

A Study of Relationship between Motivation and Fear of Learning A Foreign Language

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Abstract

Motivation has a vital role for the learners in foreign language learning. On the other hand, foreign language learning fear has a huge impact on learners' motivation at any level. In this regard, motivation and fear are closely connected to learners' desire for learning foreign language. The purpose of this study is to explore perception of learners on their use of learning strategies. This research is a quantitative descriptive study using survey methods conducted online and the sample was obtained from public and private universities in Malaysia. Respondents are from various undergraduate courses in sciences and technology, social sciences and humanities, business and administration field of studies. The instrument of survey was divided into 5 main sections. About 212 students participated in this survey on motives and fear of learning foreign language. It was found that respondents' motivation to learn, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and anxiety test varied from medium to high. The findings on the relationship showed that there is an association between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language. Correlation analysis shows that there is a low significant association between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language ($r=.382^{**}$) and ($p=.000$).

Keywords: Foreign Language Learning, Motivation, Fear of Foreign Language

Introduction

Background of Study

Foreign language learning can be known as learning of a non-native language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken yet any language which is not the mother tongue, and it is learnt outside the family context (ICT-Based Assessment, Methods, and Programs in

Tertiary Education, 2020). In a nutshell, foreign languages are learnt by non-native speakers as a second language for communication, knowledge or business purposes. Motivation and fear can be referred to as two significant affective driving factors which can dominate the process of foreign language learning. There are many aspects of foreign language that give motivation to the learner. For foreign language learners, motivation plays a prominent role to stimulate learners to gain more knowledge about language. Learners' motivation pertaining to the goal or mission of learning foreign language which drives the direction of the individual's efforts. Consequently, a motivated foreign language learner can be defined as a person who is eager to learn, willing to devote oneself in acquiring knowledge, and loves to maintain the study environment (Ai et al., 2021). On the other hand, foreign language fear is a global phenomenon that is not just established in international languages like English (Rahmat, 2019), but also in various other languages such as Spanish Horner & Redmond (2002), Chinese Mak (2011), Japanese (Cutrone, 2009). There are many criteria of foreign language that cause fear in learners such as communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Particularly, in Malaysia the key importance of learning foreign languages has been endorsed by the Ministry highlighted in the National Higher Education Strategic Plan Beyond 2020. The Malaysian government outlined the strategies for university graduates to employ them for a competitive career world due to high demand in the 21st century (Fakhrudin et al., 2022). Developing multilingual human capital is another key factor that encourages learning foreign languages in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 for Higher Education. Therefore, undoubtedly learning of various foreign languages in Malaysia is prevalent in universities, schools and also independent language centres.

Statement of Problem

Shah (2022) stated that many researchers have indicated a renewed interest in second language learning anxiety in recent years. In fact, it is a critical point in evaluating the effectiveness of English language learning as second language acquisition. This statement was supported by Daud et al (2022), who highlighted that many studies have investigated learning foreign languages. A study by Idrus (2021) stated that this is because it constantly raises red flags that require serious attention from many stakeholders in the educational field (Idrus 2021).

In relation to the study of learning a foreign language, fear of learning can have a negative impact on a learner's future learning opportunities. In fact, fear of language learning also will restrict learners' learning and reduce their motivation to learn the language. Besides, a study conducted by Rahmat (2019) indicates that fear of learning foreign language can affect how people perceive their language skills while they are learning. Furthermore, study by Daud et al (2021) revealed that 71 undergraduate participants' perceptions of learning a foreign language and how negative emotions influenced their learning revealed that students are affected by fear of learning a foreign language and reducing their chances to excel (Daud et al., 2021). In fact, when studying English as a second language, many people have difficulties. This is a problem that not only impacts young students but also older students at the university level. In fact, when discussing the significant obstacles of learning English as a second language, several issues arise (Shah, 2022). Foreign language anxiety is a topic that cannot be neglected when discussing second language acquisition. While language learners are anxious, they are more likely to make mistakes when judging their progress. According to Kralova and Soradova (2015), anxiety in English language learning creates an impact on the learning process. That person is prone to becoming passive in English classes, forgetting what

the student has prepared in advance, not making eye contact with others, not paying complete attention to the teaching and learning process, being rebellious in finishing English tasks, not participating in pair or group projects, and not asking for help when needed. Hence, it is suggested that, more studies should be carried out in determining the underlying factors that lead to this issue of fear of learning foreign language, in reference to the three components of foreign language anxiety (Daud et al., 2022).

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore perception of language learning motivation and fear of learning.. 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 communication apprehension to learn a foreign language?
- How do learners perceive their fear of negative evaluation to learn a foreign language?
- How do learners perceive their test anxiety to learn a foreign language?
- Is there a relationship between motivation and fear to learn a foreign language?

Literature Review

Motivation to Learn Foreign Languages

Nowadays, learning a foreign language is probably one of the most challenging aspects especially for students. One of the main contributing factors to academic success, particularly in foreign language learning is motivation (Gilakjani et al., 2012). According to McCoach and Flake (2018) they mentioned that motivation can be regarded as an internal drive that pushes students' abilities to perform well. Motivation in language learning is very complex where it includes four major areas such as multidimensional, involving emotional, cognitive and behavioral elements. Besides, other research also shows that there are two types of motivation that have various impacts on students which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Thohir, 2017).

