Investigating the Influence of Motivation on Fear of Learning a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language learning is always an encounter with moments of motivation and fear throughout the process of acquiring a new language. Embarking from that is crucial to understand learners' perceptions toward their motivation, their fear and the relationship between them in order to enhance the effectiveness of language learning. This quantitative study adopts a questionnaire-based data collection adapted from Gardner's (2001) motivation constructs and replicated from the instrument of Horwitz et al. (1986). The sample of 351 respondents was collected among undergraduate learners in a public university in Malaysia, which consisted of 2 sections. Based on the findings, in terms of motivation, academic achievement was scored as a strong motivational factor, closely followed by communication's desire. In contrast, the leading fear-related factor was learners feeling confident to speak in Arabic class and learners' belief that their peers are more proficient and better for each element studied. Importantly, there is an association between motivation and communication apprehension, whereas no significant association was shown between motivation and fear of negative evaluation, nor between motivation and test anxiety. The results suggest that teachers should foster a more supportive and engaging lesson environment to sustain high motivation, lowering students' anxiety by understanding their specific fears.

Keywords: Motivation, Fear of learning, Foreign Language, Gardner's theory of motivation, Language Learning

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Foreign language learners need to counter both mental and emotional challenges through their way of learning a foreign language. They need to encounter their fear and motivation as part of their learning journey. Motivation is one of the sources to overcome the fear of learning a foreign language. To lessen making mistakes, high motivation is needed. In other words, during the process of foreign language learning, motivation encourages learners to respond to the needs of people. A motivated learner is more interested in participating with the foreign language itself by regularly practicing and abiding by challenges, which can generate successful language proficiency and improved language acquisition (Seven, 2020). As the motivated learners become more thoughtful, concentrated and foresighted in looking for learning opportunities, the quality of learning foreign languages will also be affected (Steinmayr et al,. 2019).

On the other hand, fear can occur along the journey of learning a foreign language because of some factors, such as fear of being judged, avoiding making mistakes, or lack of knowledge of the culture of the foreign language itself. All these conditions can lead to a learner's behavior towards the language. To create a more interesting and enjoyable learning process, this fear needs to be abolished.

In order to learn a foreign language, the learner's ability to learn can be impacted by both motivation and fear. For example, an eager learner is always willing to do anything in terms of time and effort in order to become proficient in language, while a frightened learner will strive with difficulty in order to improve. Awareness of how these factors can impact language learning can help teachers and learners to come up with new designs for language proficiency. As a consequence, it is necessary to study the impact of motivation and fear on learning a foreign language.

Statement of Problem

In the Malaysian context, learners of Arabic as a foreign language consistently face challenges in attaining language proficiency. A key contributing factor is the limited availability of quality Arabic language learning resources, which often leads to increased levels of language anxiety. This emotional barrier has been shown to negatively affect learners' confidence, engagement, and overall language acquisition outcomes.

Language anxiety is widely recognized as a significant affective factor influencing foreign language learning (Bas & Ozcan, 2018; Dörnyei, 2014; Eddie & Aziz, 2020; Goh & Aziz, 2020; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992). It can hinder learners' ability to process and retain new linguistic information, thereby impeding progress. While motivation is also acknowledged as a critical element in language learning success, the specific relationship between motivation and language anxiety remains insufficiently explored—particularly among Arabic language learners in Malaysia.

Students learning Arabic as a third language often face greater cognitive and emotional demands compared to those learning it as a second language. This is due to added linguistic complexity and interference from their first and second languages. In the Malaysian context, these students already struggle with limited access to high-quality Arabic learning resources, which exacerbates the difficulty. Furthermore, language anxiety has been proven to negatively affect students' confidence, willingness to communicate, and ability to process and retain new vocabulary and grammar. In Arabic, where unfamiliar script, sounds, and grammar structures are common, anxiety can become a major obstacle to progress.

By understanding how motivation and anxiety interact, educators can develop more targeted, emotionally supportive teaching methods. This is especially critical in Arabic language instruction, where learners often feel overwhelmed and discouraged early in the learning process.

This study investigates how motivation influences language anxiety in the context of learning Arabic as a foreign language. By examining the interplay between these two factors, the research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how emotional and motivational dynamics affect language learning outcomes. The findings are expected to inform more effective pedagogical strategies that support learners in overcoming both cognitive and affective barriers to language acquisition.

This research is important because it provides insights into how motivation can help reduce language anxiety, ultimately helping students learn Arabic more effectively. It supports the development of emotionally aware and student-centered teaching approaches, which are especially needed for learners tackling Arabic as a third language in challenging environments like Malaysia.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

This study is done to explore motivation and factors for fear of learning a foreign language. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions:

- How do learners perceive their motivation for learning a foreign language?

- How do learners perceive their communication apprehension in the learning of a foreign language?

- How do learners perceive their fear of negative evaluation in the learning of a foreign language?

- How do learners perceive their test anxiety in the learning of a foreign language?

- Is there a relationship between motivation and factors for fear of learning a foreign language?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theory of Motivation by Gardner (2001)

Gardner's Theory of Motivation (2001), articulated through the Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the role of motivation in second or foreign language learning. Garner argues that language learning success is not solely determined by cognitive ability or exposure but is deeply shaped by learners' attitudes, desires and sustained effort. Motivation in this model is viewed as a multifaceted construct that integrates social, cultural and psychological elements. Motivation, therefore, is not merely the wish to learn but an enduring commitment shaped by social and cultural factors surrounding the learning process.

