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The Impact of Foreign Language Anxiety on FL Speech Production of Saudi EFL Learners (Case Study of Saudi Secondary School Students in Medina Region)

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the level and impact of FLA on speech production among EFL learners in secondary school in the Medina region, Saudi Arabia. The influence of teachers' attitudes on FLA among students was also examined. Moreover, the study explored the teachers' and students' awareness of FLA's effect on the students' speech production. This study used mixed methods to collect data, the FLCAS questionnaire which consists of 33 items was administered to collect quantitative data from 150 (70 female - 70 male) Saudi EFL secondary school students, and a quasi-structured questionnaire consisted of 15 items was administered to collect quantitative data from English teachers (25 female - 25 male). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect qualitative data from 14 (7 female - 7 male) Saudi EFL secondary school students. The quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS descriptive statistics and Microsoft Excel while qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic analysis. Results showed that most EFL learners experience a moderate level of FLA. The study suggests that foreign language anxiety had positive and negative impacts on EFL learners' speech production. Moreover, the result revealed that teachers' attitudes had a significant effect on FLA among students. This study provided recommendations to investigate FLA in different English language fields such as writing, reading, and listening.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety; Speech Production; Teacher's Attitudes; Student's Awareness; Teacher's Awareness

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1. Introduction

English language is considering the lingua franca of the world population meeting the communication needs of people speaking different languages across the world. As a result, learning English become for international communication, education, technology, business, and commerce. In Saudi Arabia English is taught as a mandatory subject starting from early grades at primary schools. However, the outcome is poor, not as expected according to many research studies. Al-Shammakhi & Al-Humaidi[1], Saudi EFL, for instance, reported that students at schools had a very poor competence in English. Alshahrani[2] confirms such reports stating that Saudi EFL learners did not the least expected proficiency level in English. Other researchers like Aljafen[3] the status and use of English language in Saudi Arabia still do not help Saudi learners enhance their proficiency in English as the language is used for limited purposes. This means that Saudi EFL learners face some difficulties and challenges trying to learn English language. They are unable to express themselves in English avoiding interaction with classmates, and unwilling to participate in English classes. Learning a foreign language poses many challenges and difficulties for learners. Foreign language learners are confronted with problems including anxiety when dealing with classroom tasks such as listening comprehension, speech production, and reading.

Anxiety has been covered widely in literature related to language teaching and learning. According to Spielberger[4] anxiety is an emotional state characterized by unpleasant feelings, nervousness, tension, and worry. The anxiety experienced by students when learning a foreign language is called foreign language anxiety which has significant effects on the learning process especially, speech production[5]. MacIntyre and Gardner[6] define language anxiety as the feeling of tension and fear that is directly related to second language contexts, including writing, listening, and speaking.

In the Saudi context, the majority of Saudi EFL learners experience anxiety trying to learn English. As such, anxiety is thought to negatively impact students' learning. They are unwilling to actively participate in the classroom activities. This study is an attempt to investigate the impact of FLA on English language learning among Saudi secondary school students in Medina region. The study will also examine students' awareness of FLA's impact on their learning experience. As teachers are a significant factor in the process of language teaching and learning, the study will bring on board students' awareness of the role of FLA in the language class together with their attitudes towards it. Researching anxiety among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Saudi students is significant for several reasons including uncovering the challenges students face in the learning process, which helps educators develop strategies to overcome them. There are several reasons for such kinds of studies in the Saudi context. Firstly, Understanding Language Learning Barriers like anxiety due to cultural, educational, and psychological factors. Identifying these barriers helps language educators address the specific challenges students face, such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, or negative past experiences with learning English. Secondly, improving Saudi students' proficiency in English because anxiety negatively affect their language acquisition. Understanding the effects of anxiety on students' performance, syllabus designers can develop methods and techniques that help reduce stress and secure better learning outcomes.

To achieve its set objectives, the study will try to answer the following questions:

1. What causes anxiety among EFL Saudi learners?

2. To what extent does FLA affect secondary school students' behavior in a class setting?

3. What extent are EFL teachers aware of FLA impacting students' speech production?

2. Literature Review

Foreign language anxiety is a psychological state encountered by EFL learners. It has many sources and effects on students' oral performance. In this section we will review some of the main studies conducted on the impact of language anxiety in different parts of the world. The review will cover the source of foreign language anxiety, and its impact on EFL Learners' performance.