Fear of Learning Foreign Languages

Learning a foreign language is not something new in the education system of any country in the world. This also includes the Malaysian education system. Foreign language learning is not only introduced at the higher education level, but has also started to be established in secondary schools. If we consider English as a foreign language, it has even been introduced at the primary school level or even in kindergarten. Some students feel learning foreign language as something exciting and interesting while there are some students who might be facing fear of it. Fear of learning a foreign language can also be used interchangeably with anxiety in learning a foreign language. There are few types of anxiety as stated in Kralova & Soradova (2015); Oteir & Al-Otaibi (2019); Zheng & Cheng (2018) which are; trait anxiety, situational anxiety, and state anxiety which resulted from consistent anxiety to time-dependent anxiety provocation. Many researches have been done about it and found it may lead to several effects such as stress Rahmat (2020), thus it may lead learning foreign language as something not enjoyable (Oteir, and Al-Otaibi, 2019). Earlier, Elaldi (2016) has proven that this fear of learning foreign languages has led to unfavorable results in the learning process which snowball to possibly poor performance and achievement. Basically there are two main reasons for fear of learning foreign languages. The first one is the learners themselves, whereby they fear the communication that they have to participate in, such as through group

discussion or when they are requested to talk in front of their peers or audience (Suleimenova, 2013). Other than that, Luo (2018) has identified few contributors to fear of learning foreign language such as age, motivation, perception of the difficulty of the language, self-perceived achievement, self-perceived language learning ability, self-expectation in the language class, and perception of the importance of the target language. The second reason is the surrounding environment. Souriyavongsa et al (2013) through their research on the elements that contribute to Chinese students' anxiety during learning English has found that, unsupportive parents, teachers, and classmates, as well as their English language learning environment can also be the determinant to fear of learning a foreign language. This issue needs to be highlighted by the researcher and educator in eliminating fear of learning foreign languages so that it will facilitate and create more fascinating experiences among the learners.

Past Studies on Motivation to Learn Foreign Languages

Based on the studies that have been reviewed related to the motivation and advantages of foreign languages, there are generally two research areas that can be seen. The first is in terms of the impact of foreign language learning on wider academic outcome and the second is contextual, leading to the particular use of a foreign language, that is, a non-native language, as a medium of language between teachers and students.

Based on several studies, the motivation to learn a foreign language can give an advantage in the cognitive abilities of students or those who learn it. Cognitive here refers to executive function, inhibitory control, working memory, attention control, and cognitive flexibility. However, whether learning a foreign language can improve students' cognitive abilities is mixed. This is due to the fact that it differs according to the person or group using it, difference in the age of the students, levels of bilingualism, and the particular tasks employed. It becomes difficult to determine whether or to what extent the cognitive advantage can be supported at all course and means (*).

Many studies on foreign language learning factors can be grouped in a specific context, i.e., in academic achievement. In the area of academic achievement, broadly speaking, a review by Fox et al. (*) argues that the advantage of learning a foreign language is influenced by the domain of language and literacy compared to monolingualism. Lo and Murphy (2010) also have evidence that a foreign language can help increase vocabulary growth as evidenced in 2010. However, few studies have discovered the opposite outcome. Among them is seen in terms of understanding one's learning. For example, in Mathematics, the mother tongue is argued to be more suitable as a medium of instruction than a foreign language. In line with the same argument, Graham et al (2018) emphasized that learning disabilities exist. Using a foreign language will further intensify the existing weaknesses in the respective subject.

Past Studies on Fear of Learning Foreign Languages

Many Studies have been done to investigate the learning of foreign languages. From the research by Heiner Bottger (2020) approaches a ubiquitous as well as a rarely adequately addressed problem area of learning and teaching foreign languages. It concentrates on xenoglossophobia, the fear of speaking foreign languages. Why do avoidance strategies as well as phobias develop during childhood especially in the foreign language classroom whenever it comes to the productive usage of the English language? Psychological, pedagogical, didactical as well as language related and neuroscientific findings are analysed and interpreted in order to help answer central questions like the above. The theoretical

indications are further supported by a fundamental pilot study based on the productive language usage of foreign language students (n=108) and the corresponding reflective and prospective analysis. Next research by Alif (2019) Students' unwillingness for participating in speaking activities in the classroom caused by their assumption of being judged negatively and lack of mastering the speaking skill. The researchers collected and processed the data using Photovoice. The participants of this research were 14 undergraduate students in the 5th semester. The findings indicated that the students have anxiety during performing speaking activity in the classroom.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. This concept of this study is based on Gardner's (2001) motivation to learn a language and foreign language classroom anxiety by (Horwitz et al., 1986). According to Gardner (2001), the motivation to learn a language includes three elements and they are (a) effort, (b) desire and (c) positive affect. He added that language learners need to initiate the effort to want to learn, they need to have the desire to continue learning and finally they need to enjoy the task of learning. However, learners do experience some fear of learning a foreign language. According to Horwitz et al (1986), foreign language learners experience three types of fear and they are (a) communication apprehension, (b) fear of negative evaluation and (c) test anxiety. The environment for the learning to take place needs to be one that the learners want to be in. According to Rahmat (2020), fear can be aggravated by the environment. A negative environment will create negative experiences and vice versa. In the context of this study, the researcher explores if there is a relationship between motivation to learn and fear of learning a foreign language.

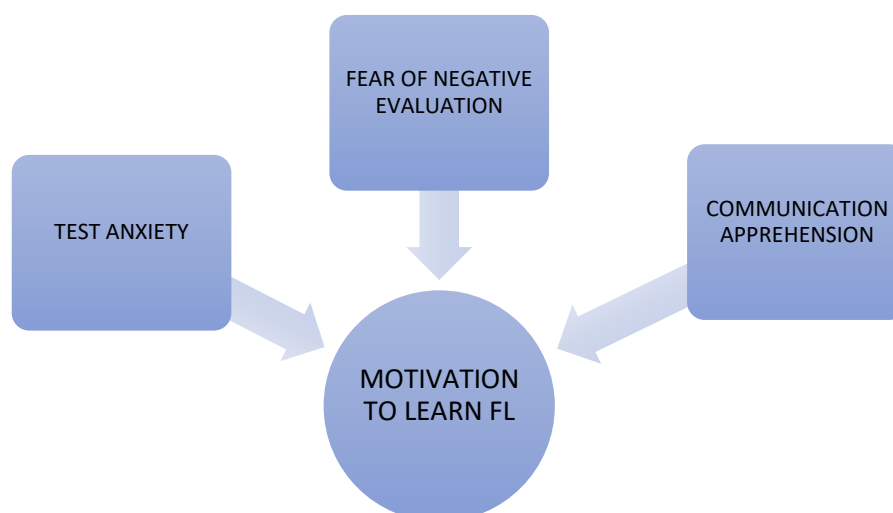


Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study-
The Relationship between Motivation and Fear in Learning a Foreign Language

