

**INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE LEARNING AUTONOMY
AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY
AMONG JORDANIAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

MISARAH HUSNY ZREAGAT

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY AMONG
JORDANIAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

by

Misarah Husny Zreagat

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LIST OF APPREVIATIONS

TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
JMOE	Jordanian Ministry of Education
JMOHE	Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
CA	Communication Apprehension
FNE	Fear of Negative Evaluation
TA	Test Anxiety
EC	English Classroom Anxiety
ABL	Autonomous Ability
RES	Autonomous Responsibility
ACT	Autonomous Activity
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
S	Student
L	Lecturer
FG	Focus Group

Kajian Mengenai Autonomi dalam Pembelajaran Bahasa dan Keresahan dalam Kelas Bahasa Asing dalam kalangan Pelajar Bahasa Inggeris sebagai Bahasa Asing Jordan di Sebuah Universiti di Jordan

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini merupakan satu pengesahan perbezaan-budaya untuk dua konstruk keresahan dalam bahasa asing dan autonomi pembelajaran bahasa. Dalam bidang pemerolehan bahasa kedua, kajian telah mendapati faktor-faktor kognitif and afektif pada seorang pelajar mempengaruhi tahap pencapaian dalam pembelajaran bahasa kedua. Antara variabel afektif yang diberi perhatian sepanjang dekad yang lepas adalah keresahan dan pembelajaran autonomi. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyiasat tahap keresahan dan pembelajaran secara berautonomi dalam bahasa Inggeris dalam kalangan pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing Jordan dari Universiti Yarmouk, Jordan. Seramai 154 orang pelajar yang mengikuti kursus kemahiran bahasa Inggeris dan 5 orang pensyarah mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini. Kaedah kualitatif dan kuantitatif telah digunakan dalam kajian. Soal-selidik yang mengandungi 33 butir soalan yang telah disesuaikan dari Horwitz et al. (1986) digunakan untuk mengkaji tahap kekhuatiran para pelajar dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris. Tambahan pula, satu lagi soal-selidik dengan 43 butir soalan disesuaikan dari Spratt, Humpreys & Chan (2002) untuk menyiasat tahap pembelajaran berautonomi para pelajar. Temuduga berstruktur separa juga telah digunakan untuk menemubual para pelajar dan pensyarah.

Keputusan yang didapati dari kajian ini menunjukkan mean butiran mengenai konstruk keresahan adalah 3.531. Ini bermaksud bahawa 70.62% dari pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing dari universiti Jordan mengalami keresahan di dalam kelas bahasa Inggeris dan seterusnya di luar kelas juga. Jenis keresahan yang dialami adalah kesulitan berkomunikasi, risau tentang penilaian yang negatif dan kebimbangan terhadap ujian. Untuk pembelajaran autonomi pula, keputusan yang didapati menunjukkan pengajaran bahasa Inggeris ini di kelas universiti Jordan masih berorientasikan guru dengan mean jawapan pelajar mengenai konstruk autonomi di paras -3.016. Ini bermaksud bahawa 78.32% dari pelajar bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing Jordan tidak mengalami pembelajaran bersifat autonomi di dalam kelas. Tambahan pula, keputusan ini menunjukkan walaupun pelajar bahasa Inggeris Jordan ini berasa bertanggungjawab terhadap pembelajaran berautonomi, mereka tidak mampu berbuat demikian atau menjalankan aktiviti secara autonomi. Dapatan kualitatif dari temuduga yang dijalankan nampaknya selari dengan dapatan kuantitatif kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa para pendidik professional dan penggubal polisi pendidikan di Jordan perlu memberi perhatian terhadap proses pengajaran bahasa Inggeris di universiti di Jordan.