One of the central concepts in Gardner's theory is integrative motivation, which refers to a learner's genuine interest in interacting with and integrating into the culture of the target language community. This type of motivation involves openness to cultural differences, positive attitudes toward the speakers of the language and a willingness to adopt aspects of their cultural norms. Learners with strong integrative motivation are often driven by personal growth, intercultural understanding and the desire to form meaningful relationships with members of the target language community. In contrast, instrumental motivation is driven by practical goals such as career advancement, academic requirements, or economic benefits. Gardner argues that while both types of motivation can promote language learning, integrative motivation tends to be more sustainable and effective in the long term.

Beyond these motivational orientations, Gardner also emphasizes the importance of learners' attitudes toward the learning situation, including their perceptions of teachers, classroom environment and learning materials. Positive experiences in these areas can strengthen motivation, while negative experiences can weaken it. Additionally, motivational intensity or the amount of effort a learner consistently invests in learning, serves as a behavioral indicator of motivation. Psychological factors such as self-confidence and language anxiety further influence how motivation is translated into actual performance. In sum, Gardner's Theory of Motivation highlights that successful second or foreign language learning is a dynamic interplay of social, cultural, psychological, and situational factors, with motivation serving as the driving force that sustains effort over time.

Motivation to Learn a Foreign Language

Over the past fifty years, research on motivation in foreign language learning has progressed from simple categories to more detailed models that include identity, thinking processes and social influences. Motivation is widely recognised as a key factor in language learning because it affects effort, persistence and participation. In foreign language contexts, where opportunities for real communication may be limited, motivation often determines whether learners continue practicing and maintain interest. Early studies distinguished between instrumental motivation, which focuses on achieving specific goals such as career advancement and integrative motivation, which emphasizes connecting with others. Later research expanded this to include psychological, cultural and situational factors. In learning Arabic as a foreign language, these elements are equally relevant, as learners may be motivated by professional needs, cultural interest, religious purposes or the wish to communicate with Arabic-speaking communities. Understanding these motivations can guide teachers in creating effective and stimulating learning experiences.

Research over the years shows that motivation is a key factor in learning a foreign language and scholars have explained it in various ways. Gardner and Lambert (1972) introduced one of the earliest and most influential models, identifying two main types of motivation. Integrative motivation is the desire to learn a language to connect with its people and culture, while instrumental motivation focuses on practical goals such as career advancement, academic success or economic benefits. Although later studies have added psychological, situational and contextual elements, this distinction remains relevant for learners of Arabic. Many Arabic

language learners are motivated by a mix of cultural curiosity, religious interest, educational aims and professional aspirations, reflecting the continued value of Gardner and Lambert's framework in understanding language learning motivation.

Dörnyei (1994) expanded on Gardner and Lambert's work by proposing three main dimensions of motivation. Integrative orientation reflects interest in the target language and its culture, instrumental orientation relates to the practical benefits of language learning and intrinsic motivation refers to learning for personal enjoyment and satisfaction. This broader view recognizes that learners may be influenced by more than external rewards or cultural connections. In the context of learning Arabic, these dimensions can overlap; for example, a learner may be motivated by the pleasure of mastering the language, the cultural and religious knowledge it offers and the career opportunities it can provide.

Oxford and Shearin (1994) highlighted that motivation in language learning is shaped by a combination of internal factors such as self-confidence, goal-setting and effective learning strategies and external influences including the learning environment, teacher support and available resources. They viewed motivation as a dynamic process rather than a fixed trait, requiring a balance between personal beliefs, interests and attitudes and the conditions provided by the learning context. Building on this perspective, Noels, Pelletier and Vallerand (2000), using Self-Determination Theory, distinguished between intrinsic motivation, which involves learning for personal interest, enjoyment or challenge and extrinsic motivation, which stems from external rewards or pressures. They argued that lasting motivation often relies on strengthening intrinsic elements. Ushioda (2011) offered a more individualized view, showing that motivation changes over time in response to learners' evolving goals, experiences and social environments. In the context of Arabic language learning, these perspectives suggest that a learner's motivation may begin with cultural curiosity, religious interest or professional needs but can develop as they build confidence, set new goals and engage with authentic communication, leading to a richer and more adaptable motivational profile.

In summary, studies agree that motivation in foreign language learning has many sides. It includes inner drives such as curiosity, enjoyment and personal growth, as well as external incentives like career prospects, academic requirements and opportunities for social connection. These factors influence each other and can change throughout a learner's language journey.

Sources of Fear in the Learning of a Foreign Language

Learning a foreign language is a complex process. It involves more than just understanding grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Although cognitive abilities are crucial, emotional and psychological factors also have a strong impact on the learning experience. Among these elements, fear is a major emotional barrier that can slow down learners' progress and limit their active participation. This fear arises from several connected causes that lower learners' confidence, reduce their motivation and make them less willing to take part in language learning. Several studies have identified important sources of fear in the context of foreign language learning (Horwitz et al., 1986; Elahemer & Said, 2022).

Communication apprehension is widely acknowledged as a primary cause of anxiety in foreign language learning (Daud et al., 2022; Horwitz et al., 1986). This form of anxiety involves learners' fear of interacting in the target language. It generally is often linked to low self-confidence or fear of making mistakes. As a result, learners may avoid participating in oral activities and limiting their opportunities for language improvement.

Furthermore, test anxiety is an important source of fear, especially in formal educational settings where exams and assessments happen often. It refers to the mental stress experienced during language tests and evaluation situations. Language learners often feel more stressed during these assessments because they worry about failing or not performing well. According to Daud et al. (2022), emotionality involves different emotional responses that activate the autonomic nervous system and cause physical symptoms like nausea and sweaty palms. This anxiety can disrupt important cognitive processes such as attention and memory recall, which are crucial for effective language performance in testing situations (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991).