Villalba[7] conducted a research study whose aim to examine how foreign-language anxiety affects oral performance among learners of English as a foreign language in a private university in Cali. The study focused on the impact of fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension upon oral production. A mixed method includes interviews, self-reports, questionnaire, and IELTS

speaking descriptors to gather data. Results indicate that higher levels of anxiety lead to poorer oral performance, including hesitation, lack of fluency, and limited vocabulary use. The results also suggest that causes of anxiety among the students surveyed include fear of making mistakes, low self-confidence, and pressure to perform well in before classmates.

Rood[8] investigates how Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) affects fluency among Dutch learners of English as a Second Language (ESL). Anxiety experienced when using or learning a foreign language, particularly in speaking situations. The participants in this study were seventeen ESL Dutch learners in their fourth year of secondary school in The Netherlands. questionnaires (e.g., the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale - FLCAS) to assess anxiety levels and oral fluency tasks to measure speaking performance. Results suggest that higher levels of anxiety significantly correlate with lower fluency. That is, anxious students speak more slowly, hesitate more, and find it difficult to retrieve words. The study recommends some strategies to reduce anxiety namely, confidence-building exercises, stress management techniques, and supportive classroom environments to enhance fluency.

Sabet & Zafarghandi[9] examines the role of anxiety in foreign language learning, particularly how it affects students' performance and confidence. The study explores how anxiety affects speaking, listening, writing, and reading skills, with a primary focus on oral communication. The study used questionnaires (e.g., the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale - FLCAS) and interviews to analyze the relationship between anxiety and language proficiency. Results suggest that Students with higher anxiety levels tend to have lower performance in speaking tasks. In addition, anxiety caused students to avoid participating in classroom activities such as refusing to speak, using simple vocabulary and hesitating more. However, anxiety played a positive role in motivating some students to improve their performance. The study recommends some strategies to reduce anxiety among students in language classrooms such as supportive teacher-student interactions, relaxation techniques and opportunities for intensive exposure to spoken English.

Rebbouh[10], the effects of anxiety on students' ability to communicate effectively in English. The study focused on the factors causing anxiety, such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and peer pressure. Qualitative and quantitative methods, including questionnaires and interviews to collect data from students and teachers. The results indicate that most of learners surveyed experienced foreign language anxiety when trying to speak in English. Anxiety significantly hinders students' oral performance, making the students to be hesitant and avoid participation in the language activities including oral communication. The study recommended some strategies to reduce anxiety among the students such as creating a supportive environment for teaching and more speaking activities.

Sadighi and Dastpak[11] explored the sources of language anxiety among Iranian EFL learners. The study identified some factors as the main agents in causing anxiety among the students surveyed. These factors were categorized into four main areas. First communication Anxiety, where learners become nervous when they speak in English before their teachers and classmates. Second, fear of negative evaluation by teachers and classmates where students tend to be reluctant to participate in language activities. Third, test anxiety, where students experience high levels of stress and pressure related to final English language exams. Fourth, classroom environment includes teacher behavior, classroom interactions, and teaching methods. These factors significantly shape students' psychological situation during a language class. The study concluded that language anxiety is a significant barrier to EFL learning and making specific recommendations to reduce anxiety in the language class. The recommendations include teachers' adoption of supportive teaching strategies and setting up an encouraging learning environment.

Toubot, A.M. et al.[12] conducted a study to examine the key factors contributing to anxiety affecting EFL learners' speaking performance. The study surveyed 300 fourth-year English students from three Libyan universities. Data was collected quantitatively using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale. The findings suggest that the primary reason for language anxiety among the students was low self-confidence. However, a notable limitation of this study was its failure to account for teachers' perspectives on FLA. This is because teachers' awareness of the problem of anxiety can plays a significant role in reducing it and subsequently improve students' performance in English. Similarly, Subekti[13] explores the relationship between For-

eign Language Anxiety and oral performance. The study was conducted among non-major English students at Indonesian universities. The sample was 202 students who study English as a university required course. The data was collected using questionnaires. The study suggests that there are significant relationships between the students' achievements and fear of negative evaluation, test anxiety, and communication apprehension. not lead to a deeper understanding of students' anxiety. A similar study was conducted by Aguila and Harjanto[14] who examined the factors contributing to foreign language anxiety and the effects anxiety on the oral performance of EFL learners in Indonesia. The study involved 23 English students (9 female and 14 male) enrolled in a conversation class at an Indonesian university. The researchers used both qualitative methods (questionnaires) and quantitative methods (observations and interviews) to collect data from the study sample population. The findings identified key factors that contribute to FLA and highlighted its negative impact on students' speaking competence.