Methodology

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation factors for learning among undergraduates. A purposive sample of 212 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey and is rooted from Gardner (2001); Horwitz et al (1986) on learning motivation and fear of learning a foreign language respectively 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 reading motivation to learn. 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			11
C	FEAR OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE	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
.934	44

Table 2 shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .934, 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.

Findings

Findings for Demographic Profile

Q1 Gender

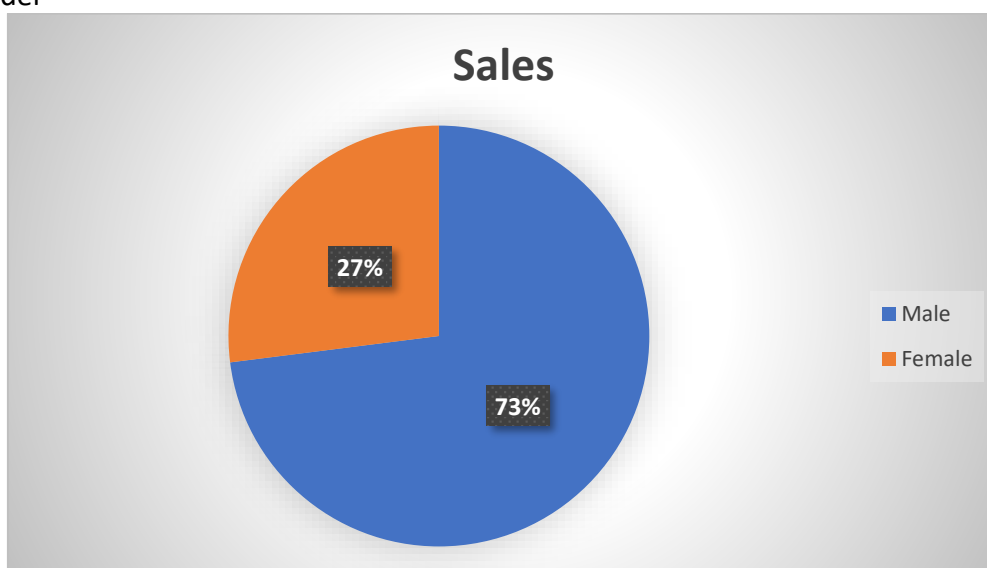


Figure 2- Percentage for Gender

As shown in Figure 2, the respondents of the study consisted of 27% female, and 73% male. Thus, this study shows that the majority of the respondents are represented by male respondents.

Q2 Age

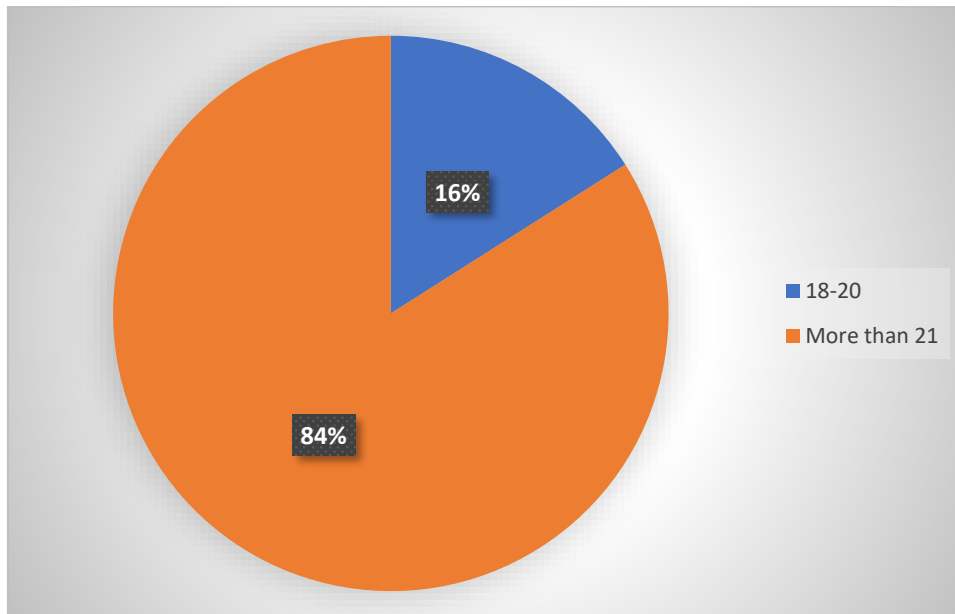


Figure 3- Percentage for Age

As shown in Figure 3, the respondents of the study consisted of 16% aged 18-20 , and 84 % aged more than 21. Thus, this study shows that the majority of the respondents are represented by age more than 21 years old.