INVESTIGATING LANGUAGE LEARNING AUTONOMY AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY AMONG JORDANIAN EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

ABSTRACT

The present study is regarded as a cross-cultural validation of the two constructs of foreign language anxiety and language learning autonomy. In the field of second language acquisition, research acknowledges that both cognitive and affective factors within a language learner affect the level of success achieved in learning a second language (L2). Among the affective variables that have received attention during the last few decades are language anxiety and learning autonomy. This study sought to investigate the levels of English language anxiety and English language learning autonomy among Jordanian EFL students in Yarmouk University, Jordan. 154 students taking English proficiency-based courses and 5 lecturers teaching these courses took part in the research. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to conduct the research. A 33-item questionnaire adapted from Horwitz et al. (1986) was used to investigate the level of English language classroom anxiety of the students. In addition, a 43-item questionnaire adapted from Spratt, Humphreys & Chan (2002) was used to investigate the level of their English language learning autonomy. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with the students and their lecturers.

The findings of the study revealed that the mean of the items regarding the anxiety construct was reported to be 3.531. This means that 70.62 % of Jordanian EFL university students experience anxiety inside English language classrooms leading in turn to anxiety outside their English classrooms. The types of anxiety experienced were: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and finally test anxiety. For learning autonomy, the findings revealed that teaching of English in Jordanian university classrooms is still highly teacher-centred where the mean of the students' answers regarding the autonomy construct was -3.916. This means that 78.32 % of Jordanian EFL students did not experience autonomous learning. Moreover, the findings indicated that although Jordanian EFL students feel responsible for autonomous learning, they do not possess the ability to do so nor do they carry out autonomous activities. Qualitative findings from the interviews with students and their lecturers seem to correspond with the findings generated from the quantitative part of the study. The implications of this study suggest that educational professionals and policy makers in Jordan need to pay more attention to the whole process of teaching English in Jordanian universities. Finally, recommendations and future research suggestions have been presented.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at providing an initial understanding of the way the study is constructed. The chapter starts with the background of the study in which the factors that led to conducting this study were explained. The chapter then introduces the whereabouts of the research with an elaboration on the social, linguistic, educational background of the people living in these whereabouts. The chapter continues with the research objectives and questions of the current research. The chapter concludes with why it is believed that the research is significant as it contributes to the body of research on field of this research. Some related terms will be finally introduced and defined as to provide a better understanding of this research throughout its different phases.

1.2 Background of the Study

The language that was once spoken by fifty thousand or so in the suburbs of London is now a world language spoken by more than one and a half billion people around the

world as a first, second or a foreign language for communication purposes (Butler & Stevens, 1997; Graddol 2006). Stevens goes on to say that over 1.5 billion people use English for communication purposes nowadays. While one fourth of all English users are native speakers, the remaining majority use English as a second or foreign language to communicate with both native and non-native speakers of English. The interesting part is that two thirds of these non-native speakers of the language have learned English in the past twenty years and the number of people who use the English language continues to increase (Norton, 1997; Alptekin, 2002).

Graddol (2006) affirms the importance of English in the world stating that the number of people who are trying to learn English is increasing rapidly. Graddol states that there is a crucial connection between English and globalisation in which globalisation encouraged the status of English and at the same time English encouraged globalisation. Graddol (2006) gives an example of India where English is spoken extensively as a second language which in turn will play a major role in the development of global English in the coming era. English is celebrating a great triumph in the world today in which it is now “redefining national and individual identities worldwide; shifting political fault lines; creating new global patterns of wealth and social exclusion; and suggesting new notions of human rights and responsibilities of citizenship” (Graddol, 2006: 12).

Crystal (2003) addresses this importance stating that the global spread of English over the last 50 years is remarkable especially that the number of people who speak English as a second or foreign language nowadays far exceeds the number of English

native speakers. Crystal makes the assertion that although English will go through transition processes, it will continue to be the world standard language and there will be no major threat to English or to its global popularity in the 21st century. Moreover, Crystal (2003) predicts that English will serve as the world language for about 100 years before a new language takes over.