Chuang[15] undertook a study to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of foreign language anxiety in EFL classrooms. The participants were students in their second year in the EGP course and 12 EFL teachers at a university in Taiwan. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect for the study (i.e. questionnaires and semi-structured interviews). Results suggest that both non-major and English major students experienced similar levels of anxiety. Yet, the sources of anxiety were found to be different for each group. The results also indicate that the teachers share the same perceptions of foreign language anxiety with the students, which needs to be further investigated. Students' perceptions of language anxiety were also investigated by Lababidi[16] in the UAE. The participants were male EFL students at a higher education institution. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from a scale and qualitative data from interviews. The findings suggest that some of the participants experienced a level of language anxiety ranging between medium to high. Additionally, the study identified key factors contributing to FLA among the students.

Wan[17] conducted a study to investigate learner variables affecting language anxiety, including exposure to English outside the classroom, attitude toward learning English, self-confidence, second language motivation, and English proficiency. The study sampled 177 Chinese learners of English at an English learning center at the University of Newcastle. A quantitative approach was used, with data collected through questionnaires. The results suggest that language anxiety decreases when learners have extensive exposure to English, indicating that the learning environment outside the classroom plays a significant role in shaping learners' anxiety levels.

Marwan, A.[18] conducted a study to investigate foreign language anxiety (FLA) among Indonesian students. The study aimed to identify the types of FLA experienced by foreign language learners and explore the strategies they used to manage their anxiety. There were 76 university students, and data was collected using questionnaires. The findings suggest that three main factors contribute to FLA: fear of failure, lack of confidence, and inadequate preparation. Additionally, the study identified four common strategies learners use to cope with FLA: positive thinking, seeking peer support, relaxation, and preparation. However, the study was limited to examining the causes of FLA and the coping strategies employed by learners; it did not explore the impact of FLA on their language performance.

Yalçın, Ö., & Iceway, V.[19] conducted a study to examine the extent to which integrating unprompted speech activities can help reduce Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) among EFL learners when speaking English. The participants were 12 first-year students at a private university in Turkey. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, collecting quantitative data through questionnaires and qualitative data through open-ended essay questions and a focus group interview. The findings suggest that three key factors help learners reduce FLA: preparedness, a sense of success, and group work. A significant result of the study was that spontaneous speaking activities can lower FLA among students. However, the study's main limitation was its small sample size (only 12 participants), making it difficult to generalize the findings.

Abu-Ghararah[20] conducted a study to investigate the effect of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) on English language learners' achievement. The participants were 240 students enrolled in secondary schools and universities. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data through questionnaires, interviews, and classroom observations. The results suggest a significant relationship between higher lev-

els of FLA and lower achievement in English among students. Similarly, Alsalooli & Al-Tale [21] explored the level and causes of FLA among first-year EFL students at Bisha University. Data was collected using a quantitative method, specifically the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. The findings indicate that gender has no effect on FLA levels, but high levels of FLA negatively impact learners' performance.

The studies discuss in this section explored the relationship between anxiety and learning English as a foreign language in different cultural contexts including Saudi environment. Research outlines some difficulties that influence the learning experience of Saudi students who learn English as a foreign language. These difficulties and challenges appeared to have been deeply rooted in sociocultural, educational, and psychological factors. That is, traditional teaching methods, limited exposure to English and sociocultural factors have been reported as the main sources of anxiety among EFL Saudi students. While previous studies have identified general sources of anxiety, this study tries to delve deeper into specific, psychological factors, sociocultural influences, and classroom dynamics impacting anxiety among Saudi EFL learners.

3. Research Methodology

To explore the nature and impact of foreign language anxiety (FLA) among the population of this study, we employed quantitative research approach. The methodology is designed to investigate key research focus, e.g., the relationship between FLA and speaking performance together with the role of sociocultural factors in causing foreign language anxiety. This section outlines research design, participant selection, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.

3.1. Participants

The study populations comprise 200 female and male Saudi secondary school students, who were in their third year in Yanbu province, Medina Region, Saudi Arabia. 150 students participated in the closed-ended questionnaire, and 14 students took part in semi-structured interview sessions. The students were taught English language for a period of 6 years

(i.e., in primary and intermediate school). They subjects were randomly selected from three levels. Besides, 50 Saudi English language teachers participated in a quasi-structured questionnaire. The present study was conducted during the second and third semesters of the 2021–2022 academic year.

