

## CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a physiological and psychological state characterized by cognitive, somatic, emotional and behavioral components (Seligman, 2001). There are two types of anxiety, situational and characteristic. Language anxiety is a form of situational anxiety. This paper examines the relation between language anxiety as measured by a special version of the FLCAS questionnaire, an accepted questionnaire in foreign-language research, and achievements in English writing and reading comprehension tasks.

This study was conducted at Dhofar University, Oman, and involved students aged 17-22, with Arabic as their mother tongue. They were learning English as a foreign language at the foundation program, intermediate level. English is the language of instruction at the University. The purpose of this research is to find out the relationship between language anxiety and English reading comprehension and writing ability. It also aims to find out whether language anxiety is a cause or a result of failure in learning the foreign language. Reading and writing skills were chosen because writing is classified as a productive communication skill but reading is not. The study examines the claim of some researchers (Ganschow et al., 1994; Sparks et al., 2001) that no significant difference exists between anxious and non-anxious students in the reading task, but such a relation will be found in the writing task. This finding, if true, would strengthen the assumption that language anxiety is connected with language production skills, namely speaking and writing, but does not influence the comprehension skills, namely reading and listening.

If a significant difference were found between anxious and non-anxious students in both kinds of tests, this would mean that a general influence of language anxiety exists in all language skills regardless of the type of skill and its attribution to production or

comprehension. Assuming significant differences, it could be said that language anxiety generally influences all foreign language skills.

### **The Research Problem**

Students in Arab countries, whose mother tongue is Arabic, are facing difficulties and problems when they study English or when English language is the medium of instruction, especially at university level. They feel that English language is very important for them regarding their future career, so they try their best to learn and master the language. Although students are very active in the class, their final achievement is very disappointing for them as well as their teachers, lecturers and educationists.(Qashoa, 2006)

### **Significance of the study**

This study is important for students who study English as a second or foreign language. It helps them to know whether language anxiety has an influence on their achievements. It is also important for teachers, lecturers and educationists. It helps them to identify solution to the factors that may affect learners' achievements and look for appropriate solutions.

The findings of this study should help educators understand the role of foreign language anxiety and its relationship to students reading and writing achievements in English as a foreign language. Assuming an existence of a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' achievements, it could be said that, a sound knowledge of students' psycho-affective experiences and needs can help instructors take appropriate measures to alleviate students' anxiety and optimize their learning.

The present study is the first empirical investigation of the relationship between language anxiety, on the one hand, and English reading and writing tasks achievements, on the other. Because it focuses only on Arabic students taking an English language course at university level, the findings of this study may vary for other populations with different backgrounds and different settings.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is:

- To find out to what extent there is a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' reading achievements.
- To find out to what extent there is a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' writing achievements.

### **Research questions**

Based on the aforementioned idea the following are the research questions:

1. To what extent is there a significant relationship between language anxiety and the reading achievement of the foundation students studying English as a foreign language?
2. To what extent is there a significant relationship between language anxiety and the writing achievement of the foundation students studying English as a foreign language?

## **Hypothesis**

According to the research questions the following hypotheses would be formulated:

- A) There is no significant relationship between language anxiety and the reading achievement of University students studying English as a foreign language.
- B) There is a significant relationship between language anxiety and the writing achievement of University students studying English as a foreign language.

## **Scope and Limitations**

This study was conducted at Dhofar University in the Sultanate of Oman in 2009. The participants were 50 intermediate level male and female native speakers Arabic, learning English as a foreign language. They were within the age range of 17-22. This limitation of the study means that the results may thus vary when conducting the same study within another population. Further information on the limitations of this study will be covered in Chapter- 6.