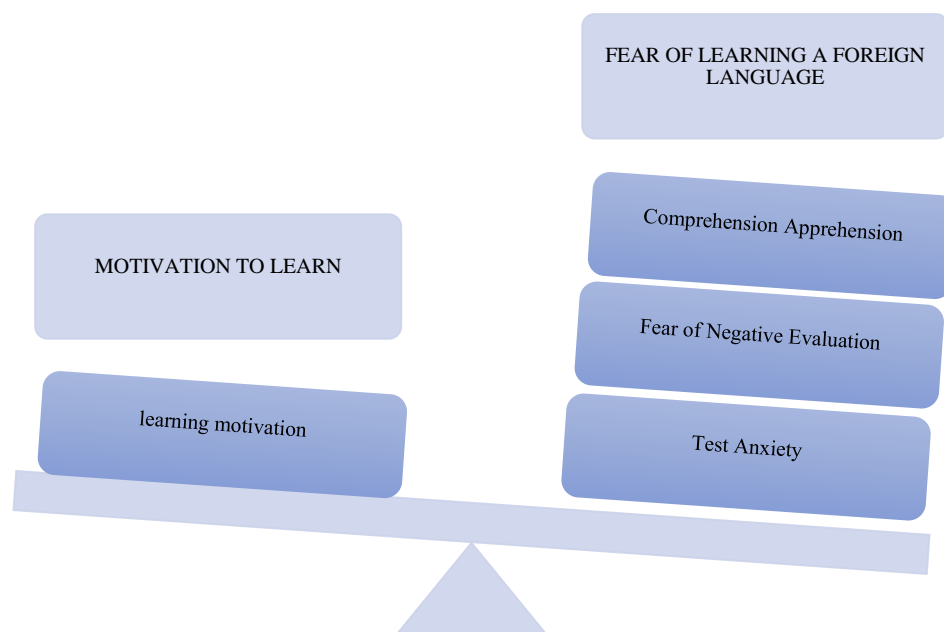
Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-
Balancing Motivation and Fear in the learning of a Foreign Language

3.0   METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors and also fear for learning a foreign language among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 62 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Gardner (2001) and Horwitz, et.al (1986) to reveal the variables in table 1 below. The survey has 3 sections. Section A has items on demographic profile. Section B has 11 items on motivation and section C has 33 items on fear of learning a foreign language.

Table 1- Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	VARIABLE	SUB-CATEGORY	NO OF ITEMS	
B	MOTIVATION TO LEARN (Gardner (2001)			11
C	FEAR OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (Horwitz,et.al.,1986)	COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION	11	
		FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION	7	
		TEST ANXIETY	15	
				33
				44

Table 2- Reliability of Survey

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.928	44

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .928, thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument chosen/used. Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