Consequently, the purpose of teaching English has shifted from the idea of mastering certain structural sets of rules into the ability to use the language for communication purposes. Most people nowadays need English not to write a novel, a poem or any literary work but to be able to communicate reasonably in this globalised and highly connected world, in which English is regarded as a *lingua franca* and a *lingua mundi*. In other words, English is today used in various areas from international trade, diplomacy and tourism to international media, air-traffic control, and technology (Alptekin, 2002). Moreover, the ultimate goal of language learning is currently defined as “authentic communication between persons of different languages and cultural backgrounds” (McIntyre et al., 2002: 559). This shift in language use influenced the language learning and teaching where many people are interested to learn English for communicative purposes. This shift in language teaching has brought about new areas to be explored by many researchers around the globe. Some of these areas include learning autonomy which was introduced due to the development of learner-centred approaches in education. Another area of research this shift brought about was second language anxiety and its effects on second language performance.

Recognising the crucial role this language plays in communities' social, commercial and political development, Arabic countries have been putting in enormous efforts trying to facilitate its use and help their citizens acquire English and make use of it in this globalised era. Al- Khatib (2000) highlighted the importance of English language learning for students in the Arab region stating that teaching of English as a foreign language in the Arab world can be traced back to the 1920s where many of the countries in the region came under the British mandates. As a result, English started to be introduced by most Arabic countries in the school curriculum. At present, students who finish public secondary school education in most Arabic countries must have had at least eight years of instruction in English as a school subject. Al- Khatib goes on to explain that it is the widespread use of English as a second language that made the teaching of this language the focus of attention of most Arab researchers (Al- Khatib, 2000).

Zughoul (2003) describes English in the Arabic world as the language of globalisation, he outlined twelve international 'domains' of the English language that contribute significantly to its privileged status worldwide. These domains account for the dominance of English, in these domains English is viewed as:

- The working language of international organizations and conferences. 85% of international organizations use English, 49% use French and less than 10% use Arabic, Spanish, or German.
- The international currency of science and technology.
- The language of international banking, economic affairs, and trade.

- The language of advertising for global brands.
- The language of audio-visual/cultural products.
- The language of international tourism.
- The language of tertiary education.
- The language of international safety.
- The language of international law.
- The ‘relay language’ in interpretation and translation.
- The language of technology transfer.
- The language of Internet communication.

(Zughoul, 2003: 10).

Zughoul (2003) states that the status of English in the Arabic world nowadays has two main reasons: the first reason is attributed to British colonialism when many Arabic countries like Jordan, Iraq and Palestine were colonised by Britain during the last century. The second reason is due to the rise of the U.S. as a strong political and military power in the world today. In the Arab world, individuals who seek better living conditions in their countries are expected to be fluent in English. Moreover, many Arabic students who seek higher education abroad are required to pass some English tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) with increasingly high scores.

The case in Jordan is much more profound where the country's cultural environment is distinguished by its widespread use of English as a foreign/second language in addition to the use of Arabic, the country's native and official language, in formal and informal settings. Jordan is somehow different from the other Arabic countries when it comes to the people's awareness of the importance of English, their eagerness to learn it and their love to speak it fluently. As a result and as a response to this awareness, eagerness and love, the acquisition of English by Jordanian students was seen by the Jordanian Ministry of Education (JMOE), hereafter, as an essential tool for the country's educational, social and economic development. This can be seen when the teaching of English was mandated in 1999 by a royal decree in all Jordanian public and private schools beginning in first grade (JMOE, 1999). This educational reform was seen as a vital tool expected to support the country's drive for modernization and helping future generations cope with the challenges of globalization (Jordan Times, 2001).

In an effort to achieve this goal, the Jordanian government has been modifying the national curriculum of English education to motivate Jordanian students to focus on developing their communicative competence in English rather than their grammatical and reading skills. Along with the Jordanian government's effort, many if not most, Jordanian students are eager to develop their English communicative competence. Many parents are trying to guide their children to develop English proficiency to become successful in the coming era. In Jordan, many social phenomena clearly depict how eager Jordanian people are to acquire English proficiency. A very good example is when students chat on the internet or use social media such as 'Facebook' and 'Twitter', English constitutes a big

communicative portion of the whole communication process even among siblings and relatives.

