

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND PUBLIC SPEAKING ANXIETY AMONG JORDANIAN EFL LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

By

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate how motivation affects English public speaking anxiety using a correlational research design. A total of 242 Jordanian postgraduate English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (PhD students) were selected from four public universities in Malaysia. The study used a non-probability purposive sampling. Data collection was conducted using two questionnaires, including the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). A correlational analysis was conducted to test the hypotheses through Smart PLS 3.0. The results supported the proposed conceptual framework, indicating that motivation was significantly related to English public speaking anxiety. More precisely, there was a significant negative correlation between motivation and English public speaking anxiety among Jordanian Ph.D. students.

Keywords: Motivation; English public speaking anxiety; Jordanian EFL learners.

INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language is usually related to affective factors such as anxiety, attitude, and motivation. These factors are considered to be important predictors of foreign language performance. EFL research has identified problems that may hinder language learning. Anxiety is one of the most destructive problems in language learning [MacIntyre and Gardner \(1994\)](#). [Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope \(1986\)](#) defined anxiety as different combinations of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning. [MacIntyre and Gardner \(1994\)](#) proposed that anxiety includes feelings of tension and anxiety particularly related to the second language environment (including speaking, listening, and learning).

Looking in-depth at the variables associated with language anxiety, motivation has been addressed as one of the main elements contributing to this issue. Motivation is stated as the integration of efforts to achieve language learning goals and positive emotions for language learning. Explicitly, the motivation to learn a language revealed how much effort the individual puts to improve proficiency [Robert C. Gardner, Lalonde, and Moorcroft \(1985\)](#). [MacIntyre \(2007\)](#) believed that motivation is the desire to master a language to communicate with people

from another culture and to become more familiar with a language. Critically for the current study, motivation can affect second language or foreign language learning.

EFL learners (especially Arabs) encounter some problems when speaking English. The main problem is that in Arab countries, there is little chance of learning English through a normal target language contact [Rabab'ah \(2003\)](#). Past studies conducted in the Arab world [Al-Seghayer \(2014\)](#); [Alrabai \(2014\)](#); [Alrashidi and Phan \(2015\)](#); [Mahboob and Elyas \(2014\)](#) reported that most Arab students are not motivated enough to learn, and they lack basic language skills. They can easily express themselves in class. In these activities, students need to speak and show their academic achievements. However, students may not be able to perform an oral practice due to reluctance to speak and fear of pronunciation. These questions make them feel embarrassed because they do not understand the message conveyed by their peers and lecturers. Due to the fluency and lack of self-confidence in expressing ideas, oral expression becomes difficult ([Taly & Paramasivam, 2020](#)).

[Jordan \(1997\)](#) stated that students must learn and develop a wide range of academic skills, the main component of which is the provision of academic monologue such as an oral presentation. Public speaking or oral presentations has become an integral part of language teaching, especially at universities. The aim is to prepare students for business presentations that they are likely to undertake after graduation and for career development. Public speaking is a process, particularly speaking or lecturing with a group.

Public speaking is the most reputable and regarded as a co-curricular practice. In every educational institution, this is encouraged as a co-curricular practice. An academic presentation is an event that plays an important role in a PhD student's success. Academic presentations such as Viva, proposal defense, conferences relating to the oral examination of postgraduate students (typically for an academic qualification) are heavily dependent on students' oral communication abilities [Amiri and Puteh \(2018\)](#). International EFL students, particularly PhD students, experience oral communication difficulties during academic presentations. For example, [Morita \(2000\)](#) argued that psychological difficulties relating to academic presentations (i.e., lack of confidence or inferiority complex) are faced by these learners.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Jordanian international students have difficulties in speaking English due to their low interest in English. When they are unable to understand and pronounce certain words, they feel pressured. As foreign students, this will make them shy because they do not speak English well. Besides, international students in Jordan are reluctant to speak English because they have limited oral English practices due to their accent difficulties. In addition, anxiety, shame, and self-confidence are the reasons why Jordanian international students have difficulties in speaking in English [Chen and Goh \(2011\)](#). Due to the language differences between English and Arabic, Jordanian graduate students seeking to acquire English as a foreign language face a particularly difficult task. According to the regulations, the early education of middle and elementary schools, middle schools, and undergraduates in Middle Eastern countries is conducted in Arabic [Al-Khasawneh and Al-Omari \(2015\)](#). Therefore, education in countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, or Malaysia will add more language difficulties because they lack language skills, especially speaking skills. [Moh'd Amer Hawari, Al-Shboul, and Huwari \(2021\)](#) confirmed this observation. They pointed out that when Arab learners such as Jordanians enter a foreign academic system, they find themselves out of date and eventually lose their journey.