The fear of negative evaluation is closely connected to both communication apprehension and test anxiety. It

involves learners' worry about being judged negatively by classmates, teachers, or native speakers (Taib et al., 2023; Akaraphattanawong et al., 2024). This fear is especially common in classroom settings where learners are expected to speak or perform in front of others. Anxiety increases due to concerns about making mistakes publicly, which may lower learners' confidence in their language abilities (Akaraphattanawong et al., 2024). Horwitz et al. (1986) observe that learners who are highly sensitive to how others view their language skills might participate less in class to avoid embarrassment, which can hinder their progress in language learning.

Low self-confidence is another important source of fear in language learning. Learners who see themselves as unable to master the target language are more likely to feel anxious and lose interest. They also fear the possible negative outcomes of failure (Sharifudin et al., 2023). According to Dewaele (2007), how learners view themselves plays a crucial role in how they cope with the challenges of learning a language.

Cultural differences can be an important factor in language learning anxiety. Since language is closely connected to culture, learners who are not familiar with the cultural rules, values, or ways of communication in the target language may feel unsure and more anxious about how to interact properly. The fear of making cultural mistakes, such as offending someone or being misunderstood, can prevent learners from fully taking part in language learning. Kramsch (1993) explains that language and culture are closely connected and understanding the culture is as important as knowing the language for effective communication.

Negative past experiences in language learning, such as being embarrassed in public, receiving criticism, or failing, can lead to ongoing fear. Learners who have faced these situations may begin to connect language learning with feelings of discomfort or shame, which can cause long-term anxiety in future learning environments. Such experiences have a strong impact on how learners think and feel about learning a language and may create lasting psychological barriers. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), past experiences greatly affect emotional factors, which can either support or block future language learning.

Finally, learners may feel anxious or discouraged when they see the target language is too complex. This can result from unfamiliar writing systems, complicated grammar or difficult pronunciation. When learners view the language as overly hard to learn, their motivation may drop and they become less willing to continue studying. This perception is often stronger in adult learners who may believe they are less mentally flexible than younger learners.

Overall, fear of learning a foreign language is a complicated feeling that is affected by mental, social, and cultural factors. Common causes include fear of speaking, worry about exams, fear of being judged, low confidence and not knowing the culture well. These problems can make it harder for learners to take part and succeed. Teachers need to find ways to help students feel more confident and less anxious. It is also important to keep studying these feelings to better understand them and to create helpful methods that improve language learning results.

Past Studies

Past Studies on Motives for Learning a Foreign Language

Motivation plays a pivotal role in the success of foreign language learning, influencing learners' engagement, confidence, and overall achievement. Several studies have investigated the motivational factors affecting learners in various contexts, shedding light on the complex interplay between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations and their impact on language acquisition.

Rethinasamy et al. (2021) examined the motivations and beliefs of Malaysian undergraduate learners studying Japanese as a foreign language. Their findings revealed that integrative motivation, where learners are driven by a desire to connect with the target language community and culture, tends to be stronger than instrumental motivation, which is more utilitarian in nature. However, despite high motivation, learners demonstrated greater confidence in receptive language skills such as reading and writing, while expressing significant apprehension regarding productive skills, particularly speaking (Rethinasamy et al., 2021). This lack of confidence highlights the role of self-efficacy beliefs in shaping learners' language performance.

Similarly, Zubairi and Sarudin (2009) found that Malaysian foreign language learners are motivated by a combination of intrinsic factors, such as personal interest and enjoyment, and extrinsic factors, including academic requirements and future career opportunities. Their study supports the notion that motivation among Malaysian learners is multifaceted and crucial for sustained engagement in language learning.

In a related context, Purmama et al. (2019) investigated motivation among Indonesian eighth-grade learners studying English as a foreign language. Their qualitative study revealed that learners exhibited high motivation and interest in learning English, emphasizing the importance of creative and innovative teaching methods to maintain and enhance this motivation. The study suggests that pedagogical approaches and teaching materials significantly influence learner motivation and, consequently, language learning outcomes (Purmama et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Li et al. (2020) conducted a large-scale mixed-method study with Chinese university learners of English, identifying learner attitude as the strongest predictor of language achievement. Their research demonstrated a positive correlation between motivation, attitude, and foreign language performance, highlighting the affective dimensions of language learning that educators must address to foster successful outcomes (Li et al., 2020).

Taken together, these studies underscore motivation as a fundamental factor in foreign language acquisition. Motivation not only fosters learner engagement and enjoyment but also enhances self-confidence and belief in one's language abilities, particularly in areas where learners may feel less competent. Moreover, teaching strategies, learning materials, and learner goals play an instrumental role in nurturing motivation, which in turn supports language proficiency development. Understanding these motivational dynamics is essential for educators aiming to create effective and supportive foreign language learning environments.

Past Studies on Sources of Fear of Learning a Foreign Language

Many studies have been conducted to explore the causes or sources of fear of learning foreign languages learning. A study by Sadighi and Dastpak (2017) investigated sources of speaking anxiety among EFL learners in Iran. A total of 154 learners completed an FLCAS-based questionnaire. The study revealed that speaking anxiety stemmed mainly from communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The implication of the study is that teachers should be aware of these factors to reduce learners' anxiety in oral communication situations.