4.0   FINDINGS
4.1   Findings for Demographic Profile
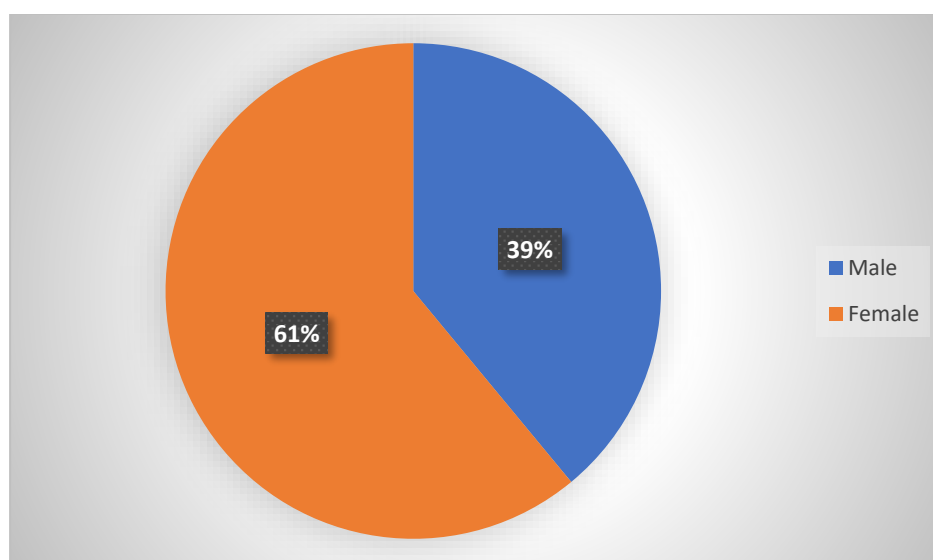Q1 Gender

Figure 2- Percentage for Gender
Figure 2 shows the percentage for gender. 39% are male respondents. 61% are female respondents.
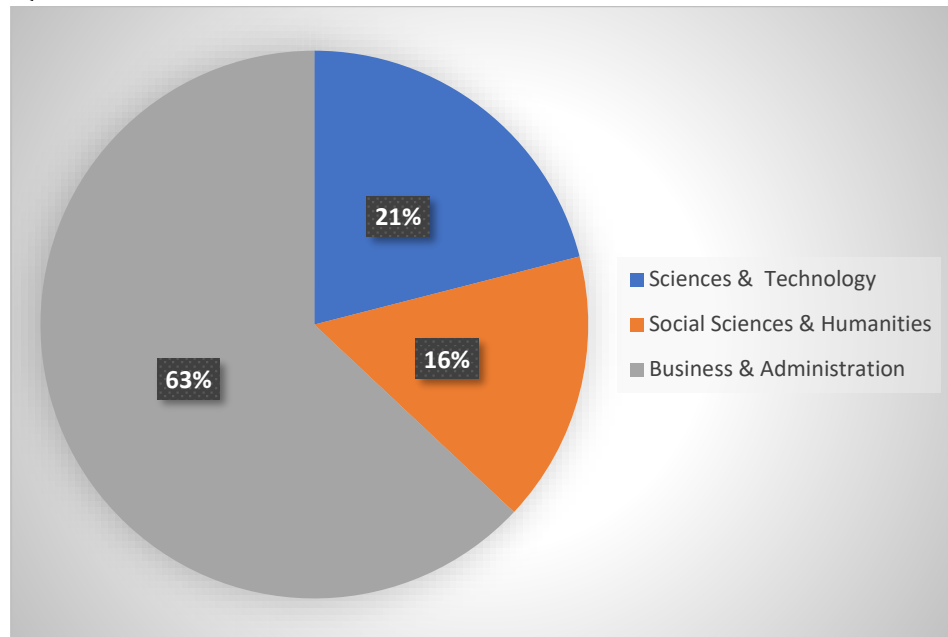
Q2 Cluster

Figure 3- Percentage for Cluster

Figure 3 shows the percentage for cluster. Majority of the respondents (63%) are from business and administration. 21% are from science and technology . 16 % are from social sciences & humanities.
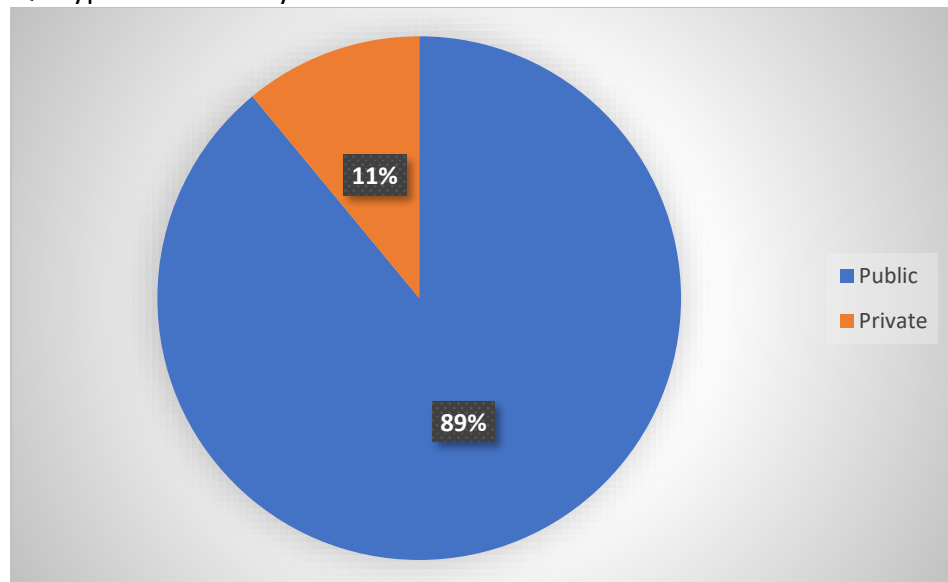
Q3 Type of University