When Jordanians decide to study abroad, learning English will become a compulsory course, which coincides with the development in global communication, which makes English as a medium of communication [Ahmed, Pathan, and Khan \(2017\)](#). However, for graduate students in Jordan, this can cause language difficulties [Mahmoodzadeh \(2012\)](#). As a result, the difficulties they encounter will only promote obstacles in learning English as a foreign or second language, which may subsequently cause language anxiety [Abrar, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyraf, and Marzulina \(2018\)](#). Relatively speaking, speaking ability is the most troublesome ability for most EFL learners (especially Arab learners) [Al-Sobhi and Preece \(2018\)](#). Since most Jordanians struggle to use English as a medium of communication, and their mother tongue (Arabic) has become their most comforting language, the anxiety of using English to communicate in public has been increasing ([Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal, 2014](#)).

A good and an effective speaker will not stammer in a speech. Therefore, speaking requires strong motivation and self-confidence. Learners must be cautious about what they want to say, and they must be satisfied with what they want to say. Otherwise, their speeches seem to become incoherent. Among these four language skills, Arab learners, especially Jordanian graduate students, consider public speaking as the most difficult factor. Students in Jordan believe that talking and interacting with people is a difficult activity [Abu-Rabia* \(2004\)](#); [Asmar \(2009\)](#); [Zrekat, Abu Bakar, and Latif \(2016\)](#). Among these four English skills, Jordanian English learners face serious difficulties in English skills, with the most difficult skill being an oral communication skill [Zrekat et al. \(2016\)](#). Specifically, graduate students are required to use oral communication skills in various academic activities, such as class discussions, conference presentations, seminar presentations, research proposal defense, and live presentations [Ali Alghail and Ali Mahfoodh \(2019\)](#). EFL learners may have the ability to speak English, but when they speak publicly in front of people, they cannot control how they feel. Usually, this is related to students' oral anxiety [Nurlaili and Kurniasih \(2016\)](#). Since Jordanian learners lack the ability to speak English in public, they feel shy and afraid to speak English in public. Therefore, anxiety affects them. Furthermore, lack of experience and motivation can make them feel more anxious [Asmar \(2009\)](#); [Huwari and Abd Aziz \(2011\)](#).

Speaking anxiety, particularly in the context of public speaking, needs to be given a great highlight among the Jordanians since most of the studies have been conducted in other Middle East countries such as Iraq, Yemen, and Saudi. The exploration on speaking anxiety among the Jordanians is very much important to be conducted [Batiha, Noor, and Mustaffa \(2016\)](#). Previously, studies on speaking in Jordanian were conducted only among the undergraduates [Al-Jamal and Al-Jamal \(2014\)](#); [Asassfeh, Al-Shaboul, Zuraiq, and Alshboul \(2011\)](#). This highlights the reason for the need for more studies on English public speaking anxiety among postgraduates, especially those studying abroad such as Malaysia since this is the most targeted country in pursuing postgraduate studies. The current study is an endeavour to fill the gaps of public speaking in a foreign language especially English. We aim to examine the extent to which motivation affects English public speaking anxiety among Jordanian EFL learners. We hypothesise that motivation is negatively related to English public speaking anxiety among Jordanian EFL learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Speaking Anxiety

Many studies have investigated anxiety in public speaking [Amiri and Puteh \(2018\)](#); [Robert C. Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret \(1997\)](#); [Hashimoto \(2002\)](#); [Nurlaili and Kurniasih \(2016\)](#); [Pontillas \(2020\)](#); [Qurnia and Marlina \(2020\)](#); [Raja \(2017\)](#) studied variables that cause

public speaking anxiety among 80 undergraduates studying tourism in a public university. The results showed that most students are affected by communication comprehension factors, while fear of testing and negative feedback raise students' anxiety to a moderate level. Besides, most students prefer to receive English training and to be more confident in public speaking.

[Bodie \(2010\)](#) studied the factors that cause anxiety in public speaking and the techniques used to conquer the anxiety among 13 graduate students. The results show that both mental and physical variables are essential and different. When their speech structure is not good enough, students will feel nervous and anxious. Also, in public speeches, students cannot control their anxiety. By choosing interesting subjects, graduate students use some methods to overcome anxiety. In another study, [Richard C. Gardner, Lalonde, and Pierson \(1983\)](#) show how age affects the public speaking anxiety among English learners at Omar Almutkal University. A questionnaire was distributed to the participants. Besides, the influence of age on public speech anxiety was also examined. The results revealed that age differences have a significant negative impact on the public speaking anxiety among English learners.

