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**Factors of Language Anxiety in Learning the Speaking Skill:**

The Case of First Year LMD Students of English at Biskra University

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for Master  
Degree in Science of Language

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## **Dedication**

To the dearest people to my heart

To my parents with love

To my brother 'Tarik' and his wife 'Samiha'

To my sister 'Sara'

To my nephew 'Akram Lounis'

To my niece 'Riham'

To all my teachers

Special gratitude is due to all those extraordinary People who have stood  
by me in very hard moments.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FLCAS: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

=: percentage

Q: Question

T: Teacher who participated in the interview

FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

LA: Language Acquisition

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

L2: Second Language

L1: First Language

LMD: License, Master, Doctorate

FL: Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

LCDH: Linguistic Coding Difference Hypothesis

SAT: Scholastic Assessment Test

CA: Communicative Apprehension

TMT: Terror Management Theory

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

LAD: Language Acquisition Device

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## **Abstract**

This research is an attempt to investigate the sources of anxiety in oral English classrooms at Biskra University. This study used a mixed research method in a questionnaire and a structured interview format. The findings suggested that foreign language anxiety can originate from communication apprehension, fear of failing tests or negative evaluation. Especially, fear from peers, the students' self perceptions and the degree of self-esteem, besides, their beliefs about language learning, and instructor's beliefs about language teaching. Classroom procedures were found to provoke anxiety, particularly, the teacher's questions and error correction in the classroom. The three stages of learning, and the socio-cultural factors like age, gender, and errors in social settings were present as sources of language anxiety. Finally, in an attempt to find solutions, we propose some strategies in order to help students cope with their anxiety and become more confident to speak in language classrooms, thus ultimately enhance their learning of oral English.

## المخلص

هذه الدراسة عبارة عن محاولة لاستقصاء العوامل التي تتسبب في القلق لأقسام الشفهية للغة الانجليزية في جامعة بسكرة. هذه الدراسة أنجزت عن طريق مزج الطريقة الكمية و النوعية. النتائج المتحصل عليها من هذه الدراسة اظهرت أن القلق من اللغة الأجنبية يمكن أن يصدر من الخوف من الاتصال, الخوف من الفشل في الاختبارات أو التقييم السلبي خاصة من قبل الزملاء, إدراك الطلبة و درجة اعتبارهم للذات بالإضافة إلى معتقداتهم حول التعلم, و معتقدات أساتذتهم حول عملية التعليم. الإجراءات المتبعة في القسم كان لها دور كبير في التسبب بالقلق خاصة أسئلة الأستاذ و طريقة تصحيحه للأخطاء في القسم. مراحل التعلم الثلاث و العوامل الثقافية و الاجتماعية مثل العمر و الجنس, العيوب في الأوساط الاجتماعية كانت أيضا من بين المسببات للقلق اللغوي. و في الأخير كمحاولة لإيجاد حلول لهذه الظاهرة اقترحنا مجموعة من التقنيات لمساعدة الطلبة على التأقلم مع قلقهم ليصبحوا أكثر ثقة عند التكلم في الأقسام اللغوية و بهذا نعزز تعلمهم للمهارة الشفهية في اللغة الانجليزية

# SOME FACTORS OF ANXIETY IN LEARNING SPEAKING SKILL

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## **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

### **General Overview**

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) has been a worthy subject of study among many other affective factors in second language acquisition in the last three decades. Foreign language anxiety, which is peculiar to the foreign language process, can be associated with various sources that arise from learners' self perception, instructors' instructions, linguistic difficulties, socio-cultural factors, and so on. (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Brown, 2000, 2007; Ellis, 1994, 2008; Dornyei, 2005; Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). Recently, the main and most important challenge for ESL/EFL teachers is "to provide students with a learner-centered, low anxiety, and comfortable classroom environment." (Ohata, 147). In an attempt to provide such an environment, the issue of language anxiety (LA) and its negative effects on second language learning and performance seems to assert a challenge to ESL/EFL teachers; furthermore, it can hinder the process of "optimal" teaching and learning. Thus, "our first and foremost important task as EFL/ESL teachers is to have a better understanding of the nature of student anxiety in terms of when, where, how, and why students feel anxious, before addressing effective ways of anxiety reduction." (Spielmann and Radnofsky, 262)

### **Statement of the Problem**

The demand of good communication skills has increased with the worldwide expansion of English language. However, learners of English language often report to suffer from feelings of stress, tension, nervousness, or anxiety while learning to speak English language and claim to have a 'mental block' against learning English. Feelings of anxiety exist among all categories of EFL learners. Even highly EFL learners like teachers feel anxious while learning and particularly speaking English in some situations, both within

and out of the classroom settings. EFL learners always wonder why they cannot speak English well because their continuous efforts in practicing English do not lead to their expected performance.