Q3 Cluster

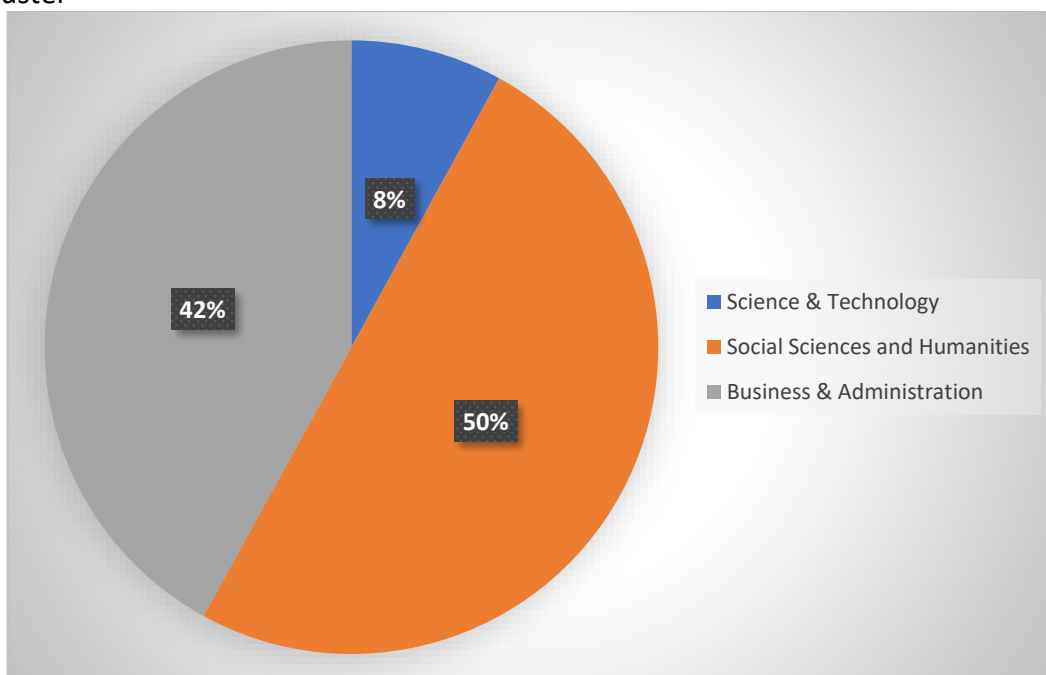


Figure 4- Percentage for Cluster

Figure 4 indicates that most of the respondents were from cluster Science & Technology with 8%, followed by cluster Social Sciences and Humanities with 50 % and cluster Business & Administration with 42 %. Thus, this study shows that the majority of the respondents are represented by cluster Social Sciences and Humanities.

Q4 Education Level

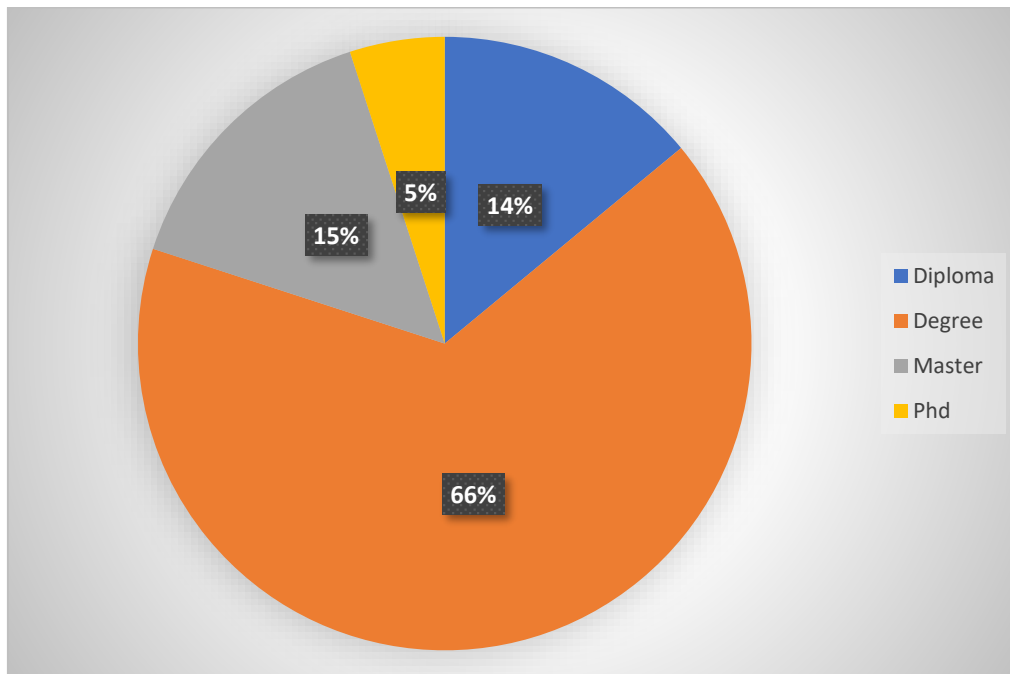


Figure 5- Percentage for Education Level

As shown in Figure 5, in terms of education level, most of the respondents had diploma with 14%, followed by 66% with degree holders, 15 % master holders and lastly 5% with PhD holders. Thus, this study concludes that most of the respondents are degree holders.