The levels of public speaking anxiety were analysed by [Raja \(2017\)](#) and [Gaibani and Elmenfi \(2016\)](#). [Raja \(2017\)](#) examined the levels of anxiety in public speaking and the factors behind such levels among 50 Karachi undergraduate students. The results show that learners are afraid of public speaking and they avoid speaking. It was discovered that practice can resolve public speaking anxieties as well. As for [Gaibani and Elmenfi \(2016\)](#), he investigated the anxiety level in an English class in four different stages of public speaking (i.e., pre-preparation, preparation, pre-performance, and performance), and determined the factors affecting public speaking anxiety in each stage. The interviewees in the study were 50 graduate students from the Language School of Thammasat University. The findings of quantitative data showed that, in public speaking classes, most students have significantly different levels of anxiety. In the performance stage, students showed the highest degree of anxiety, while in the pre-preparation and pre-performance stages, they showed a moderate degree of anxiety. Besides, the level of spoken English, personality, and subject familiarity are the three most important variables that affect public speaking anxiety in four different stages.

[Amiri and Puteh \(2018\)](#) discussed the experience of foreign Ph.D. students in academic presentations (such as proposals and viva) as well as examples of oral communication apprehension. For this analysis, the interview participants were 25 students from different public universities in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The findings showed that, despite years of working experience as lecturers, the oral communication apprehension of these doctoral students is unavoidable. The study showed that linguistic issues, lack of research skills during presentations, negative perceptions of the presentation panel, and other related factors are impairing the OCA of international Ph.D students. The students were apprehensive about the academic presentation and the above factors aggravated their level of OCA.

More recently, to find out the extent of speech anxiety of EFL students in the public speaking class, [Qurnia and Marlina \(2020\)](#) carried out a study at the UNP English Department. 63 students from the Public Speech Class at the UNP Department of English participated in the study. The findings show that EFL students can come forward. However, they are not confident in their ability to communicate. This is due to their speaking anxiety at a medium stage. [Pontillas \(2020\)](#) focused on encouraging students to confront their anxiety in public speaking, which interferes with their oral communication skills. The instructor-researcher has launched an initiative called Popsispeak. In this study, a one-shot case study was utilised among 28 students from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges. An effective approach to help

students improves their oral communication skills and reduce their anxiety about public speaking was found to be Popsispeak.

Subsequently, [Netta, Trisnawati, and Helmanda \(2020\)](#) studied the strategies of students coping with anxiety in English public speaking courses. The participant were two junior high school students from the Department of English Education at Muhammadiyah Aceh University of Indonesia. Qualitative methods were used for analysis. The results revealed that students used various techniques to overcome their speaking anxiety, including proper practice and the use of body gestures when speaking. The study shows that teachers should encourage other EFL students to use this technique so that they can overcome their fear of public speaking.

Motivation and Anxiety

[Abu-Rabia* \(2004\)](#); [Robert C. Gardner et al. \(1985\)](#); [Horwitz et al. \(1986\)](#); [MacIntyre and Gardner \(1994\)](#) and [Noels \(2001\)](#), concurred that anxiety had a negative relationship with motivation. [MacWhinnie and Mitchell \(2017\)](#) investigated the link between the L2 motivational self-system and Japanese college students' anxiety about English language learning and how this link mediates their ability to acquire language skills. The findings showed that ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience are associated with lower levels of anxiety, which in turn leads to positive learning outcomes. Besides, the study revealed that self-indication of oneself can indicate increased anxiety, but it is also a powerful indicator of overall motivation.

In studies that confirmed the correlation between anxiety and motivation in a foreign language environment, scholars have not reached a consensus on the specific relationship (for example, positive and negative, direct and indirect). A large number of researchers believed that anxiety is a factor negatively related to motivation. For example, [Bećirović \(2020\)](#) concluded that as language learning motivation increases, these two variables are negatively correlated, and the level of writing anxiety in language learning decreases. [Jain and Sidhu \(2013\)](#) found that anxiety has a negative impact on the learning motivation of college students. [Amiri and Puteh \(2018\)](#); [Amiryousefi and Tavakoli \(2011\)](#) pointed out that test anxiety has a negative impact on the motivation of TOEFL reading preparation. [Magelinskaitė, Kepalaitė, and Legkauskas \(2014\)](#) investigated the relationship between primary school learning motivation, school anxiety, and social competence; they concluded that reducing anxiety may enhance learning motivation. Besides, [Kirova, Petkovska, and Koceva \(2012\)](#) experimented with Macedonia and found that reducing anxiety is a way to increase motivation. Other studies have shown similar trends [Richard C. Gardner et al. \(1983\)](#); [Robert C. Gardner, Smythe, Clément, and Gliksman \(1976\)](#); [Robert C. Gardner et al. \(1997\)](#); [Hashimoto \(2002\)](#).