Figure 4- Percentage for Type of University

Figure 4 shows the percentage for types of university. 89% of the respondents are from publica university. 11% of them are from private universities.
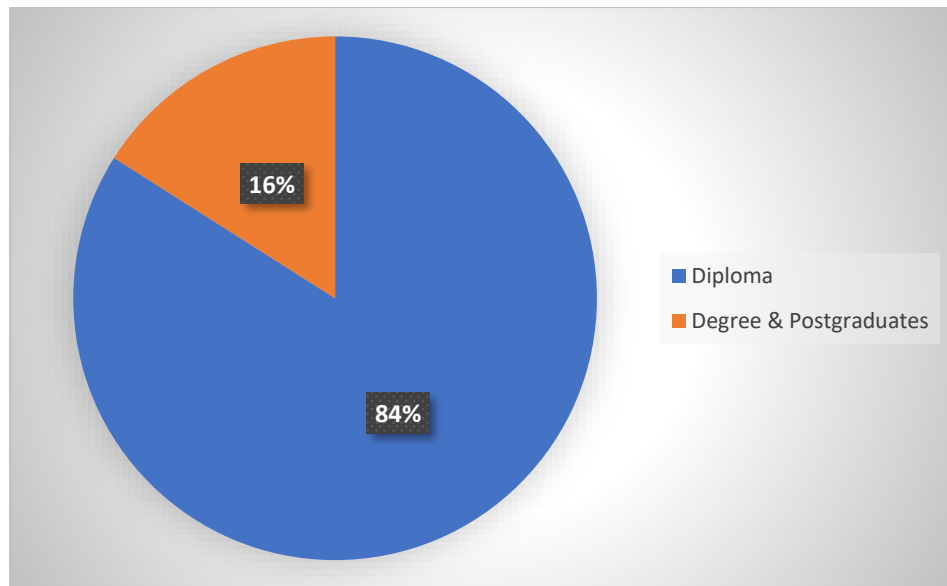
Q4 Level of Study

Figure 5- Percentage for Level of Study

Figure 5 shows the percentage for the level of study. 84% of the respondents are studying Diploma. 16% are pursuing their degree and postgraduate studies.