Q5 How many Foreign Languages do you know

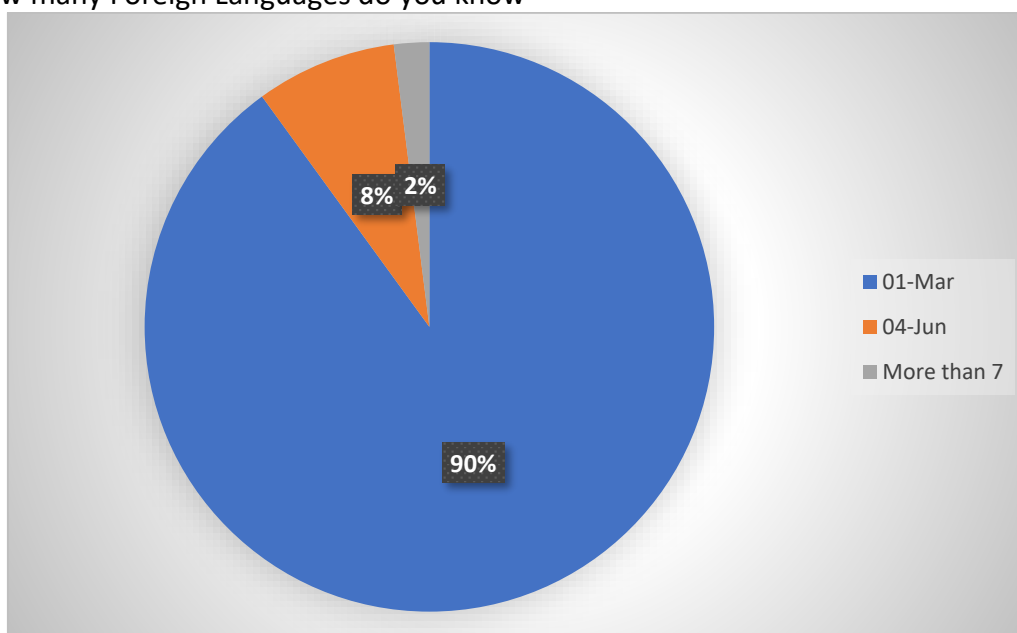


Figure 6- Percentage for No of Languages

In terms of no of languages , Figure 6 indicates that most of the respondents were 1-3 with 90 % , 4-6 with 8 % and more than 7 with 2 %.Thus, this study shows that the majority of the respondents are represented by no of languages 1-3.

Q6 Know foreign languages

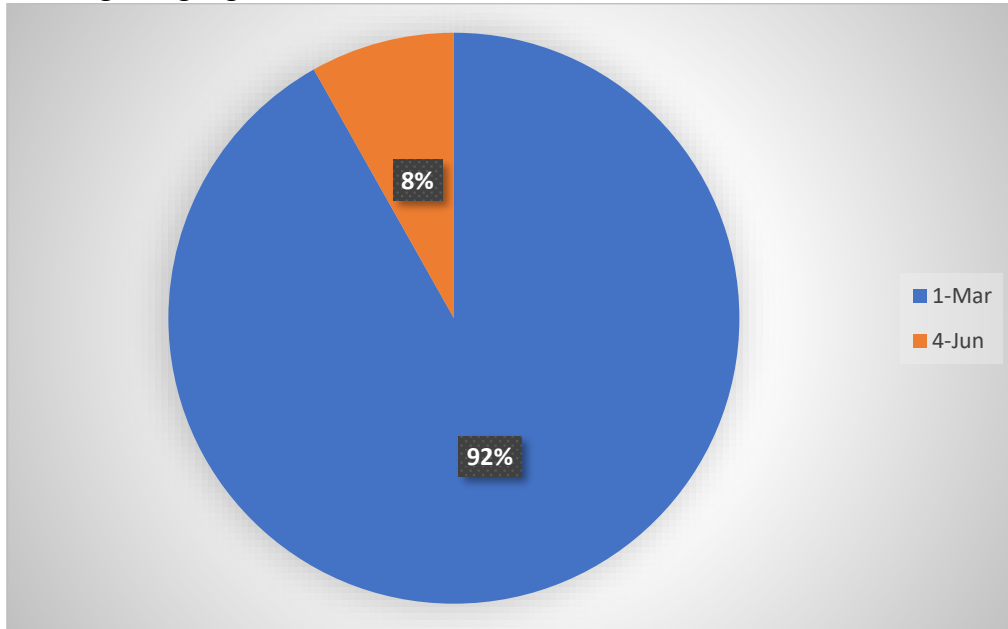


Figure 7- Percentage for Languages Known

As shown in Figure 7, in terms of languages known, most of the respondents know foreign languages with 85% and do not know with 15%. Thus, this study concludes that most of the respondents know about foreign languages.