3.2. Instruments

The instruments of this research are an adjusted version of the FLCAS questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and a quasi-structured questionnaire. In addition, the quasi-structured questionnaire was used to measure teachers' awareness of FLA. It consists of three sections including different types of questions closed-ended, open-ended and Likert scale questions. The first section contains demographic information on the participants' backgrounds, including gender, qualification, and length of experience in teaching. The second section contained 3 questions on sources of anxiety among EF speaking in class. The third section contained 9 statements for rating on a five-point Likert scale. The second tool is an adjusted version of the FLCAS questionnaire, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) which is considered the most popular tool used to measure foreign language anxiety. The scale was developed by Horwitz et al. [22] consists of 33 questions about fear of negative evaluation, communication apprehension, and test anxiety. The FLCAS comprises of five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to make sure you would fully understand the questions contained. The third tool is semi-structured interviews meant to ensure more reliable data. The semi-structured interviews consist of a list of questions aiming to measure students' awareness of FLA; to see their opinion about the role of teachers in their anxiety, and to see if there are any positive effects of anxiety on their speech.

3.3. Procedure

The participants of this study were selected randomly, both questionnaires were designed via the Google Form website, and distributed online to teachers and students with a brief introduction about the objectives of the study. There is no specific time to fill out the questionnaire, which puts the participants under no pressure on the subject to avoid negative effects on the validity of the results. The adjusted

FLCAS questionnaire was translated into Students' mother tongue (Arabic) to enable students of various levels of English proficiency to understand the questions and respond to them. Fourteen students were interviewed via Zoom application. The links were sent to the participants inviting them to join the session. The interviews (20 minutes for each session) were conducted individually and in the students' mother tongue.

After sorting the data out, closed-ended questions, and statements were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software v.26. The analysis has been based on frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Percentages responses are represented graphically according to the questions using Microsoft Excel. All points were analyzed in a statistical way to obtain meaningful findings. The semi-structured interviews data was described and interpreted using thematic analysis method. The findings of the interviews were coded and notated into categories according to the research questions.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Quantitative Analysis

4.1.1. To What Extent Do Saudi EFL High School Students Experience FLA?

In response to the first question, participants' levels of foreign language anxiety were measured by using descriptive statistics. To measure participants' level of foreign language anxiety, students were classified into three levels of anxiety. First, participants whose scores ranged between 48 to 97 were identified as highly anxious students. Second, students who scored between 80 and 112 were identified as having a moderate level of anxiety. Third, those whose scores ranged between 113 and 145 were identified as students with a low level of anxiety.

As shown in **Table 1**, the female sample (N = 75) had a mean foreign language anxiety score of 93.55. The descriptive results indicate that 69.3% (N = 52) of female participants experienced a moderate level of anxiety, 28% (N = 21) experienced a high level, and 2.7% (N = 2) experienced a low level. In the male sample (N = 75), the mean anxiety score was 89.51. The results show that 80% (N = 60) of male participants experienced a moderate level of anxiety,

17.3% (N = 13) experienced a high level, and 2.7% (N = 2) experienced a low level of foreign language anxiety. This means that both male and female participants mostly had moderate anxiety as more females (28%) reported high anxiety compared to males (17.3%). However, the mean anxiety score was slightly higher for females than for males, indicating that female participants may have experienced slightly more anxiety on average. Only a small percentage (2.7%) of both groups had low anxiety. The analysis data suggest potential gender differences in foreign language anxiety in that females experienced higher levels of anxiety compared to the male participants.

Table 1. FLA level among the participants.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Female	75	93.5468	44,08155
Male	75	89.5066	45,86915

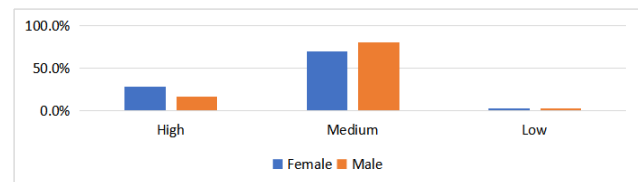(N = 2) experience a low level, as shown in **Figure 1** below.

Figure 1. Secondary school students FLA in English classes.