4.2   Findings for Motivation

This section presents data to answer research question 1- How do learners perceive their motivation to learn a foreign language?
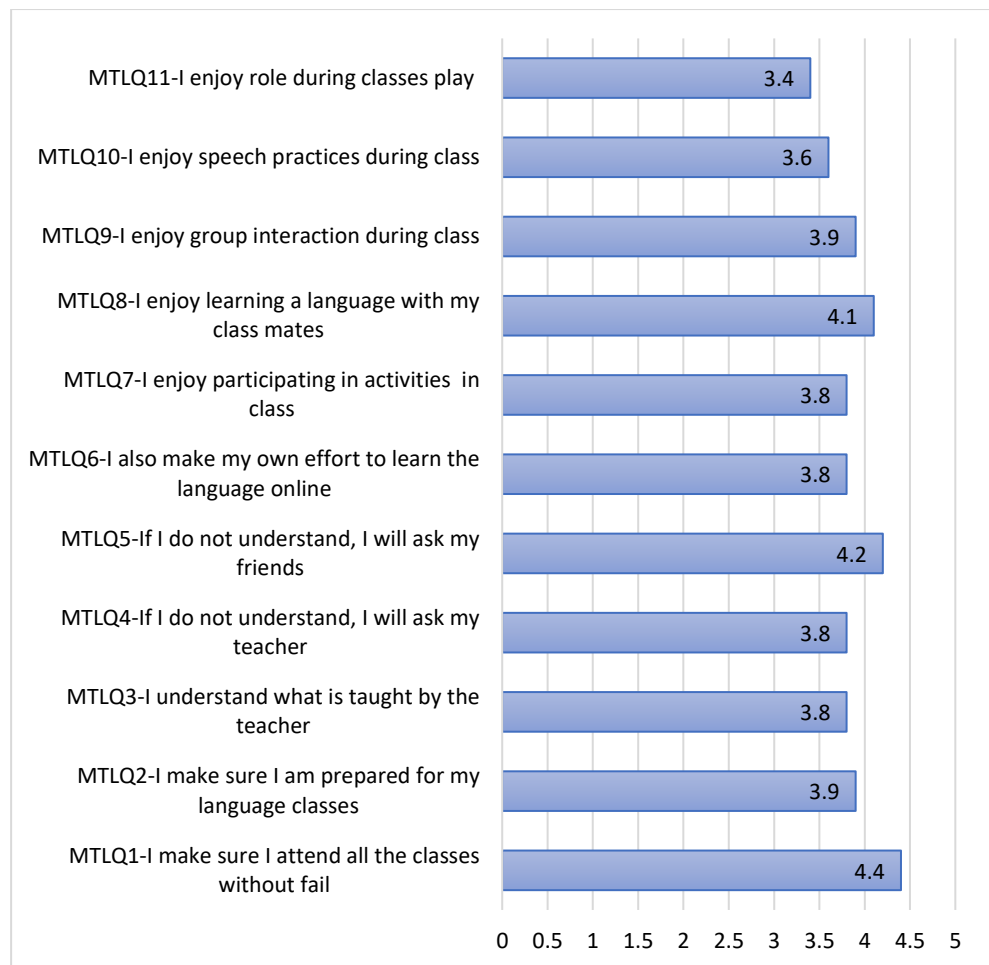
Figure 6- Mean for Motivation

Figure 6 shows the mean for motivation. The highest mean is 4.4 for the item "MTLQ1-I make sure I attend all the classes without fail". This is followed by the mean of 4.1 for the item "MTLQ8-I enjoy learning a language with my class mates". Two items share the same mean of 3.9 and they are "MTLQ2-I make sure I am prepared for my language classes" and "MTLQ9-I enjoy group interaction during class". The lowest mean is 3.4 for "MTLQ11-I enjoy role during classes play".