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) released a Human Development Report in the year 2007/08 stating that Jordan has shown a strong commitment to universal education. The Jordanian government spent 20.6 % of its budget on education in the year 2001. The government has placed a high priority on upgrading the standard of teaching particularly on the teaching of English. Jordan has scored a high rate of literacy as school enrolment in 2005 stood at 89% for primary level and 79% for secondary. According to Jordan's Department of Statistics (2007), overall adult literacy rates are high for the region, at 92.1%, compared with 80.8% in Syria and 74.3% in Tunisia. A decision to allow technical school graduates to go on to higher education is encouraging more families to consider this option. Since the 1970s, Jordan has maintained a successful policy of educating its citizens, with the aim of enabling them to obtain professional jobs in the oil-rich states of the Gulf (UNDP, 2007).

In Jordan, a comprehensive, sustainable and high-quality educational system has been the vision of the country's education decision makers during the last decade. Currently, Jordan is reforming its educational system constantly so that it could meet the demands of the global economy (globalization). In this context, it makes it mandatory for students to be English and computer literate whereby all students have to take English and computer subjects at the age of six (Grade 1). Almost every English textbook in use in Jordan sets the goal that learners will be able to understand, read and write in English.

At the university level, the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education has been restructuring its policies regarding higher education so as to ensure Jordanian graduates are able to meet the challenges of today's world in this globalised era. Recognising the important role English plays in the country's economical and social development, the Ministry of Higher Education have been strengthening the role of English in the educational process. A very good example would be the initiative in early 2010 when all candidates who apply for postgraduate study, regardless of their majors and areas of interest, should pass the TOFEL test with a score of 500 for scientific majors and a score of 400 for other majors (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010).

1.3 The Cultural and Sociolinguistic Profile of Jordan

Jordan is a relatively small Arabic country in the Middle East that has a population of 5.8 million (Jordan's Department of Statistics, February, 2009). Jordan has very moderate geographical features that distinguish its nature from other countries in the Arab World in general and the Middle East in particular. Decades ago, Jordan was one of the most significant routes for tradesmen and passersby. The following is a map of Jordan:



Figure 1.1: Map of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

(Source: Jordanian Ministry of Education, 2010)

According to Al-Bashayer (1997), Jordan is a Muslim country comprising 92% Sunni Muslims, 6% Christians who dwell basically around the cities of Amman, Karak, Salt, Ajloun and Madaba and 2% from other religious backgrounds like Shiites, Baha'ies and others. Al-Bashayer (1997) points out that the strategic location and moderate geographical features of Jordan made it an attractive homeland for many immigrant groups over years of time from different countries.

Al-Douri (1985) asserts that during 1948 and 1967, Jordan was the only Arab country to give Palestinians the right of settlement on its land and practice all the possible political rights. Palestinians form about 1.5 million of the total population in Jordan. Palestinians of Jordan have contributed greatly to the health and prosperity of the country. However, the right of settlement was also the right of other emigrant groups such as Chechens, Circassians, Turkomans, Armenian and a small community of Druze, mainly near the Syrian border. These multigrain minorities play an important role in shaping the Jordanian social mosaic (Dweik, 2000).

According to Al-Khateeb (2000), at the end of the British Mandate in 1946 Arabic became the dominant language in Jordan. It is the official language of the government and it is learned by local people who live in Jordan. Al-Khateeb (2000) adds that Arabic is the mother tongue and national language of Jordan; it serves as the sole official language of Jordan and enjoys a special prestige nationwide. Also, it is the language of media, educational institutions, workplace, culture and religious rituals.

Al-Khateeb (2000) points out that a significant number of languages such as English and French are also used in Jordan for the purpose of communication and education at schools and universities. Besides Arabic language, other languages are used by immigrant groups such as Chechen, Armenian and Druze. Many people, especially those who came from Chechen background in cities like Al-Zarqa, Al-Azraq and Al-Sukhnah, use Chechen language as the medium of communication among themselves as minority groups.