4.1.2. To What Extent Does FLA Affect Secondary School Students' Behavior in a Class Setting?

As shown in **Table 2**, participants' responses to the second question indicate that they become nervous when they are unable to write or express themselves in a foreign language (M = 1.91). They also reported feeling anxious and trembling whenever they are called to participate in class activities (M = 2.80). In addition, students expressed fear of speaking or asking questions in a foreign language class (M = 2.55). They also reported having low self-confidence when trying to speak English before classmates (M = 2.45). Some students become more anxious when they see other colleagues express themselves in English more fluently than they do (M = 2.78). Other students feel uncomfortable when the teachers ask them questions, they are not prepared for (M = 2.29). However, they disagreed with the statement: "*I*

Table 2. FLA impact on students' classroom behaviors.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
1. I feel nervous when I can't write or express myself in a foreign language.	150	1.9067	0.99897	Strongly agree
2. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	150	2.8000	1.49720	agree
3. I am not nervous speaking the foreign language in front of my classmates.	150	2.9733	1.23128	disagree
4. I fear speaking or asking the teacher in my foreign language class.	150	2.5533	1.53499	Strongly agree
5. I feel low self-confidence about speaking the foreign language in front of the class.	150	2.4533	1.37858	Strongly agree
6. I feel anxious when I see classmates better than me in my foreign language class.	150	2.7800	1.47403	Strongly agree
7. I feel anxious when the teacher asks me a question that I have not prepared for.	150	2.2933	1.24538	strongly agree - agree

am not nervous about speaking a foreign language in front of my classmates" (M = 2.97).

The analysis of **Table 2** suggests that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a significant challenge for the participants. Several important observations can be made based on participants' responses. First, fear of failure to speak in English shown by the lowest mean score (M = 1.91). This means that students feel very anxious when they fail to speak in English, which suggests that language production, whether written or spoken, is a major source of stress. Second, the relatively high mean score for trembling when called on to participate in class activities (M = 2.80) implies that students feel nervous in situations where they are asked to speak. Third, students feel uncomfortable speaking or asking questions in class (M = 2.55) because they do not have enough confidence to speak before others (M = 2.45). Fourth, some feel anxious when they compare themselves to more fluent English-speaking classmates (M = 2.78). Fifth, the score for feeling anxious when asked an unexpected question (M = 2.29) suggests that students find it difficult to use English in real-life communication.

These results suggest that foreign language anxiety among students is caused by several factors including self-expression difficulties, fear of public speaking, and social comparison (**Figure 2**). To reduce anxiety among EFL learners, stakeholders need create supportive learning environments, where students can practice English without fear of judgment.
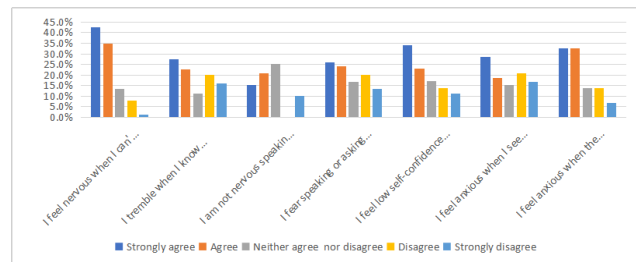

Figure 2. The impact of FLA on EFL learners' behavior in English class.

4.1.3. Does FLA Impact Students' Speech Production?

Analysis of **Table 3 (Figure 3)** indicates that participants experience anxiety when they try to speak in English during foreign language classes. They fear pronouncing words incorrectly (M = 2.43) and feel nervous when speaking English in front of their classmates (M = 2.87). some students reported feeling confused and anxious while speaking in class (M = 2.99). Additionally, most of the students feel anxious when they want to speak English as they struggle to find the right words in English (M = 2.37). Feeling nervous becomes evident when the students encounter unfamiliar words during a class activity (M = 2.59). The results indicate that foreign language anxiety (FLA) is strongly linked to speaking-related difficulties, particularly pronunciation, vocabulary limitations, and fear of making mistakes. The results highlight several significant observations. First, Fear of mispronunciation (M = 2.43) suggesting that pronunciation anxiety is a common issue, possibly due to fear of embarrassment or negative evaluation by peers or teachers. Second,

Speaking Anxiety in Front of Peers (M = 2.87) showing that students feel anxious when speaking English in front of their classmates. Third, nervousness and Confusion while Speaking (M = 2.99) suggesting that many students struggle with nervousness and confusion when speaking English in class, possibly due to performance pressure, lack of fluency, or fear of making mistakes.
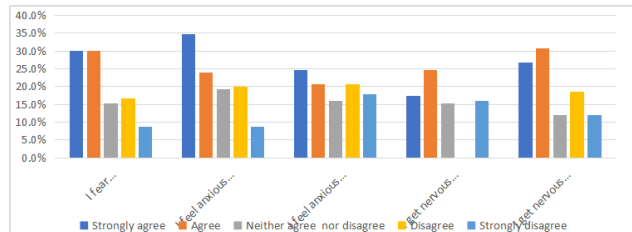

Figure 3. The impact of FLA on EFL learners' speech production in English class.