A study carried out by Daud et al. (2022) examined the issues of fear of communication and fear of negative feedback in foreign language learning. This research is about exploring the causes of fear among learners in English-speaking classes. The respondents were undergraduate learners from UiTM Segamat, Malaysia and Hunan University, China. A total of 340 learners participated in the study. The instrument used was an adapted version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCAS) questionnaire. The findings show that learners experienced a moderate level of anxiety, mainly due to communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test-related stress, which affected their speaking performance. The implication of this study is that reducing language learning anxiety can improve learners' confidence and participation in speaking classes and future research should consider the role of learners' native language in their performance.

Next, the study by Ismail et al. (2023) was done to investigate the level of oral language anxiety and its relationship with learning outcomes in the Arabic language among Malaysian secondary school learners. This quantitative study involved 500 Form 4 learners from 20 religious secondary schools in Malaysia. The tool used was a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from FLCAS, measuring listening and speaking anxiety. The findings revealed moderately high levels of speaking and listening anxiety (Min=3.48, SD=0.64 for listening; Min=3.29, SD=0.57 for speaking). The results also found that speaking and listening anxiety have a significant relationship with learners' learning outcomes in school (listening anxiety: $r = -0.121$, $p < .05$; speaking anxiety: $r = -0.154$, $p < .05$). This study suggests that teachers to emphasize various and effective strategies and methods of teaching Arabic in order to help reduce learners' anxiety in applying Arabic.

In the study by Sabti et al. (2024), the focus was on investigating sources of writing anxiety and their effects

among Iraqi EFL learners. The research involved 100 Iraqi undergraduate EFL learners, 50 males and 50 females, at Al-Nisour University College. This study employed SLWAI (Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory) and CWAI (Causes of Writing Anxiety Inventory) to assess anxiety components and causes. Results showed that linguistic difficulties were the most cited cause of anxiety, followed by fear of writing tests, pressure for perfect work, topic choice issues, and time pressure. Additionally, avoidance behavior anxiety was the highest among components, and female learners experienced higher anxiety than males. The study implies that addressing linguistic challenges, reducing evaluative pressure, and recognizing gender differences are vital for supporting writing development in EFL contexts.

Overall, previous studies consistently indicate that fear of learning a foreign language whether in speaking, listening or writing, often arises from communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety and linguistic challenges. These studies also highlight that such anxiety can negatively impact learners' performance, confidence and learning outcomes. While most research emphasizes the role of teachers in applying strategies to reduce anxiety, they also point to contextual factors such as cultural background, native language influence and gender differences as important considerations. In relation to the present study, these findings suggest that understanding the specific sources of learners' fear is essential for designing targeted interventions that not only lower anxiety but also foster a more supportive and engaging foreign language learning environment.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The figure shows the conceptual framework of the study. This study explores the relationship between motivation and factors of fear for learning a foreign language. According to Gardner (2001), motivation for learning is a complex, inner and favorable attitude of learners. When learners are motivated, they make efforts to succeed. However, when it comes to learning a foreign language, some factors may cause learners to fear learning. This fear may hinder future learning and future success in the learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) listed three main reasons why learners fear learning a foreign language. The first is communication apprehension. At the initial stage of learning, learners may develop anxiety or apprehension towards communication in the target language. Next, learners may fear the negative evaluation they may get from their instructors and even peers. Finally, when preparing for a test, learners may have anxiety, fearing whether they can succeed in the test.

This study therefore looks at if there is a relationship between motivation and communication apprehension. It also investigates the relationship between motivation and fear of negative evaluation as well as between motivation and test anxiety.
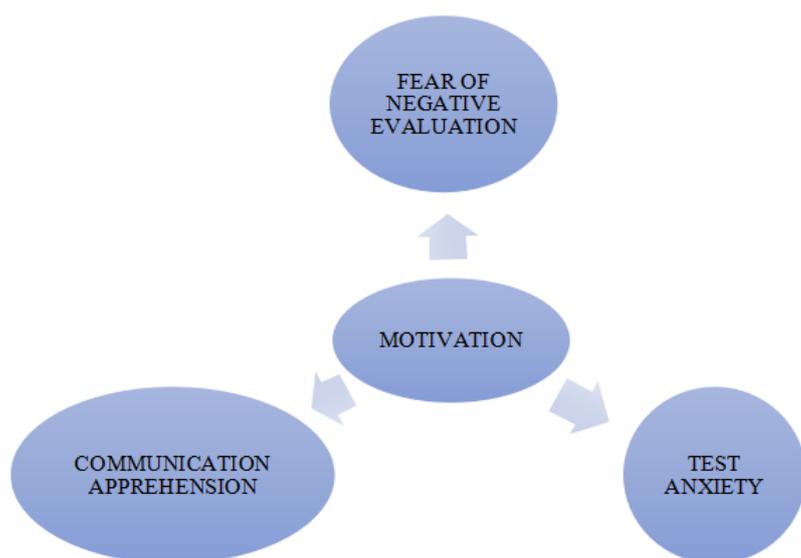

Figure 1- Conceptual Framework of the Study

Is there a relationship between Motivation and all Factors in the fear of Learning a foreign language?

METHODOLOGY

This quantitative study is done to explore motivation and fear of learning a foreign language. A convenient sample of 351 participants responded to the survey. The instrument used is a 5 Likert-scale survey. Table 1 below shows the categories used for the Likert scale; 1 is for Never, 2 is for Rarely, 3 is for Sometimes, 4 is for Very Often and 5 is for Always.