Being an L2 learner as well as a future teacher of English language, the researcher herself has not only experienced language anxiety but also observed this phenomenon among the students of the University of Biskra. The researcher was interested to know why EFL learners feel anxious while learning and particularly speaking English.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the psycholinguistic factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners in learning and speaking English Language?
- What are the socio-cultural factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners in learning and speaking English language?
- How is language anxiety manifested in the learners?
- Which strategies can be used to successfully cope with language anxiety?

### **Aims of the Study**

The main objective of this research is to identify the main sources that can cause the learners to be anxious during the learning of a foreign language especially when speaking it, and what impact this anxiety has on their performance in that language.

The secondary aim of this study is to facilitate the teaching/learning process through a comprehensible and careful analysis of foreign language anxiety origins and hence, the strategies of its alleviation.

## **Significance of the Study**

Foreign language anxiety is still considered to be a relatively new and developing area within foreign language research. (Piniel, 2006). Literature has not yet found a comprehensible description of the nature of language anxiety, or its possible causes. (Young, 1991, cited in Ohata, 2005). Thus, exploring this area of research, with the addition of some insights from recent findings, will be of great benefit for teachers in the first place because a thorough study of anxiety may help them to find out the suitable method to overcome this problem. Students of Biskra University will benefit too, in addition it is a complicated phenomenon in that it implies a set of unclear concepts whenever we try to go deeper. (Dornyei Z., 2005)

## **Hypothesis**

- Debilitative foreign language anxiety provoking factors stem from three main areas: psychological, psycholinguistic, and socio-cultural.
- If anxiety sources are recognized, remedies can be established for this phenomenon.

## **Methodology**

The research methodology that will be used in this study is a descriptive one. This research will be conducted by means of a mixed method through a questionnaire that will be administered to a sample selected randomly that is composed of sixty first year LMD students of English at Biskra University because “anxious students are common in foreign language classrooms (at least in beginning classrooms on [sic] the university level. (Horwitz et al, 131). An interview will also be conducted with five teachers who will be of great benefit for our research due to their interaction with English students and their observation of learners’ performance particularly teachers of oral expression and educational psychology.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study will be concerned only with foreign language anxiety which is considered to be a relatively independent variable from other general types of anxiety (Ellis, 2008). In addition, this study is concerned with language anxiety on the learners' part not on the teachers' part unless it is associated with the sources of learner anxiety.

## **Definition of Key Concepts**

**English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learners and Teachers:** are those who are learning or teaching English while living in a community where English is not spoken as a first language.

**First or Native Language (L1):** The language a child learns from infancy. Many children learn more than one language from birth and may be said to have more than one 'First' language.

**Second Language (L2):** In this dissertation the term refers to any language other than the first language learned. For this reason, second (L2) or foreign language (FL) will be used with the same meaning.

**Language Acquisition and Language Learning:** 'Acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. 'Learning' is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process, which results in conscious knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules (Krashen, 1985, cited in Tanveer, 2007).

Note: In order to avoid confusion, the term 'learning' will be used in the dissertation, which encompasses 'acquisition' as well.

**Psycholinguistics:** A term that links psychology and linguistics. That is to say it links learners' psychological variables (personality traits, perceptions, beliefs, etc.) and the

language learning and speaking process. The aim of the psycholinguists is to find out about the structures and processes, which underlie a human's ability to speak (Aitchison, 1998, cited in Tanveer, 2007 ).

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

**CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW**

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## Introduction

Proficiency in English for students who are learning a foreign language will determine the opportunities for employment in multinational companies after their graduation. The degree of proficiency in a foreign language signifies not only the mastery of the technical skills of the language, but the soft skills as well. Those soft skills include the ability to communicate in English effectively. Being spoken by more than six hundred million people all over the world as an international language, English language, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, has become a “pre-requisite” for an individual to become a member in the international business and cultural society. (Lee M.L, 2011). In the way to achieve the stated objective, affective variables such as aptitude, personality, sex, motivation, self esteem, learner’s belief and anxiety may impede fulfilling it.