However, some research emphasised the possibility of a positive correlation between motivation and anxiety. [Strack and Esteves \(2015\)](#); [Strack, Lopes, Esteves, and Fernandez-Berrocal \(2017\)](#) pointed out that although some people feel anxious, they will debilitate but grow under similar adverse circumstances. When they are anxious in the face of difficult challenges, the latter may become harder. As a result, certain types of people become more motivated under pressure. Although it is not a foreign language learning, [Wang, Shakeshaft, Schofield, and Malanchini \(2018\)](#) revealed the possibility of a positive correlation between anxiety and learning motivation. [Wang et al. \(2018\)](#) supported the view that anxiety and motivation can be positively correlated because their findings indicate that most diligent students are characterised by a combination of high-test anxiety and high motivation.

Basco and Han (2019) explored the general degree of self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety among English college students in South Korea. The outcome indicated that the students have a "moderate" level of self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety. A positive correlation between self-esteem and motivation has been reported, but there was no relationship between self-esteem and anxiety as well as between motivation and anxiety. Mohammed (2016) explored the degree of anxiety and motivation among students in Saudi Arabia. The outcomes demonstrated that Saudi students are anxious to learn English as a foreign language. Simultaneously, the outcomes discovered that although they were unmotivated, they could be motivated instrumentally. Moreover, there was no measurably critical correlation between anxiety and motivation. Recently, the influence of motivation and anxiety on the speaking performance of students has been investigated by Ritonga, Nasmilah, and Rahman (2020). The study was conducted among the students at Dayanu Ikhsanuddin University. The findings showed that during students' English presentation, language anxiety could result in their inability to deliver ideas clearly and this would negatively affect their results. It was found that language motivation during the speech presentation would make students feel less stressed and focus more on the topic, thus contributing to improved success in speaking.

METHOD

Research Design

Due to its purpose and goals, a quantitative research design was used in the present study. In addition, in line with the research objective, a correlational study design was applied.

Respondents

The population for this study consisted of 650 Jordanian EFL students (Ph.D. students) studying at four Malaysian universities. Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA) were among the universities involved in this study. The sample size for this study was based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970). For a population of 650 participants, the optimal sample size was 242. A total of 212 of the 300 questionnaires were filled out online and returned by Jordanian Ph.D. students. Nonetheless, 21 of the 212 copies were unusable since a significant majority of them were not completed. The survey produced 191 valid copies overall.

Instruments

There were several scales in the questionnaire used in this study, adapted from Robert C. Gardner et al. (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB 2004 edition) and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) from Horwitz et al. (1986). Five structures were included in the AMTB test developed by Robert C. Gardner et al. (1985): attitudes towards the learning situation, integrativeness, motivation, language anxiety, and instrumentality along with several scales used to measure these structures. In this study, the researchers used the five-point Likert scale format, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The original questionnaire has 104 items, but in this study, only 11 items were included. The researchers adapted several items of Fareed, Isa, and Noor (2016); Robert C. Gardner et al. (1997) AMTB and made some changes to some items to suit the characteristics of the sample and the background of the current study.

The two most important socio-psychological variables were the key focus of this study: motivational orientation (instrumental and integrative) and the adaptive element of AMTB, including three measurements (instead of twelve measurements). The current study, therefore,

covered the following three levels, which are "motivation-orientation" (instrumental and integrative) and the desire to learn languages.

Robert C. Gardner et al. (1985) items which were excluded from this study are as follows: (1) English classroom anxiety; (2) English teacher assessment; (3) English course assessment; (4) English use anxiety; (5) Parents' encouragement; (6) Interest in foreign languages; (7) Motivation intensity; (8) Attitudes towards English speakers; and (9) Attitudes towards learning English. Therefore, the statistical procedure only included the above three levels.

Regarding the FLCAS originally developed by Horwitz et al. (1986), the researchers selected 18 out of 33 items. The researchers adjusted the questions and made some changes to suit the characteristics of the sample and the research background. The researchers used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). This questionnaire was designed to collect information about the anxiety levels experienced by students when speaking in English in public.

Data Analysis

To analyse the questionnaire statistically, "The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling" (PLS-SEM) was used. Correlational analyses were carried out to assess the relationships between motivation and English public speaking anxiety. To begin with, a factor study was executed to learn the legitimacy and the unwavering quality of every item. At that point, the researcher started to examine the information to address the research questions, the hypothesis and to examine how motivation affects English public speaking anxiety.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Data analysis was mainly conducted to fulfil the presumption of running the PLS-SEM. After that, the PLS-SEM measurement model and the structural model were assessed.