Findings for Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language

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

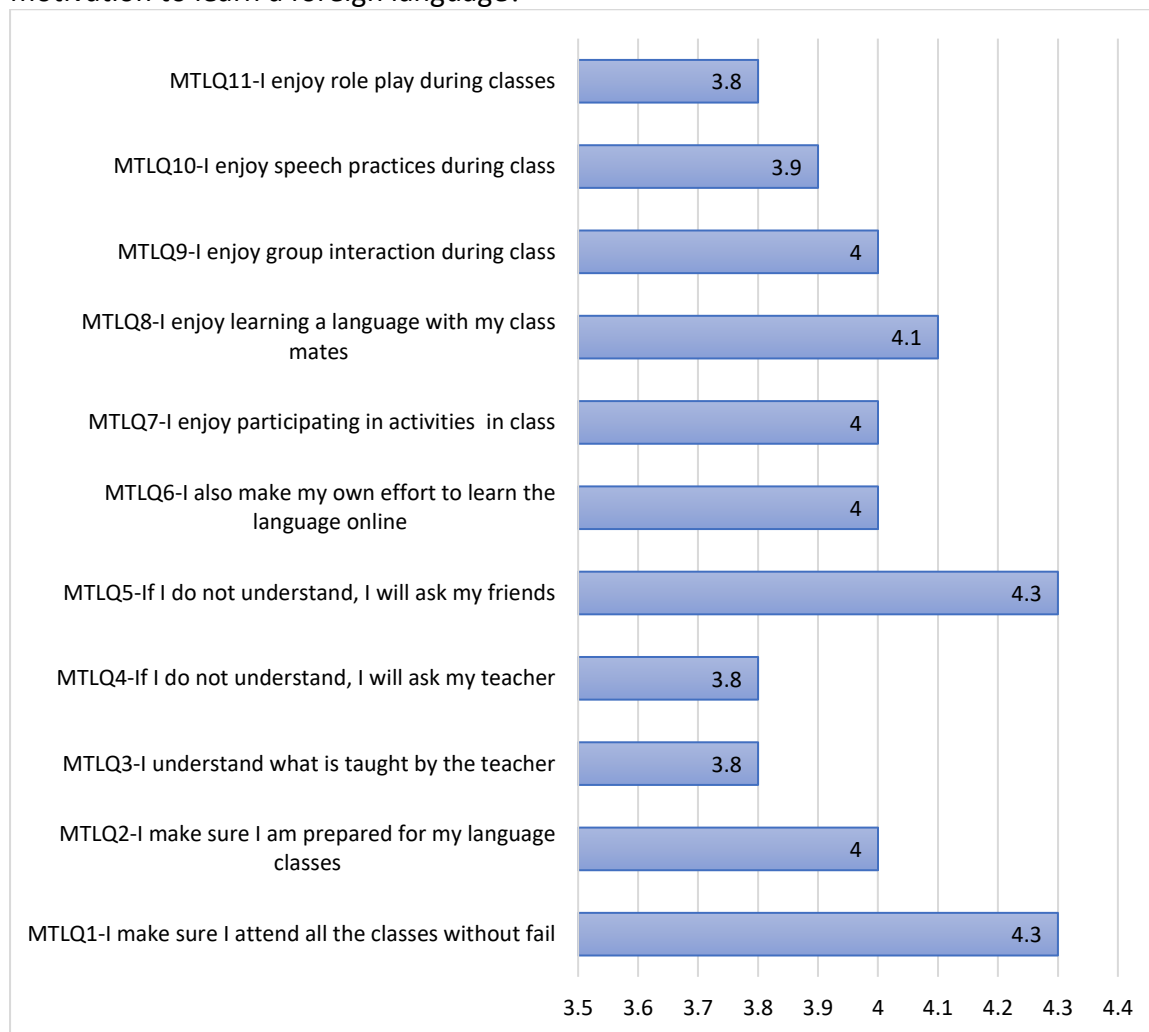


Figure 8- Mean for Motivation

Figure 8 exhibits the statistics for the mean value for the motivation to learn foreign language. From the results of the mean value above, the lowest mean values for the variable were found to be for MTLQ3, MTLQ4, MTLQ10 and MTLQ11. Whereas, the highest mean values were found to be for MTLQ1 and MTLQ5. This means that the level of motivation to learn foreign language is between medium and high.

Findings for Communication Apprehension

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive their communication apprehension to learn a foreign language? The communication of students between the instructors and their surroundings can be seen as having lots of fear and anxiety towards their experience and thought of being evaluated by others. The instructor needs to plan learning tasks so learners are motivated to learn the foreign language and overcome their anxiety or fear related to real or anticipated communication with others. This is measured by the items in communication apprehension. The research also shows that almost everyone is affected by it to some degree.