Table 1- Likert Scale Use

1	Never
2	Rarely
3	Sometimes
4	Very Often
5	Always

Table 2 below shows the distribution of items in the survey. The instrument is adapted from Gardner's (2001) motivation constructs and replicated from the instrument of Horwitz et al. (1986) to reveal the variables in the table below. Section B has 8 items on motivation to Learn and section C has 24 items on fear of learning a foreign language.

Table 2- Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	VARIABLE	SUB-CATEGORY	NO OF ITEMS	TOT ITEMS	
B	MOTIVATION TO LEARN			8	.888
C	FEAR OF LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAG-E	COMMUNICA-TION APPREHENSIO-N	10	24	.831
		FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION	6		
		TEST ANXIETY	8		
				32	.854

Table 2 also shows the reliability of the survey. The analysis shows a Cronbach alpha of .888 for Motivation to learn and .831 for Fear of learning a foreign language. The overall Cronbach Alpha for all 32 items is; thus, revealing a good reliability of the instrument used (Jackson, 2015). Further analysis using SPSS is done to present findings to answer the research questions for this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Analysis

Table 3 -Percentage for Demographic profile

Question	Demographic Profile	Categories	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	35%
		Female	35%
2	Class code	TAC 401	25%
		TAC 451	22%
		TAC 501	53%

3	Like Arabic	Yes	92%
		No	8%

Table 3 presents the demographic profile of the learners involved in the study. In terms of gender distribution, both male and female learners constitute an equal proportion of 35% each, indicating a balanced participation between the two groups. Regarding class code, the highest representation is from TAC501, which corresponds to Introductory Arabic Level 3, comprising 53% of the total learners. This is followed by 25% from TAC 401 (Introductory Arabic Level 1) and 22% from TAC 451 (Introductory Arabic Level 2). This distribution indicates a larger participation from learners at the more advanced stage of the introductory Arabic language program. In relation to the learners' interest in the Arabic language, a substantial majority of 92% indicated a positive inclination, while only 8% reported otherwise. This suggests a generally favourable attitude towards Arabic among the learners, regardless of their class level.

Descriptive Statistics

Findings for Motivation

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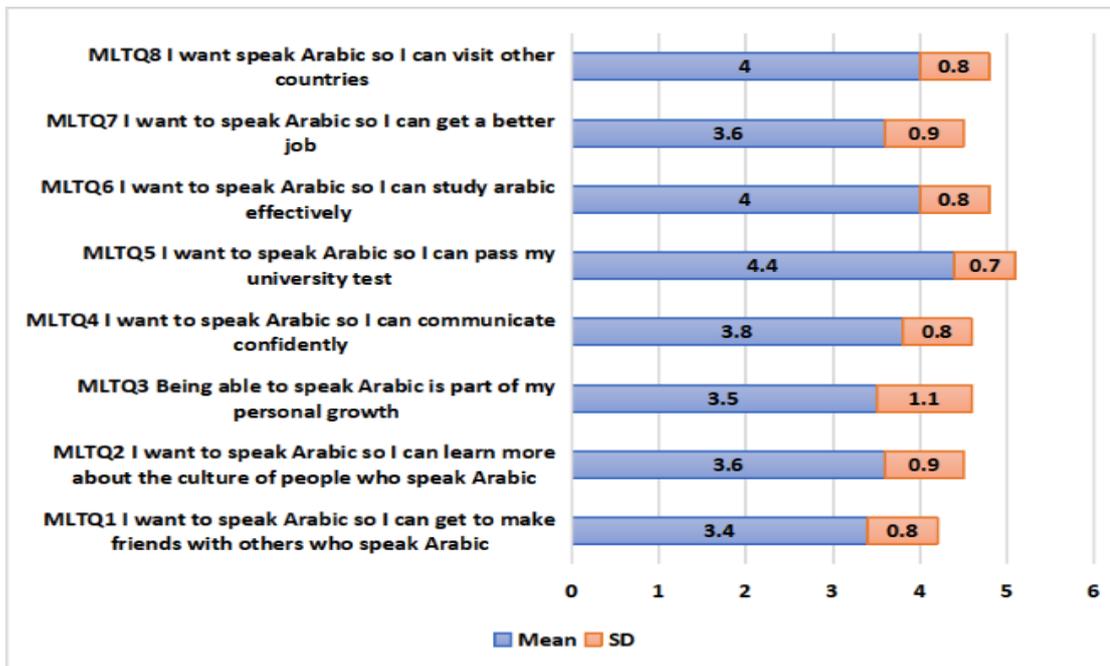

Figure 2- Mean for Motivation

Figure 2 above displays the mean value of motivation. The highest mean score is 4.4 (SD = 0.7) for the item making efforts to develop Arabic speaking proficiency to meet the requirements of the university examination. Next, the results indicate a tie for the second highest mean scores (M = 4, SD = 0.8). The first item expresses the desire to develop spoken Arabic skills to enhance the effectiveness of studying the language, while the second item reflects the intention to acquire Arabic proficiency to facilitate communication when visiting other countries. In contrast, the item reflecting a desire to speak Arabic to make friends with other Arabic speakers received the lowest mean score of 3.4 (SD = 0.8), indicating that social motivation was the least influential factor in learners' language learning intentions.