Another incident that contributed to the diversity of the people of Jordan was the Second Gulf War in Iraq in 2003 when millions of Iraqis had to leave their homeland as a result of the war. Like Syria and Iran, Jordan has played host to a large Iraqi expatriate community. Although Syria and Iran were known as safe havens for Iraqi oppositionists, Jordan played host to a much less politically active Iraqi community: Iraqis in Jordan tend to be seculars and educated, which fits well with Jordan's own national identity and the country's political orientation.

After the war in Iraq and with the fall of Baghdad, the capital city of Iraq, Iraqis flooded into Jordan in numbers that far exceed both the earlier population flows and the current movements of Iraqis into Syria and other neighbouring countries. Accurate figures of the number of Iraqi refugees who fled to Jordan are hard to come by and estimates vary considerably. During the last few years, many sources put the figure anywhere between 500,000 and 800,000—possibly even as high as one million. A senior Jordanian official cited the 800,000 figure, but the same source stated that the Jordanian government tends to rely on low estimates. Several unofficial sources said the common assumption among the political elite in Jordan is that the Iraqi community numbers is at least one million. In the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, 2010, King Abdullah II, the king of Jordan was asked about the exact figure of the Iraqi refugees in Jordan. The king's answer was that the number is not accurate but to be estimated as half a million “give and take fifty thousand”. Keeping in mind the constant cross-border migration and repatriation, it is possible that several million Iraqis have spent at least some time in Jordan over the years (Saif & DeBartolo, 2007).

Modern Jordan is predominantly urbanized and it is classified as a country of "high human development" by the 2010 Human Development Report (The Jordan Times, 2010). The country has been also classified as an emerging market as it has more Free Trade Agreements than any other country in the Middle East. The regime in Jordan is regarded as pro-Western with many close ties with the United States and Europe. The head of the Jordanian regime, King Abdullah II is the son of a Jordanian father and a native British mother with English as his first language. Furthermore, Jordan is one of only three members of the 22 state Arab League to have diplomatic relations with Israel (The Jordan Times, 2010). These factors led to the advanced status English enjoys nowadays in the country.

Thus and because English is regarded as an important tool for the countries' social and economic development (Graddol, 2006), the goal of this research is to help Jordanian EFL students acquire English more effectively and speak it more constantly in their daily life. This goal will be carried out through understanding what it takes to learn English more effectively by understanding the factors that lead to the effective use of English. This goal will be achieved through examining and understanding two of the main factors that have been proposed to be effective variables in English language achievement. These two main variables are foreign language anxiety and language learning autonomy. A detailed explanation is presented later in the realm of this research about each of the two variables.

1.4 Higher Education in Jordan

Higher education in Jordan began in the second half of the twentieth century, namely the sixties, when numerous Teachers' Colleges were established throughout the country. Their establishment provided the necessary teaching manpower needed to meet the high demand on school education characterizing that era. The first public Jordanian university, the University of Jordan, was established in 1962. Yarmouk University followed in 1976 and six more public universities were established in different parts of the Kingdom since that date. In 1989, the Council of Higher Education endorsed the first policy document authorizing the establishment of private universities. Amman University, the first Jordanian private university was established in 1990. An impressive number of more private universities and other educational institutions were founded since that date (Abu Samak, 2006).

Non-university education is offered at Community Colleges, which were created in 1981 by converting and expanding the existent Teacher Colleges. These institutions are meant to offer specialized, career-oriented training and prepare their students for work in middle-level professions. All community colleges are supervised by and affiliated to Al-Balqa Applied University, which is a Jordanian public university (Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2004).

Jordan is a country rich in human capital but poor in natural resources. The government, therefore, decided to begin a broad-based reform programme. The first step was to establish the institutional and physical infrastructure needed to support Jordan's

educational goals. To move the reform forward, the government took several steps: a new education law was prepared in 1994; the school system was restructured abolishing middle schools and reducing the secondary school cycle from three to two years; the curriculum was modernized; and higher minimum qualifications were established for teachers. The higher education system in Jordan comprises two-year community colleges and four- to five-year university education. The offerings dramatically expanded in the 1990s when the government allowed private firms to invest in education by building their own universities. There are 16 private universities now in Jordan (JMOHE, 2010).