4.1.4. To What Extent Are EFL Teachers Aware of the Impact FLA on Students' Speech Production?

Table 4 (**Figure 4**) presents teachers' responses to the questionnaire regarding foreign language anxiety (FLA) among students. The results indicate that most teachers observed a high level of anxiety among the students (M = 3.22). Theaters believe that students can differentiate between foreign language anxiety and general anxiety (M = 3.34).
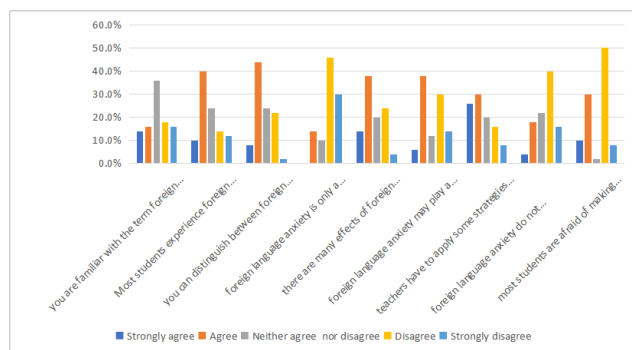

Figure 4. Teachers' Perception of FLA among students.

They reported that FLA significantly affects students' speech production (M = 3.34). In addition, in some cases, anxiety had a positive impact on students' speech performance (M = 2.92). This means that teachers need to implement strategies to help reduce students' anxiety levels. The table also shows that the teachers recognize the impact of anxiety on students' speech production and acknowledge their role in reducing it. However, they observed that stu-

dents avoid speaking English in a language class for several reasons, including fear of classmates' and teachers' negative evaluation.

4.2. Qualitative Analysis

In this section, we will analyze teachers' attitudes to language anxiety based on data collected via semi structure interview. A thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews provided significant insights into the impact of teachers' attitudes on foreign language anxiety (FLA). The findings revealed two main themes: teacher characteristics and teacher feedback.

Teacher Characteristics

The analysis showed that teacher support and encouragement play a crucial role in reducing students' anxiety. A significant number of participants reported that working more confidently and independently following teachers' efforts made to encourage them to use the language without fear of judgment. By involving all of the students in the classroom activities, teachers were able to create a supportive learning environment which helped reduce anxiety among the students. One participant commented:

> *"My teacher's attitude had a significant role in reducing my anxiety. He motivated us to speak freely without fear of making mistakes, which helped me speak confidently without anxiety."*

Additionally, the way teachers handle students' mistakes plays a vital role in reducing speech anxiety. Some participants indicated that teachers who reacted to students' mistakes without punishment or mockery making sure that classmates did not laugh at errors helped them to be less anxious. As one student explained:

> *"She never minded wrong pronunciation or incorrect word choices. She always told us that it's okay to make mistakes because we are still learning. This attitude positively affected my speech anxiety."*

However, some students felt that teachers' attitudes could also increase anxiety. Three participants noted that when teachers were too serious, did not give students a chance to speak, or failed to consider individual circum-

Table 3. The impact of FLA on students' speech production.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
1. I fear pronouncing words incorrectly in my foreign language class.	150	2.4267	1.29193	Strongly agree - agree
2. I feel anxious when I want to volunteer to say something but can't find the proper words to say it in my foreign language class.	150	2.3733	1.31357	Strongly agree
3. I feel anxious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students	150	2.8667	1.45476	Strongly agree
4. I get nervous when there is a lot of vocabulary that I don't understand being used in my foreign language class	150	2.5867	1.37175	
5. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class	150	2.9933	1.36346	agree

Table 4. EFL teachers' awareness of the impact of FLA on students' speech.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Degree
1. You are familiar with the term foreign language anxiety	50	2.9400	1.25210	Neither agree nor disagree
2. Most students experience foreign language anxiety	50	3.2200	1.18304	agree
3. You can distinguish between foreign language anxiety and general anxiety	50	3.3400	0.98167	agree
4. Foreign language anxiety is only a student's problem, so there is no need to help of a teacher	50	2.0800	0.98644	disagree
5. There are many effects of foreign language anxiety upon Speech Production of EFL students	50	3.3400	1.11776	agree
6. Foreign language anxiety may play a positive role in Speech Production of EFL students	50	2.9200	1.22624	agree
7. Teachers have to apply some strategies to make his/her students feel less anxious in the class	50	3.5000	1.26572	agree
8. Foreign language anxiety does not consider problems in itself	50	2.5400	1.09190	disagree
9. Most students are afraid of making mistakes because the fact that it might lead to a bad grade	50	2.8400	1.23487	disagree

stances, students became reluctant or even unwilling to participate in class activities. One participant stated:

> *"Some teachers are the source of anxiety. If the teacher doesn't give me a chance to speak or listen, my anxiety increases during class."*

Interestingly, a few participants denied any role of teachers in reducing or decreasing language anxiety among them. One student reported:

> *"I don't think the teacher's attitude has any effect on my speech anxiety."*

However, other students appreciated teachers feedback when they speak or write in English. Five participants con-firmed this saying when teachers correct their speech errors, especially pronunciation and word choice improvement, they become more confident and willing to participate in class activities. They believed that theaters intervention when they make mistakes and errors enhances their confidence and helped them avoid making mistakes. One participant stated:

> *"I feel pleased when my teacher corrects my pronunciation mistakes because it helps me develop my speaking skills."*

More participants noted that the way teachers correct mistakes helps students become less anxious. They felt comfortable when corrections were made in an encouraging and constructive manner. As one student explained:

"Sometimes I feel ashamed when the teacher corrects my pronunciation in a mocking way, but I feel glad when the correction is encouraging."

Conversely, three participants reported that teacher corrections made them feel embarrassed and demotivated. Students who were already hesitant or shy felt even more discouraged from participating. One student reported:

"Teacher corrections annoy me because they put me in embarrassing situations."

The findings suggest that teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' foreign language anxiety (FLA), which can either hinder or enhance their speech production. The impact of teachers is evident in two key areas: teacher characteristics and teacher feedback. Many students reported that teachers who provide encouragement and create a judgment-free environment help them feel more confident in speaking. When teachers motivate students to speak without fear of making mistakes, involve all students in class activities, and foster a supportive learning atmosphere, students develop self-confidence and become more willing to participate in language activities. On the other hand, some students stated that teachers who were overly strict, serious, or do not provide opportunities to speak contribute to increasing anxiety. This means that students would experience lower levels of language anxiety when teachers satisfy their needs for equal chances to participate, they become less anxious and willing to speak, leading to better speech production.

Positive and Constructive feedback by teachers in correcting students' pronunciation and speech errors helps improve students' language proficiency. Students appreciate error corrections that help them refine their pronunciation and avoid making mistakes. Such kind of error correction reduces the level of anxiety and builds self-confidence among the students. However, some students reported that they felt embarrassed or discouraged when teachers corrected their errors before the class. If a teacher corrects mistakes in a harsh or mocking manner, students may become more anxious and unwilling to use the language in the classroom. A supportive and encouraging teacher can help students overcome anxiety and improve their speech production. A strict or overly critical teacher, on the other hand, may increase language anxiety among the students and hinder their participation in class activity. To reduce FLA and promote students' speech production, teachers need to create a supportive learning environment, encourage participation, and provide constructive feedback.

5. Discussion of Results

The quantitative findings from the student questionnaire indicate that most Saudi secondary school students (both male and female) experience moderate levels of foreign language anxiety (FLA). This result aligns with previous studies [2, 17, 22], reinforcing the idea that FLA is a common challenge among language learners in similar contexts.

The data analysis suggests that FLA negatively influences students' classroom behavior. Specifically, items 1, 4, 5, and 7 in **Table 2** scored below 2.5 on a 5-point scale, indicating a high level of anxiety. This indicates that students often feel shy and uncomfortable when using English in class, which affects their self-confidence. This finding strongly supports Melouah [23], who argued that reduced self-confidence could lead to fear of interaction, particularly due to concerns about teachers' and classmates' negative reactions. It also echoes the findings of Toubot and Seng [12], who identified low self-confidence as a primary source of FLA. Similarly, Subekti [13] found that FLA contributes to communication apprehension, hindering interaction between teachers and students. The study also aligns with MacIntyre & Gardner's [5, 6], which found that students often feel uneasy when engaging with classroom activities. In all these studies students were found to be nervous when asked to take part in an activity they were not prepared for.