4.3   Findings for Fear of learning a Foreign Language

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive their fear of learning a foreign language?
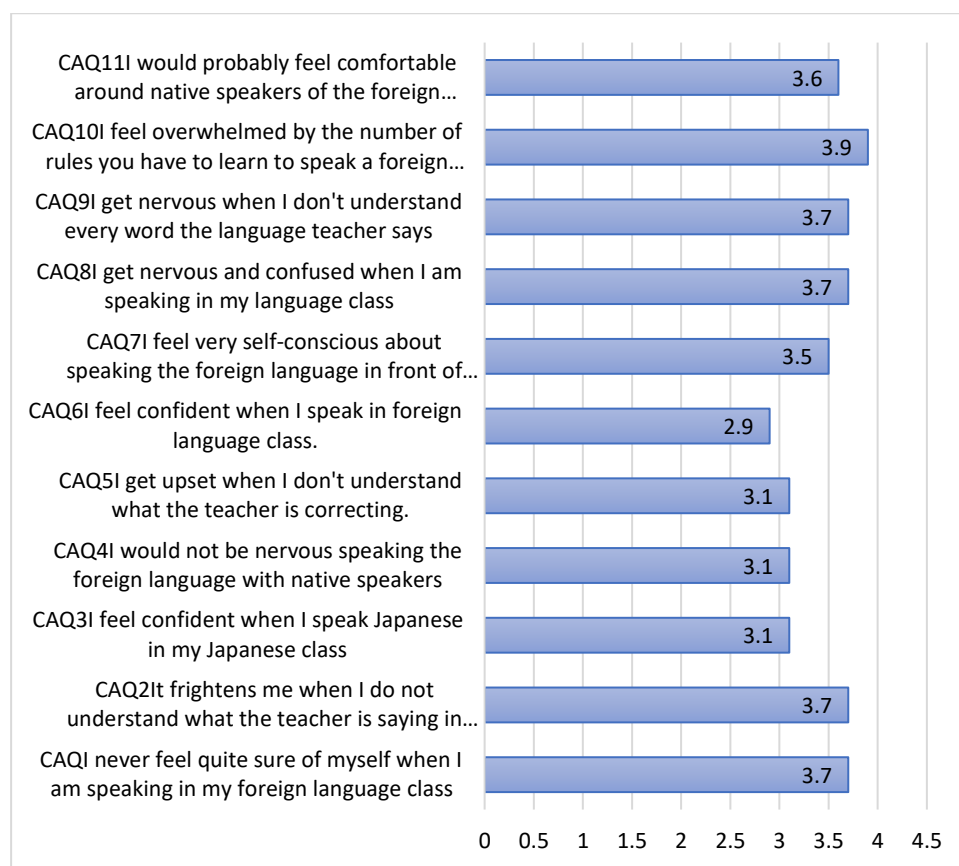
(i)   COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION

Figure 7- Mean for Communication Apprehension

Figure 7 shows the mean for communication apprehension. The highest mean is 3.9 for the item "CAQ10I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language". Next, four items share the same mean of 3.7 and they are "CAQI never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class", "CAQ2It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in foreign language", "CAQ8I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class" and "CAQ9I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says". The lowest mean is 3.1 shared by two items and they are "CAQ3I feel confident when I speak Japanese in my Japanese class" and "CAQ4I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers".
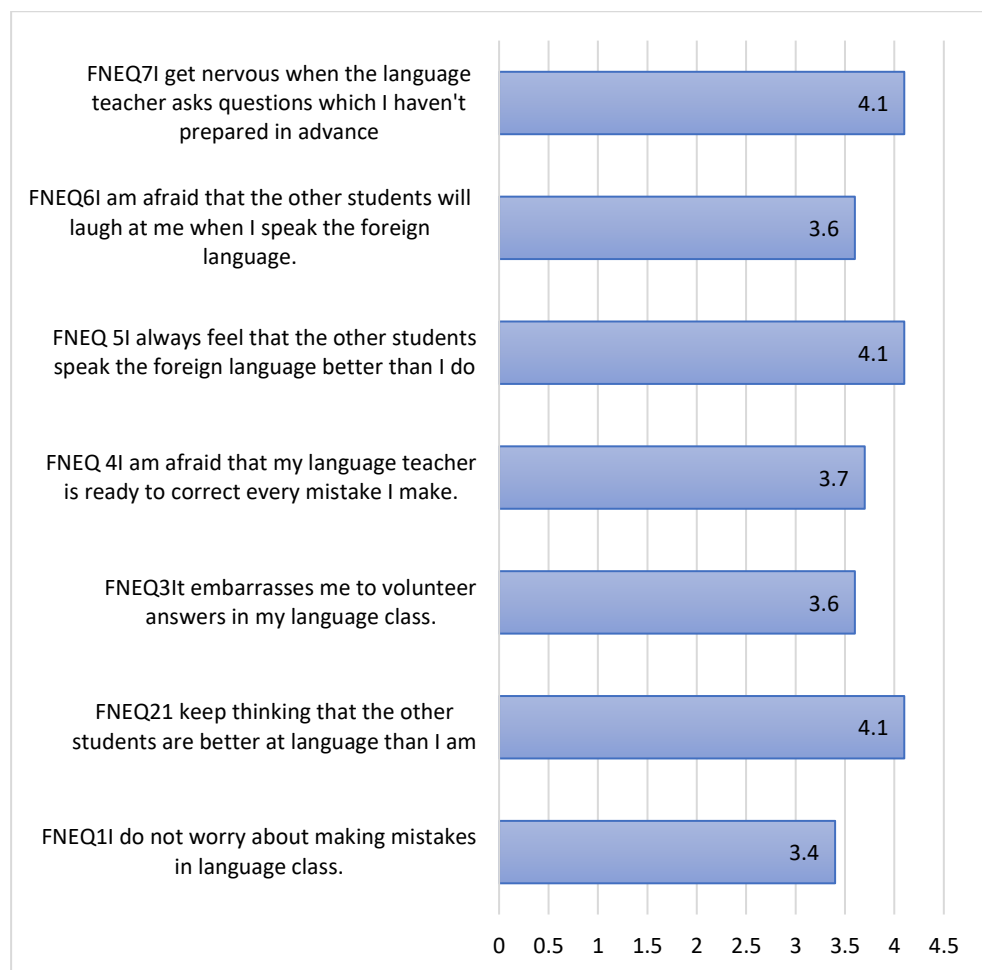
(ii)   FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION

Figure 8- Mean for Fear of Negative Evaluation

Figure 8 presents the fear of negative evaluation. The highest mean of 4.1 is shared by three items and they are "FNEQ21 keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am", "FNEQ 5I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do" and "FNEQ7I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance".
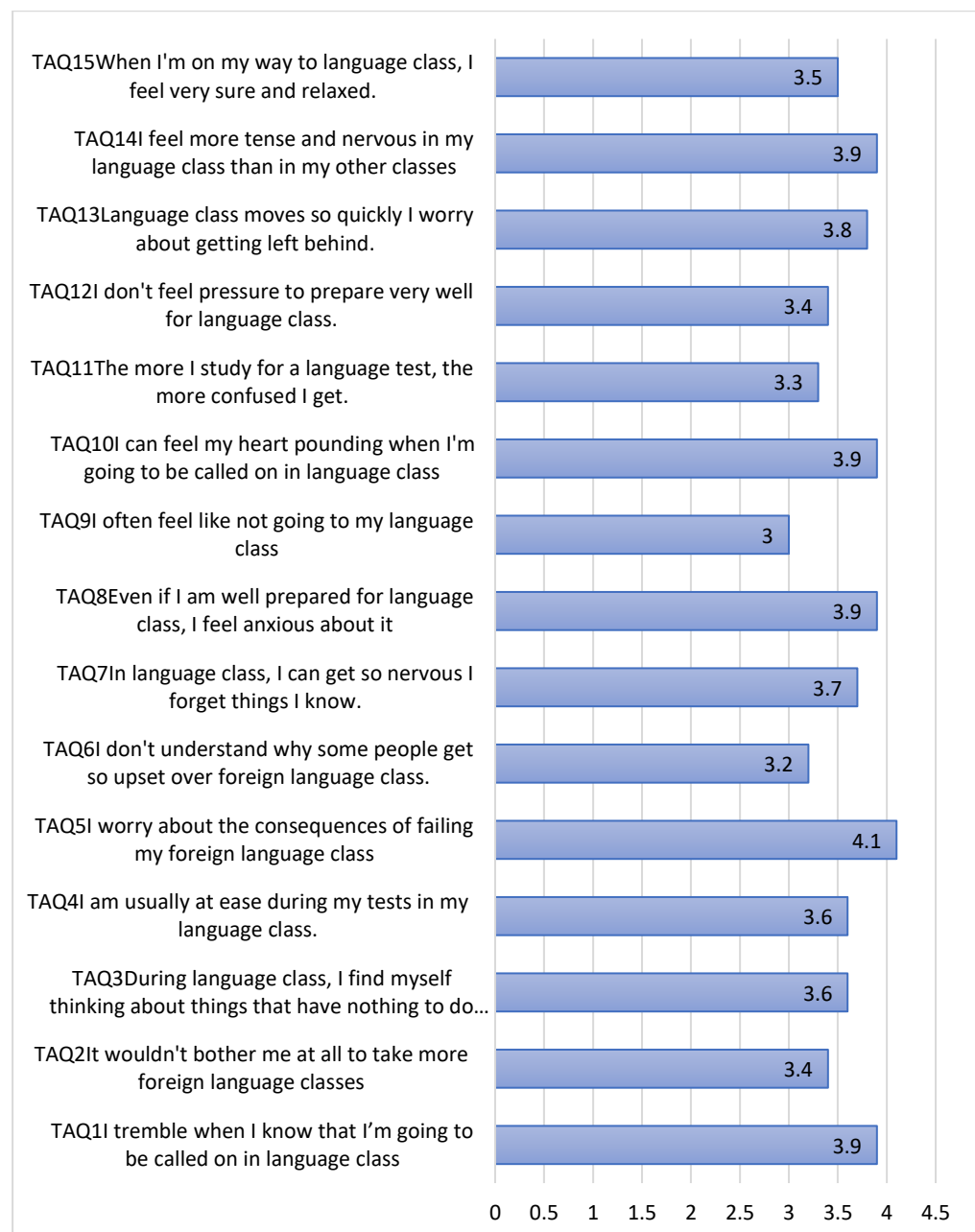
(iii)   TEST ANXIETY