1.5 Jordanian Universities

At the present time, there are 39 educational institutions including public universities, private universities, colleges, affiliated universities and other educational institutions in Jordan. They are all under the jurisdiction of the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education. These educational institutions offer Bachelor, Master's and Doctorate degrees. Both public and private educational institutions follow the American Credit-Hour system in which the academic year is divided into two compulsory semesters and one optional summer semester. The Bachelor Degree for most academic disciplines usually takes four years while it takes five years for majors like Dentistry, Pharmacy and Engineering and six years for Medicine majors. This means 132 – 223 credit hours depending on the major. A Masters degree usually takes two to three years provided that applicants have already got a Bachelor degree from a recognised university (whether local or international) approved by the Ministry of Higher Education. Students can enrol in two types of Masters Programme, either by a course-work plus a thesis (23-27 credit hours of

course + 9-12 credit hours of research, a dissertation) or by full course work system (36 credit hours of courses + a comprehensive examination). Finally, the Doctorate degree (PhD) usually takes between three to five years provided that candidates have Masters Degree from a recognised university (whether local or international) approved by the Ministry of Higher Education. PhD students must take 60 credit hours in (27 – 33 credit hours of courses and 27 – 33 credit hours of research) (JMOHE, 2010).

The language of instruction in all Jordanian public and private universities is Arabic while English is used as the language of instruction for the disciplines of Medicine, Engineering, Dentistry, Pharmacy and other scientific subjects. English has recently been used in the Business Administration Programme at the University of Jordan and other universities as well (Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, 2004). The following two tables (Table 1.1 & table 1.2) show a list of both public and private universities and educational institutions in Jordan respectively.

Table 1.1: Public Educational Institutions in Jordan.

Name of Educational Institute	Name of the Province of Location	Year of Establishment
University of Jordan	Amman	1962
Balqa Applied University	Balqa	1997
Jordan University of Science and Technology	Irbid	1986
Yarmouk University	Irbid	1976
Mutah University	Kerak	1981
Al-Hussein Bin Talal University	Ma'an	1999
Al al-Bayt University	Mafraq	1992
Tafila Technical University	Tafila	2005
Hashemite University	Zarka	1996

Source: Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHE, 2009)

Table 1.2: Private Educational Institutions in Jordan.

Name of Educational Institute	Name of the Province of Location	Year of Establishment
Amman Private University	Amman	1990
Amman Arab University for Higher Studies	Amman	
Applied Science Private University	Amman	1991
Al-Isra Private University	Amman	1991
German-Jordanian University	Amman	2005
Jordan Academy of Music	Amman	1989
Philadelphia University	Amman	1991
Princess Sumaya University for Technology	Amman	1991
University of Petra	Amman	1991
Al-Zaytoonah University of Jordan	Amman	1993
Irbid National University	Irbid	1994
Jadara University	Irbid	
Jerash Private University	Jerash	1992
Zarka Private University	Zarka	1994
Middle East University for Graduate Studies	Amman	
Jordan Applied University College of Hospitality & Tourism	Amman	2004

Source: Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MOHE, 2009)

All these universities and educational institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Jordanian Ministry of Higher Education (JMOHE) where the ministry acts as a supervisor and organiser for these educational institutions (JMOHE, 2010).

1.6 Profile of Yarmouk University

On the 24th of June 1976, a Royal High Decree was issued for establishing the second university in Jordan, Yarmouk University located in the northern town of Irbid, one of the Northern provinces in Jordan. The first university in Jordan was The University of Jordan which was established in 1962. Yarmouk University's first year began in October, 9, 1976 with 640 students. Now Yarmouk University contains 12 colleges and these colleges contain 55 majors in Bachelor programs, 63 in Master programs and 18 in PhD programs, which have 30400 undergraduate students until the first semester 2008/2009 and 91000 graduate students until the first semester 2008/2009. Yarmouk University aspires to offer many majors that generate graduates who are able to meet the needs and the challenges of Jordanian community, even the Arabic and international community (Yarmouk University's official website, 2009).