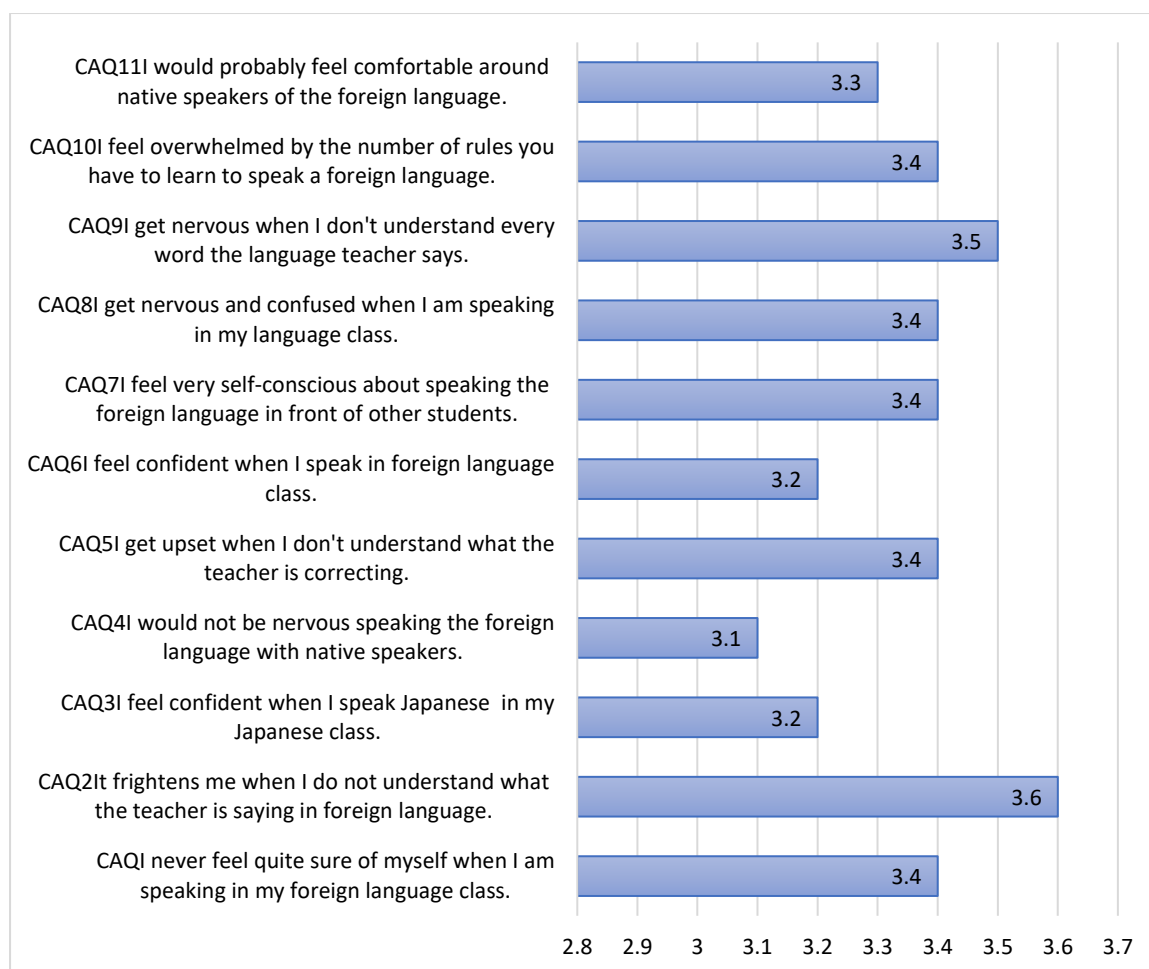


Figure 9- Mean for Communication Apprehension

Figure 9 shows the statistics for the mean value for the independent variable of communication apprehension. Based on the results of the mean value, the lowest mean value reported was for CAQ4I while the highest mean values revealed was 3.6 for CAQ2I. Based on the findings, this means that the level of communication apprehension is between medium and high.

Findings for Fear of Negative Evaluation

This section presents data to answer research question 3- How do learners perceive their fear of negative evaluation to learn a foreign language?

(i) Fear of Negative Evaluation

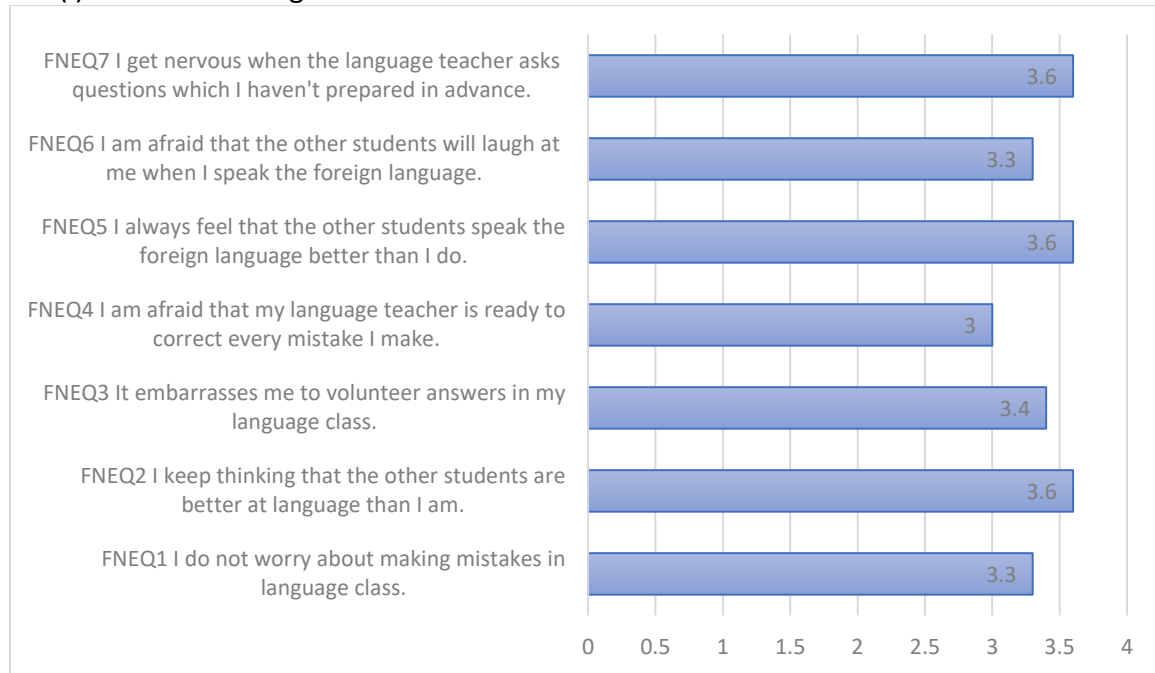


Figure 10- Mean for Negative Evaluation

Figure 10 shows the result from the survey on mean value for the independent variable of negative evaluation. Apparently, the result indicates a medium value which represents between 3.00 to 3.60 mean for each item. The lowest is FNEQ4 with the value of 3.00 while the highest are 3.60 for FNEQ2, FNEQ5 and FNEQ7. Thus it means that the learners perceive their fear of negative evaluation to learn foreign language is at medium and high level.

Findings for Test Anxiety

This section presents data to answer research question 4- How do learners perceive their test anxiety to learn a foreign language?