Findings for Communication Apprehension

This section presents data to answer research question 2- How do learners perceive their communication apprehension in the learning of a foreign language?
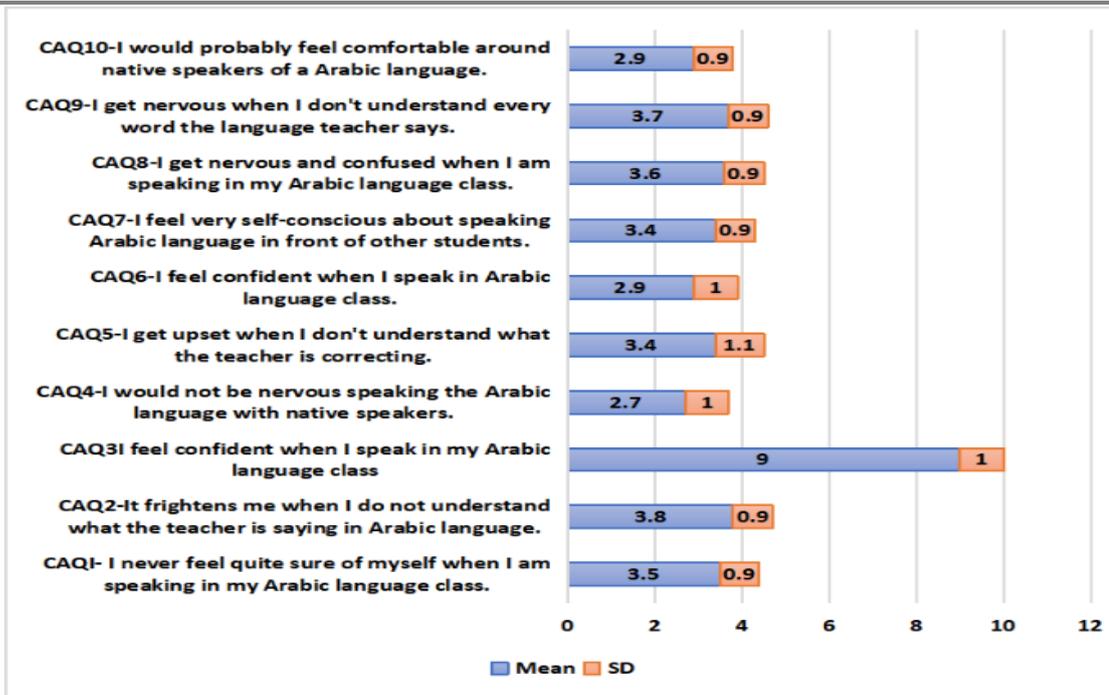
Figure 3- Mean for Communication Apprehension

Refer to the data in Figure 3; the three highest mean scores for communication apprehension are:"I feel confident when I speak in my Arabic language class" (M=9, SD=1), "It frightens me when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in Arabic language" (M=3.8, SD=0.9), "I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says" (M=3.7, SD=0.9). These responses indicate that some learners are confident to speak in Arabic language class, while some of them are anxious once they can't understand what their teacher says. In contrast, the lowest mean score was stated for the item "I would not be nervous speaking the Arabic language with native speakers" (M=2.7, SD=1).

Findings for Fear of Negative Evaluation

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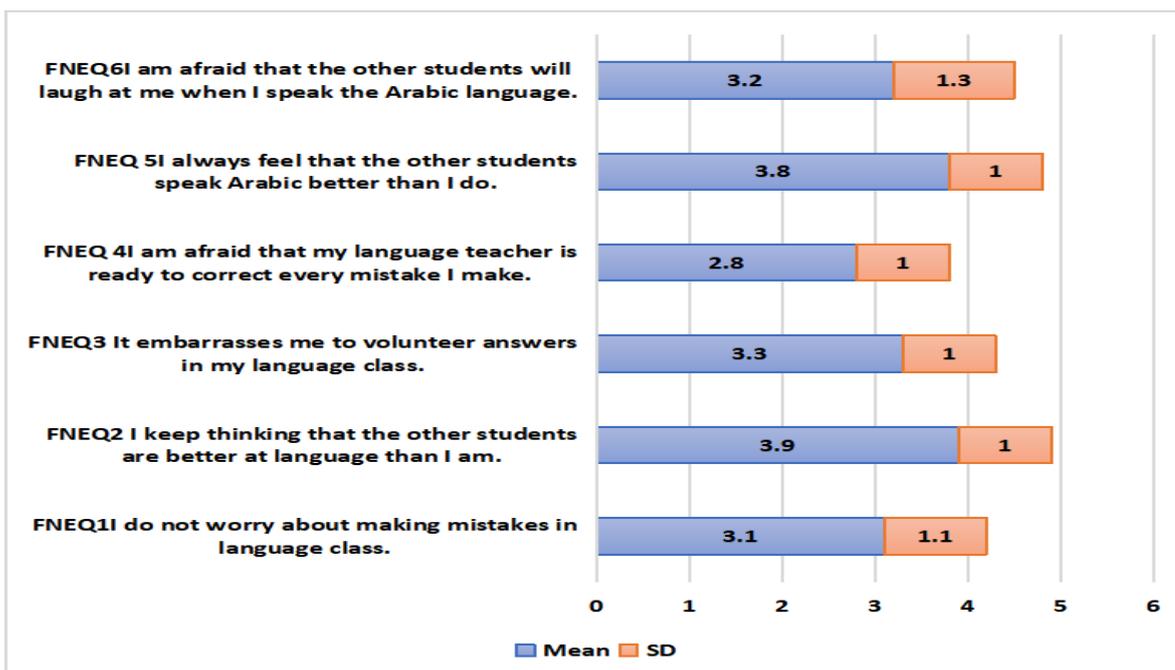

Figure 4- Mean for Fear of Negative Evaluation

Based on the Figure 4 above, the three item for the construct fear of negative evaluation with the highest scores are 'I keep thinking that the other students are better at language than I am' (M=3.9, SD=1), 'I always feel that the other students speak Arabic better than I do,' (M=3.8, SD=1) and 'It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class' (M=3.3, SD=1). These results indicate that learners' fear of negative evaluation is primarily influenced by their tendency to compare themselves with peers and perceive others as more proficient in the target language. Conversely, the item with the lowest mean score was 'I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make' (M=2.8, SD=1).