Yarmouk University has grown both in size and stature over the years since its foundation in 1976. The university philosophy has been to become a leading institution of higher learning through its dedication to provide approach to academic management and human resource development. The university is a governmental institution that enjoys a considerable degree of autonomy. The degree of autonomy the university enjoys is a basic outcome of the whole policy of higher education in Jordan where there is a belief that Jordanian universities in general and governmental universities in particular should have a considerable degree of autonomy so as to contribute to the wholesale change and reform in the country. The University's mission comprises three main components:

- To provide quality education to its students in the various fields of specialization and at different levels of achievements ranging from the undergraduate levels to the M. Sc. and Ph. D. levels.
- To engage its faculty and students in relevant and timely research programs that would be needed to fuel economic growth and development of the country, and that would also contribute to human welfare and prosperity in its wider context.
- To render public service at the local, national, and international levels through fostering a dynamic environment of cultural enrichment, and the provision of educational and training opportunities to non-student groups.

In response to the importance of the English language in the body of Jordanian educational process, Yarmouk University incorporated this importance into practice believing that candidates should have a good English proficiency to perform well in the university later especially that English is the language of text books and instruction in many of the university's different study majors (Masadeh, 2006). At the beginning of each academic year, all students who are admitted to Yarmouk University are required to sit for an online English placement test. The test covers areas of students' grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. Students who fail the test have to take three language courses at the University Language Center; these courses are LS99, LS100 and LS101. Those who pass the online English placement test with a grade of 50%-79% have to take two English courses at the University Language Centre, they are LS100 and LS101. Finally, those who pass the test with a grade of 80% and above have to take only

one English course at the University Language Center, the course is LS101 (Yarmouk University's official website, 2009).

1.7 Statement of the Problem

The highly important role English is playing in the world today led many researchers to explore many issues regarding this language especially the issues that help learners communicate with this language more effectively. Some of the important issues researchers have been trying to explore are the factors that lead to better English communicative competence and thus better English language proficiency in foreign language learning contexts. Some of the factors that have been hypothesised to affect learners' language achievement which in turn affect English language acquisition include learners' foreign language anxiety and their language learning autonomy (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002; Little, 2003). These two main constructs are the focus of the current research.

Foreign language anxiety was hypothesised to be one of the major predictors of students' SLA as it has a direct affect on learners' willingness to communicate and their motivation to learn and speak the language (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; 1991a; 1994). Some researchers concluded that language anxiety is one of the major and most direct variables affecting language acquisition and performance particularly inside English language classrooms. In the literature on language anxiety, most research studies show a consistent negative relationship between language anxiety and language performance (MacIntyre et al., 1998).

Learning autonomy, which was derived from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) developed by Deci & Ryan (1985), was reported by many researchers to affect language performance especially inside foreign language classrooms. Language autonomy was hypothesized to positively affect students' language achievement as it enables learners to take charge of their learning experience, positively affect their learning motivation and help students control their emotions such as language anxiety (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Black & Deci, 2000).

A significant deal of research has been conducted to examine the way students' language anxiety and their learning autonomy affect students' achievement and their English language performance (Holec, 1981; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; MacIntyre, 1994; Onwueguzie et al., 2000, Yashima, 2002; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002; Little, 2003, Yashima et al., 2004). Throughout the process of research, researchers have been forming, developing and modifying models and instruments to measure these factors not only among native speakers of English but also among second and foreign language learners. Most of these studies recommended that further research should be done and more studies need to be conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing learners' language achievement taking into account the diverse cultural and social aspects of the different societies (MacIntyre, et al., 2001; Shinge, 2005).