Figure 9- Mean for Test Anxiety

Figure 9 shows the mean for test anxiety. The highest mean is 4.1 for the item "TAQ5I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class". Next, four items share the same mean of 3.9 and they are "TAQ1I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class", "TAQ8Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it" , "TAQ10I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class" and "TAQ14I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes". The lowest mean is 3 for the item "TAQ9I often feel like not going to my language class".

5.0   CONCLUSION

5.1   Summary of Findings and Discussions

A summary of findings for motivation in this study revealed that motivated learners made sure they attended the classes. It is also reported that they enjoyed their classes. They are focussed to achieve their learning goals. The findings in this study is in accordance with the study by Marszalek,et.al. (2022) and Aljuaid (2021) who found the relationship between intrinsic motivation and dispositional flow in learning a foreign language. Learners with dispositional flow are able to focus on what they want. Their goal is to maximise their learning outcome.

Next, this study revealed that learners do experience anxiety to learn a language. They experience comprehension apprehension. They are also reported to experience fear of negative evaluation Finally, they also have test anxiety. When it comes to communication apprehension, they are overwhelmed by the rules in the language. They are often unsure of using the language and this worry causes them to be frightened of the language teacher and this fear hinders their learning. Next, language learners do have fear of negative evaluation. They constantly think that other learners are better. This leads them to fear being asked questions by the teacher. Finally, language learners display test anxiety. This anxiety makes them tensed being in the language class. They fear oral presentations or even verbal encounters in the language classrooms. Similarly, Hakim (2019) and Al-Khasawneh,(2016) also reported findings to reveal that learners' fear comes for the classroom as well as the surrounding environment. Hakim(2019) also added that sometimes the fear are caused by the learners' own self-esteem.

5.2   (Pedagogical) Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

There are many learning methods and aids that are being used in today's technology era. Based on the results of this study, students' anxiety in learning a foreign language is quite serious. A study can be conducted to measure the level of motivation, interest, and tendency of students to use technology in learning a foreign language. It is possible that students may enjoy learning a language with technological elements such as chatting with native speakers through video call platforms.

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