Another significant finding is that FLA significantly affects students' speech production. Items 1 and 2 in **Table 3** ranked highest in showing this impact, marking anxiety as a barrier to fluent and confident speech among the students. Many students reported that FLA prevented them from expressing themselves in English during language classes. This confirms previous studies conducted in different contexts including Saudi Arabia [7, 14, 24]. Fear of making mistakes seems to be an important reason for this reality, which aligns with findings by Sadighi & Dastpak [11] and Horwitz et al. [22]. The studies indicate that fear of making errors and mistakes negatively impacts students' ability to speak in English con-

fidently. Additionally, item 4 in **Table 3** highlights how comprehension anxiety affects communication. Students identified vocabulary limitations, topic familiarity, and differences in accent as the main factors influencing learning English.

The results from the teacher questionnaire provide further insight into the role of teachers in managing FLA. The analysis shows that 46% of the respondents believe that teachers help them reduce their anxiety. This aligns with Chuang[13], who found that teachers play a critical role in reducing student anxiety. Similarly, Aldarasi[25] emphasized the importance of teacher guidance in managing FLA. In addition, item 6 received the highest percentage of agreement (38%), suggesting that some teachers believe that FLA has a positive impact on students' speech production. This is consistent with Chuang[15], who argued that anxiety can causes student to actively participate in speaking activities which helps them be fluent speakers in English. Furthermore, 30% of teachers agreed that indicated that they were aware of the impact of FLA on the teaching and learning process and the best ways of controlling it.

The qualitative findings from student interviews further emphasize the significant role of teachers in mitigating FLA. Many students reported that teacher support and encouragement helped them build self-confidence and reduced speech anxiety in the classroom. This supports findings by Arnold[26], who argued that a supportive classroom environment significantly reduced students' language anxiety. However, this contradicts Mayangta[27] who contended that teachers can be a source of FLA. Mitigation of anxiety by teachers can be obviously seen in the way they handle students' speech errors. While some students found corrective feedback beneficial for improving their speaking skills. This can be seen in the way teachers deal with students' language errors in the classroom. Some students reported that they became extraordinarily anxious when teachers correct their language errors before classmates. However, teacher correction methods appear to influence anxiety levels differently. While some students viewed feedback as constructive, others believe that it negatively affects their self-confidence and increases language anxiety among them. This suggests that teacher comments and corrections significantly impacted students' language performance. Similarly, Mills[28] confirmed the role of teachers' feedback in reducing the level of anxiety among in a language classroom.

Interestingly, while most findings highlight the negative effects of FLA, some students reported that anxiety had a positive influence on their speech production. This supports Scovel[29] and Chuang[15], who referred to anxiety as a "key to success". Ultimately, the results suggest that FLA has both positive and negative impacts on students' speech production. This dual effect has been confirmed by several studies, including Ohata[30–32], which found that while anxiety can be a barrier, it can also serve as a motivating factor in some cases.

6. Conclusions

Research on the impact of foreign language anxiety (FLA) on speech production in the Saudi EFL context appeared to be limited. Most previous research used quantitative methods; this study relied on mixed methods to provide a deeper analysis of the impact of anxiety on EFL Saudi students. The main objective of the study was to investigate the FLA experienced by Saudi EFL high school students. The study also examines the effect of students' and teachers' awareness and attitudes in students' speech production. The findings indicate that most students experienced a moderate level of FLA. Students acknowledged both the positive and negative effects of FLA on their speech production. On the negative side, FLA led to the fear of speaking, fear of making mistakes, and reluctance to interact with classmates in the language class. However, some students indicated that FLA had a positive impact in improving their speaking skills. Additionally, the study also suggested that both female and male students experienced moderate anxiety with slightly higher level of anxiety among the female participants.

Moreover, the study highlights the significant role of teachers' attitudes in shaping students' anxiety. It has been found that most teachers were aware of FLA's impact on speech production by implementing effective strategies to help the students control their anxiety. The findings have important implications for English teachers, syllabus designers, and EFL learners. Based on the results teachers can create supportive classroom environments that minimize anxiety and foster self- confidence among the students. Syllabus designers may consider developing instructional methods that better accommodate anxious students.

Despite its potential contributions to improving the teaching environment, this study has some limitations. The findings are based on students from a single region in Saudi Arabia, which may question the generalizability of its results. Further investigation of the problem should expand to different regions across Saudi Arabia to gain a broader perspective. Further studies are also needed on the impact of FLA on other language skills, such as listening, reading, and writing.

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Data Availability Statement

Data supporting the results of this study is available in the paper (**Tables 1–4** and **Figures 1–4**).

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Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest involved in this study.

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