For example, lately, the notion of 'learner autonomy' has gained more and more significance in the field of language learning due to the development of learner centered

approaches in education. In the current literature on learner autonomy, it has been suggested that the perception and practice of autonomous learning change according to specific cultural and educational contexts. Therefore, in any given country, it is crucially important to identify students' readiness for learner autonomy before designing or adapting activities that would promote autonomous learning (Yıldırım, 2008).

In a baseline report about education in Jordan, Neumann (2006) states that teaching in Jordan is viewed as teacher-centred rather than student-centred where teachers are seen as the ultimate sources for knowledge and information. The main aim of autonomous learning is to encourage the process of student-centred learning where students take responsibilities of their own learning experiences. However, before implementing autonomous learning in any society, it is important to find out whether this society is ready for autonomous learning (ibid, 2008). In Jordan, no studies have been conducted on examining Jordanian students' readiness for autonomous learning in the EFL context.

Many, if not most, Jordanian students are eager to acquire English proficiency in order to enter universities, secure admission to better universities, or achieve higher social standings (Jweihan, 2007). However, Jordanian EFL students experience many difficulties when speaking in English in and outside classrooms (Al-Hyassat, 2006). Werikat (2009) stated that students in Jordan face a major problem in dealing with English as a foreign language and that their performance in English language is unsatisfactory. This view was even supported by statistics from the Jordanian ministry of

education showing the low achievement level Jordanian students scored in Al-Tawjeehi exams.

The Jordanian government is aware of the essential role English plays in the overall development of the country. This can be seen in the enormous efforts the Jordanian Ministry of Education (JMOE) puts in to enhance and facilitate using English for Jordanian EFL learners. Yet, despite learners' desire to learn and speak English, Jordanian students seem to have difficulty gaining the success that would assist them in achieving their goals in today's highly globalised world especially where English is regarded as an important tool that would pave the way to this success (Al-Hyassat, 2006; Obeidat & Abu-Melhim, 2008).

Moreover, most of the research done in Jordan regarding English in EFL/ESL contexts concentrated on reading and writing skills while English in the communicative contexts was left with little research (Al-Mahfadi, 2005; Al-Khrisheh, 2008). Therefore, this study attempts to explore Jordanian EFL students' English language anxiety and language learning autonomy as predictors of better success in second language communication. This study is also an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature regarding these critical areas of research of English language considering the fact that little has been researched on the relationship between foreign language anxiety and learning autonomy (Shinge, 2005).

This study not only attempts to examine Jordanian EFL students' language anxiety and learning autonomy but also tries to find out whether a relationship exists between the two variables. This kind of relationship has not been thoroughly examined in the literature of this research. As a matter of fact, Shinge (2005) states that his study was the first to investigate such a relationship between foreign language anxiety and language learning autonomy. Although Shinge's findings did not show a significant relationship between the two affective variables, he strongly recommended that more studies be conducted on other foreign languages to find out whether similar findings are gained taking into account that his study investigated the relationships between the two variables in the context of French as a foreign language. So, this study is answering a call from other researchers who conducted studies in the fields of language anxiety and learning autonomy in foreign language contexts.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

This study aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. To examine the extent to which Jordanian EFL university students experience language classroom anxiety.
2. To analyze the perceived language learning autonomy of Jordanian EFL university students.
3. To investigate the relationship between Jordanian EFL university students' language classroom anxiety and their language learning autonomy.

4. To identify students' perceived methods of reducing their classroom language anxiety and enhancing their language learning autonomy.
5. To examine teachers' perceived methods of enhancing their students' language learning autonomy and reducing the students' language classroom anxiety.

1.9 Research Questions

This research aims at answering the following questions:

1. To what extent do Jordanian EFL university students experience language classroom anxiety?
2. What is the perceived language learning autonomy of Jordanian EFL university students?
3. What is the relationship between students' language classroom anxiety and their language learning autonomy?
4. What are students' perceived methods of reducing their level of language classroom anxiety and enhancing their language learning autonomy?
5. What are teachers' perceived methods of enhancing their students' language learning autonomy and reducing the students' language classroom anxiety?