The measurement model was used to test the construct's reliability and validity Robert C. Gardner et al. (1997); J.F Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2014); Joe F. Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011). A Reflective-Reflective model was the model, and the structure was high-level. To test the model, the repeated index method was used Becker, Klein, and Wetzels (2012). Indicator reliability was assessed for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR), whereas for validity, convergence validity (AVE) and discriminant validity were measured. J.F Hair et al. (2014) designated discriminant validity is the degree to which a set of indicators represent a latent construct and how they can differentiate a construct from other constructs in the research model. Explicitly, the indicators are obligatory to have variances amongst each other greater than the variance shared with other variables Fareed et al. (2016). This study showed that the CR value is 0.978 (Motivation) and 0.989 (English Public Speaking Anxiety), as shown in Table 1. The Cronbach's alpha value is 0.927 (Motivation), and 0.988 (English Public Speaking Anxiety).

Table 1. Reliability and validity of the constructs

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Motivation	0.927	0.972	0.978	0.819
English Public Speaking Anxiety	0.988	0.989	0.989	0.835

Table 1 demonstrates convergent validity measured by AVE with values of 0.819 (Motivation) and 0.835 (English Public Speaking Anxiety). The Discriminant validity assessed for this model by Fornell-Larcker Criterion Joe F. Hair et al. (2011) is shown in Table 2. It indicates that AVE's square root (diagonal) is higher than all reflection structures' correlation (off-diagonal).

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Motivatn	English Public Speaking Anxiety
Motivation	0.811	
English Public Speaking Anxiety	0.853	0.802

In the measurement model, once reliability and validity were obtained, we tested the structural model. We tested the path coefficient (hypothesis test), the determination coefficient (R2 value), and the effect size (f^2) in the structural model. The coefficient of determination (R2 value) for this study is 65.8%, indicating that motivation explains 65.8% of the variance of endogenous variables (i.e., English Public Speaking Anxiety). To evaluate the path coefficient (hypothesis test), we ran the guided program in Smart-PLS. A two-tailed test with a significance level of 1% was used to evaluate the P-value and T-statistics to test the significance or insignificance of the hypothesis. Table 3 indicates that motivation has a significant effect on English public speaking anxiety ($\beta = -0.468$; $t = 8.242$; $p < 0.01$). Thus, H1 is supported.

Table 3. Results of direct hypothesis testing

	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Motivation -> English Public Speaking Anxiety	-0.468	0.056	8.242	0.000*

We further investigated the effect size of the exogenous variable once the hypothesis was tested. In Table 4, English public speaking anxiety is explained by the endogenous variable (SME performance) and the effect size (f^2) is 0.381, indicating that the effect size of the corresponding exogenous variable is large.

Table 4. Effect size

	Exogenous Construct	f2	Effect size
	English Public Speaking Anxiety	0.381	Large

Discussion

This study explores the role of motivation in Jordanian Ph.D. students' English public speaking anxiety. It has empirically confirmed that motivation has a substantial impact on English public speaking anxiety. The current study has shown that in English public speaking anxiety, motivation plays a vital role. More specifically, with a t-value of 8.242 and a β value of -0.468, a negative significant relationship was noted between motivation and English public speaking anxiety. In other words, this finding demonstrates that motivation negatively affects the English public speaking anxiety of Jordanian EFL students. Therefore, at this point, the purpose of this research was fully realised by examining the relationship between motivation and English public speaking anxiety.

The findings of this study are consistent with other studies that have found a significant negative relationship between anxiety and motivation Abu-Rabia* (2004); Alico (2016); Bećirović (2020); Hashimoto (2002); (Liu, 2015); Luo, Subramaniam, and O'Steen (2020); Noels (2001); Sari (2017); Tercan and Dikilitaş (2015). Some studies highlighted the possibility of a positive association between the two variables that suggested that under pressure, some individuals became more motivated Luo et al. (2020); Strack and Esteves (2015); Strack et al. (2017); Wang et al. (2018). The outcomes of these studies are not consistent with the outcome of current study.

LIMITATION

The current analysis is quantitative in nature. It is recommended that further research be carried out to gain insights into all viewpoints of the phenomena under review through a qualitative or a mixed-methods design. Future researchers should conduct interviews to investigate the relationship between the current study's variables. Also, this study was conducted only among Jordanian Ph.D students studying abroad. It is proposed that Jordanian Ph.D. students studying in Jordan and also undergraduate students studying within and outside Jordan should be further investigated.

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