(ii) Test Anxiety

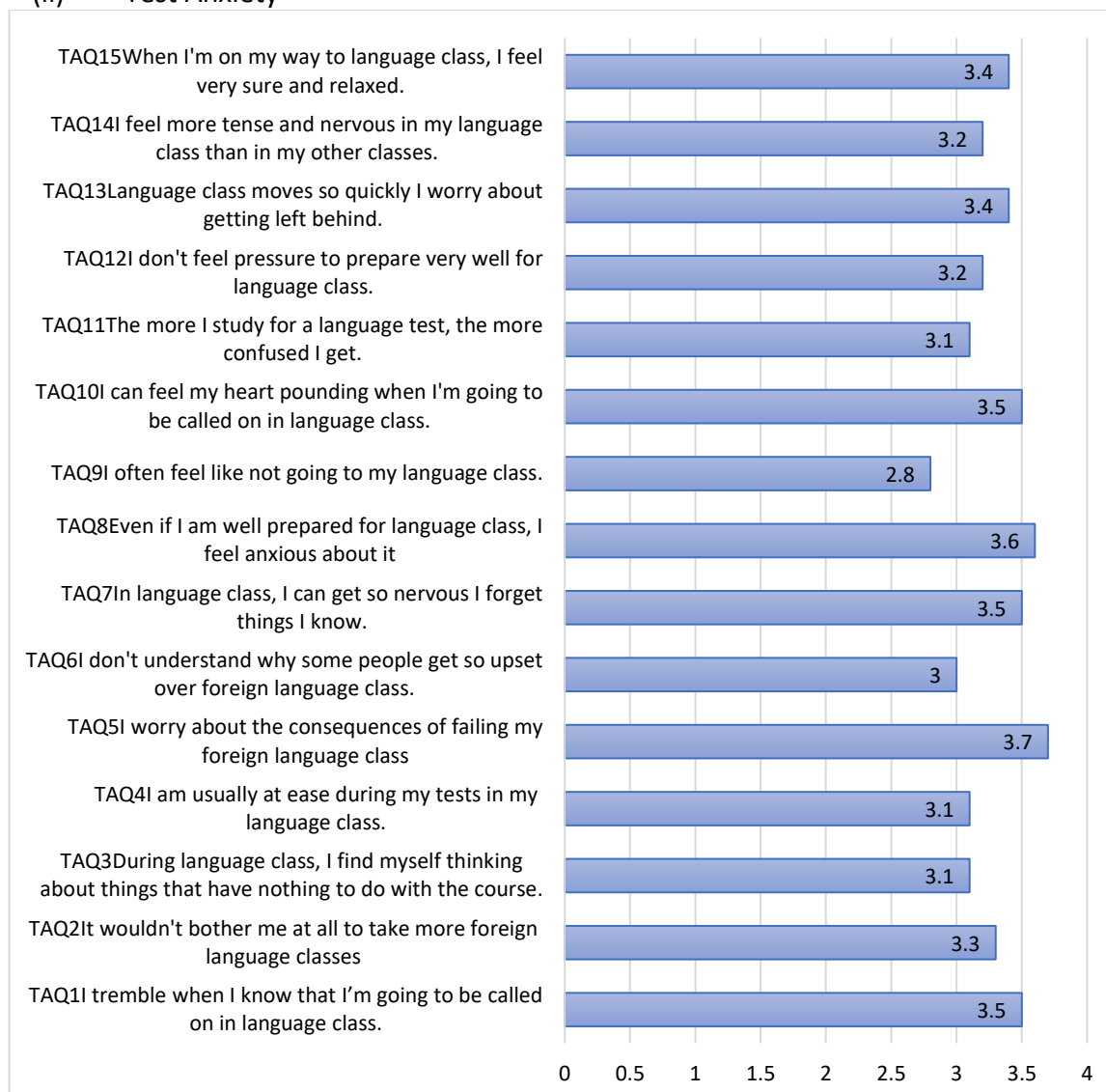


Figure 11- Mean for Test Anxiety

Figure 11 exhibits the statistics for the mean value for the independent variable namely, test anxiety. From the results of the mean value above, the lowest mean values for independent variables were found to be for TAQ1 until TAQ15. This means that the test anxiety is only medium.

Findings for Relationship between Motivation and Fear to Learn a Foreign Language

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language, data is analysed using SPSS for correlations. Results are presented separately in table 3, 4, 5 and 6 below.

Table 3

Correlation between Motivation to learn an Fear of learning a Foreign language

		TOTALMOTIV ATIONLEARN	TOTALALLFE AR
TOTALMOTIVATIONLEARN	Pearson Correlation	1	.382**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	212	212
TOTALALLFEAR	Pearson Correlation	.382**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	212	212

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

Table 3 shows there is an association between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language. Correlation analysis shows that there is a low significant association between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language ($r=.382^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). According to Jackson (2015), coefficient is significant at the .05 level and positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. This means that there is also a weak positive relationship between motivation and fear of learning a foreign language.

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussions

Based on the current study, it can be summarised that different results were found towards these three sections. First, for communication apprehension, the lowest test result reported is 3.1. However, all other variables also showed average mean value between range 3.1 and 3.6. Based on the findings, this means that the level of communication apprehension is between medium and high. The research results by Molnar & Crnjak (2018) show that year of studying as one of the background factors is not a significant predictor of communication apprehension. Furthermore, AYDOĞAN stated that communication apprehension in foreign language speaking anxiety is restricted to the classroom speaking activities when some students feel nervous, non-competent and become aware of a sort of language barrier.

Secondly, for fear of evaluation in learning foreign language, the result indicates a medium value which represents between 3.00 to 3.60 mean for each item. This means that the fear of negative evaluation to learn foreign language is at medium and high levels. Furthermore, fear of negative evaluation itself was found to be a strong source of language anxiety (Aydin,2008). Lastly, for test anxiety, the result of the mean value revealed that the lowest mean value reported was 2.8 while the other mean values are 3 and above. This means that the mean value of test anxiety is medium. This is congruent with Aydin (2020) where the findings show that foreign language learners suffer from test anxiety due to several factors and that they experience physical problems, problems related to tests, and affective problems, whereas they use a limited number of strategies to decrease the level of test anxiety.

(Pedagogical) Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Over the past decades our world has become more integrated and new telecommunication has permitted everyone to engage with experts all around the world. As association with countries grows, the need to communicate a foreign language is vital for the continuity of the communication process. In this regard, researchers need to look at various foreign languages that have been spoken by students. Apart from that, there are three independent variables that focused on this study including fear of communication apprehension, negative evaluation, test anxiety. Findings show communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are medium and high mean value while test anxiety has medium mean level. Future researchers need to define other variables that influence foreign language learning from motivation and anxiety aspects such as personality, language exposure, family background and native language. Most importantly, motivated foreign language learners enhance their determination and performance in learning languages. On the contrary, foreign language fear destroys the overall desire of learning foreign languages. Besides, the findings from this study will help potential researchers to find out the areas that were not fully examined in the literature.

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