

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In this chapter an outline of the study will be provided, and the main findings will be summarized. Limitations of the study will be stated, and finally recommendations for future teaching practice will be suggested.

### **1. Summary of the Study and Findings**

The study was located in the context of English as a foreign language and more particularly in the context of a course in which English is used both as medium of instruction and a subject, giving the opportunity to examine the relationship between foreign language anxiety, on the one hand, and reading achievement and writing achievement, on the other. Foreign language anxiety was the independent variable, reading achievement and writing achievement were the dependent variables.

The study was conducted at Dhofar University, Oman, in 2009, and involved students aged 17-22, with Arabic as their mother tongue. They were learning English as a foreign language in the foundation program, intermediate level. English is the language of instruction at the University. The two purposes of this research were to find out to what extent there is a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' reading achievements, and to find out to what extent there is a significant relationship between foreign language anxiety and students' writing achievements.

The two research questions were as follows:

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?

In order to answer these two research questions, a quantitative method was adopted in the process of data gathering and data analysis. Three instruments were employed to collect the data. First, the 33-items questionnaire was adopted to measure the students' level of anxiety, and it is called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al. (1986). The second tool was the National Reading Test of Omani Secondary School Certificate. The third instrument was the National writing Test of Omani Secondary School Certificate.

The questionnaires and the two tests were scored and statistically analyzed by using a parametric test namely Pearson's  $r$  correlation to determine whether or not the variables are significantly related.

Based on the aforementioned research questions the study hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between language anxiety and the reading achievement of university students studying English as a foreign language. The second hypothesis was that there is a significant relationship between language anxiety and the writing achievement of university students studying English as a foreign language.

The findings of the study show that statistically there is a negative and weak relationship between language anxiety and the students' reading achievements ( $r = - 0.254$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The study also finds that there is a negative and very weak relationship between language anxiety and reading achievements ( $r = - 0.117$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, though this was

not a research aim, the present study also reveals that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between students' writing and reading achievement.

The study argues three main points. First, it shows how the negative relationship reported in the first and second findings seems to be logical, because the foreign language anxiety measure was employed to investigate the achievement (Yung-nan Chiang, 2006). It also discusses how the students' fear of being negatively evaluated by their teachers or laughed at by other peers, and social environment could be possible reasons behind their language anxiety level, and their poor achievement. As the second point, it discusses how the students' writing achievement is positively affected by their reading achievement; though correlation does not imply causation, it is indeed the case that good readers are also better writers. Finally, the study lends further support to the claim that both productive and receptive language skills can be affected negatively by foreign language anxiety level, though the relationship was not statistically significant in this study.

## **2. Limitations of the Study**

Although the present study provided partial support for the findings of previous studies, some limitations of this study should be considered. First of all, the number of the participants in this study was only 50 so findings may well vary when conducting a similar study in a bigger population. Secondly, the participants were only those who had registered in the foundation level and more particularly intermediate level English. A study using students at the advanced level or the elementary level may produce different results. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) cited the results of several studies, indicating that as experience and proficiency increase, anxiety declines in a fairly consistent manner. Therefore, anxiety may play a different role in foreign language reading and writing

achievements for advanced students. Lastly, it should be noted that due to the correlational nature of this study, the results of the statistical parametric test, namely Pearsons'  $r$ , do not prove that the negative relationship between the variables, though very weak, means there exists a cause-effect relationship between anxiety and reading and writing achievement. It is possible that other unidentified factors caused the high anxiety and low achievement among the students.

### **3. Recommendations for Future Research and Teaching Practice**

Since the findings of the present study prove that the relationship between foreign language anxiety and the students' reading and writing achievements is very weak, it is suggested that EFL teachers should not worry too much about foreign language anxiety among university students but would be well advised to address other causes of low reading and writing scores. Causes like lack of vocabulary, poor memorizing of lessons, and lack of language learning strategies may hinder the students' knowledge about the subject and hence cause the weak reading and writing achievements.

The findings also suggest that English language teachers should focus on the reading materials and ask their students to do more on the reading tasks due to the positive and statistically significant relationship between the students' reading achievements and writing achievements.

For future research, a similar study with a bigger population including students at different levels of English proficiency may yield more solid findings. Another study that considers the relationship between language anxiety and the four language skills can also help in identifying the reasons behind Arab students' weak achievement and performance in a foreign language like English.