Findings for Test Anxiety

This section presents data to answer research question 4- How do learners perceive their test anxiety in the learning of a foreign language?
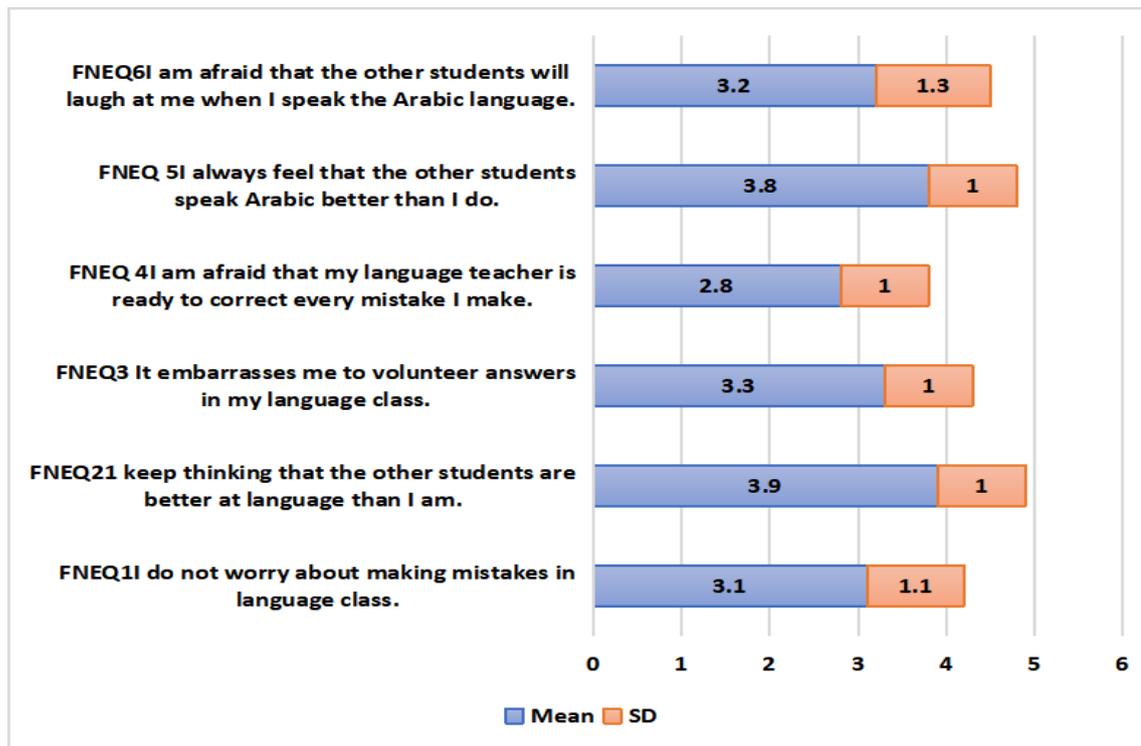
Test Anxiety

Figure 5- Mean for Test Anxiety

Figure 5 presents the mean for test anxiety. The highest mean is 3.9 for item 2 (SD=1) which states that the learners would keep thinking that other learners were better than them. Item 5 (mean=3.8, SD= 1.0) states that the learners always felt that other learners spoke better Arabic. The lowest mean is 3.1 (SD=1.1) and it states that the learners were not worried about making mistakes in the language class.

Exploratory Statistics

Findings for the relationship between motivation and factors for fear for learning a foreign language.

This section presents data to answer research question 5- Is there a relationship between motivation and factors for fear of learning a foreign language?

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

Table 4 Correlation between Motivation and Communication Apprehension

		MOTIVATION	COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION
MOTIVATION	Pearson (Correlation	1	.421**
	Sig (2-tailed)		.000
	N	351	351
COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION	Pearson (Correlation	.421**	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	351	351

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

Table 4 shows there is an association between motivation and communication apprehension. Correlation analysis shows that there is a moderate significant association between motivation and communication apprehension (r=.421**) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level and a 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 moderate positive relationship between motivation and communication apprehension.

Table 5 Correlation between Motivation and Fear of Negative Evaluation

		MOTIVATION	FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION
MOTIVATION	Pearson (Correlation	1	.045
	Sig (2-tailed)		.402
	N	351	351
FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION	Pearson (Correlation	.045	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.402	
	N	351	351

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

Table 5 shows there is no association between motivation and fear of negative evaluation. Correlation analysis shows that there is no significant association between motivation and fear of negative evaluation (r=.045) and (p=.000). According to Jackson (2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level and a 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.

Table 6 Correlation between Motivation and Test Anxiety

		MOTIVATION	FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION
MOTIVATION	Pearson (Correlation	1	.087
	Sig (2-tailed)		.102
	N	351	351
FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION	Pearson (Correlation	.087	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	.102	
	N	351	351

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

Table 6 shows there is no association between motivation and test anxiety. Correlation analysis shows that there is no significant association between motivation and test anxiety (r=.045) and (p=.000). According to Jackson

(2015), the coefficient is significant at the .05 level and a 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.

CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings and Discussions

For research question 1, which examined how learners perceive their motivation for learning a foreign language, the findings indicate three key motivational factors: academic achievement, enhanced spoken Arabic skills for learning effectively and facilitated communication in other countries. Among these, academic achievement recorded the highest mean score, showing that the majority of learners agreed that passing or succeeding in the examination is a key reason for motivating them to learn Arabic. This suggests that extrinsic factors play a stronger role in influencing learners' desire to learn.

This finding aligns with Zubairi and Sarudin (2009), who stated that Malaysian learners were highly motivated to learn the language for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons. In contrast, the item reflecting a desire to speak Arabic to make friends with other Arabic speakers received the lowest mean score, indicating that social motivation is less prominent. This support what has been discovered by Rethinasamy et al. (2021) in his study, which is that learners lacked confidence to speak in Japanese. This suggests that low communicative confidence can reduce learners' motivation to engage with native speakers. This trend showing the need of balance in teaching between academic achievement and communication.

Addressing research question 2, which examined how learners perceive their communication apprehension as a component of fear of learning. The findings show that items like confidence in speaking, fear of misunderstanding teachers and fear of incomplete understanding had the highest mean, indicating that although learners feel confident in speaking, they still experience listening anxiety, which is feeling anxious when unable to fully comprehend the teacher's message. This pattern partially aligns with the study of Daud et al. (2022), who reported a significant association between speaking, listening anxiety and academic achievement. This implies that even with high oral confidence, listening anxiety may limit the effectiveness of language learning. However, the lowest mean reveals that learners feel nervous when speaking with native speakers, meaning that learners feel confident in speaking Arabic in the classroom yet tend to feel nervous when engaging with native speakers.

Regarding research question 3, which explored how learners perceive their fear of negative evaluation as a second component of fear of learning. The finding records that items like thinking the other learners are better and feeling another learner is more proficient in speaking scored the highest, whereas the items like being afraid of the teacher's evaluation scored the lowest. This situation suggests that learners feel more afraid with the peer comparison rather than receiving the feedback from the teacher. This results in a line with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) finding, which is that learners who are highly sensitive to how others view their language skills might participate less in class to avoid embarrassment, which can hinder their progress in language learning.

For research question 4, which explored how learners perceive their test anxiety, the results show that test anxiety in this study is mostly influenced by peer comparison, as shown by the highest mean scores for the item "thinking other learners are more proficient." On the other hand, items like learners who were not worried about making mistakes in the language class scored lowest, suggesting that learners in this study continued to show anxiety about making mistakes in class. This finding is consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) finding, which is that learners' anxiety often comes from concern about peer judgement and they might participate less in class to avoid embarrassment, which can hinder their progress in language learning.

For research question 5, which is to answer the question, "Is there a relationship between motivation and factors for fear of learning a foreign language?" The results show that there is a moderate association between motivation and communication apprehension, explaining that high-motivation learners tend to have more confidence in communication, yet this relationship is not strong enough to view motivation as the only factor contributing to learners' confidence. However, in relation to fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety, results show that there

is no association between motivation and each of the components, indicating that this fear may come from other factors, not just motivation alone.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Theoretical and Conceptual Implications

This study adds knowledge about the link between motivation and fear in learning a foreign language, especially Arabic in Malaysia. The findings show that motivation has a moderate connection with communication apprehension. This means motivated learners may still try to speak even when they feel nervous. However, there is no link between motivation and fear of negative evaluation or test anxiety. This suggests that these fears may come from other factors, not just low motivation. It also means that improving motivation alone may not be enough to reduce certain types of fear.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study highlight several pedagogical considerations for Arabic language instruction in Malaysia:

a. Teaching Practice

Teachers should integrate classroom activities that both sustain learners' motivation and address specific forms of fear. Since communication apprehension was found to be a major challenge, small-group speaking activities and pair work should be prioritised before moving learners to whole-class presentations. Additionally, fostering a classroom culture that normalises mistakes as part of the learning process can reduce anxiety and encourage active participation.

b. Assessment and Feedback

Given that academic achievement emerged as the strongest motivator, assessment tasks should be designed with transparent learning outcomes and achievable goals. To reduce test anxiety, teachers may incorporate low-stakes practice tests, training in exam strategies and consistent positive feedback from both instructors and peers. These approaches can build learners' confidence and make assessments less intimidating.

c. Curriculum Design

Curriculum should balance academic demands with opportunities for communicative practice. Integrating formative assessments and reflective tasks can ensure that motivation is nurtured continuously, not only for exam success. Moreover, cultural and religious relevance of Arabic in Malaysia can be incorporated into the curriculum to enhance learners' sense of connection and purpose, thereby supporting intrinsic motivation.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study is not without limitations. First, its reliance on self-reported questionnaires may have introduced social desirability bias, as learners could downplay their levels of anxiety, limiting the accuracy of affective data. Second, the cross-sectional design provides only a snapshot of learners' experiences, making it difficult to capture how motivation and fear evolve over time.

Future research should address these limitations through mixed-method approaches, such as combining surveys with interviews, classroom observations, or learner journals, to capture richer and more nuanced insights. Longitudinal designs are particularly valuable for tracing how learners' motivation and anxiety interact throughout their language learning journey. In addition, expanding the scope of research across multiple institutions and incorporating learners of other foreign languages would enhance its broader applicability and allow for cross-linguistic comparisons. Finally, future studies may also explore how cultural and religious perceptions of Arabic influence learners' motivation and fears, thereby offering a more comprehensive perspective on foreign language learning in the Malaysian context.

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