Previous studies on second language acquisition were limited to the teaching of the language itself through the investigation of the issues of language pedagogy such as the grammar translation method, the audio-lingual method, in addition to the development of strategies. As a result, the internal factors particularly the affective variables in learning a foreign language were marginalized; however, recently, “most of researchers posited that in order to have a holistic understanding of the learning process and to gain a better academic achievement, learner’s affective variables need to be taken into consideration.”(Tanveer. M, 2007, p.16).

Anxiety related to foreign or second language learning and communication has long been a central issue for second language researchers. Since the 1970’s, foreign language anxiety has been studied in the “broader” context of individual differences that may be responsible for differences in language learning. (Dornyei, 2005).

We intend to review in this chapter literature on language anxiety from two dimensions: psycholinguistic and socio-cultural; it has been divided into five sections. The first section revises the previous research on language anxiety and establishes the conceptual foundations of this phenomenon in terms of three components: communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety. The second section explores the factors that stem from a learner's own sense of self and from classroom procedures. The third section deals with psycholinguistic factors, that is, the factors that increase anxiety which has an impact on the three stages of learning: input, processing, and output. The fourth section attempts to highlight some socio-cultural factors, concerning age, environment, and gender. The final section suggests a number of strategies to cope with foreign language anxiety.

Anxiety as a psychological construct or a concept related to language learning is ambiguous besides it has been found to be related to many variables. These variables are grouped into two main categories "situational variables" and "learner variables". (Williams, K.F, Melvin, A.R 2008, p.183). Situational variables include; for example, course activities, teacher's behavior and attitudes, and social interaction among learners. (Spielman and Radnofsky, 2001). Learner variables include age, attitudes, beliefs, culture, gender, learning styles, and personality variables among others. (Dewaele, 2002; Gregerson and Horwitz, 2002). Thus, the complexity of foreign language anxiety lies in the interplay between anxiety and the mentioned variables in complex ways that provoke some anxiety situations for many students.

In addition to the various variables stated above, another complexity of foreign language anxiety is that it may affect the stages of the learning process. These three stages are input, processing, and output. An experiment was conducted by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a) in an attempt to prove the effects of foreign language anxiety in the three stages.

The findings of the experiment revealed that anxiety can be induced at each of the stages of the learning process.

Another aspect of foreign language anxiety which is worthy to mention is how learners cope with it. Anxiety seems to be “inherent” in the learning process of new university students of foreign languages; therefore, reducing “language apprehension” should be an integral part of any language teaching program. (Casado, M.A, Deresshiwsky, M.I, 2001). Some of the most frequent techniques of alleviating foreign language anxiety are to provide students with a relaxed classroom environment, and to conduct class activities in groups. However, the most significant element to allay anxiety is the teacher due to his/her direct interaction with students and the authority she/he has in the classroom which provide him with the power to implement the different strategies that help the students to cope with their anxieties.

## **Section I: An Overview of Foreign Language Anxiety**

### **1.1 Definitions of Anxiety**

Before discussing foreign language anxiety, it is useful to have some insights into what anxiety is in general. Etymologically, the word “anxiety” is a noun form of an adjective “anxious”. According to Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary (Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 1993), the word “anxious” derives from a Latin word “angere” “to choke” which means to strangle, distress. The Concise Oxford Dictionary gives four meanings: “state of being anxious-troubled, uneasy in mind; concern about the future; earnest desire (as in anxious to please or to succeed); morbid state of excessive uneasiness” (cited in Crozier, W.R, 1997, p.123). Another definition is given by the Penguin Dictionary of Psychology that is “a vague, unpleasant emotional state with qualities of apprehension, dread, distress and uneasiness.” (ibid, p.124). In the two last definitions, it is clear that anxiety is a kind of an unpleasant emotional state characterized by a particular state of

mind, referred to in both definitions as ‘uneasiness’ which is perhaps the main characteristic which distinguishes anxiety from fear. In this respect, and although anxiety is difficult to define in a single manner ( Takayuki, N 2008) , a clinical psychologist, Stanly.R (2004) presents one of the most complete descriptions of anxiety in which he states that anxiety is “The tense, unsettling anticipation of a threat, a feeling of suspend uneasiness. It is distinguished from fear in that fear persists only while the threatening situation prevails” ( cited in Takayuki.N 2008, p.10).

Anxiety was also explained in terms of the Human Evolution Theory. From this perspective, Darwin thought of anxiety as “an emotional reaction that is aroused when an organism feels physically under threat.” (cited in Wilson, S.J.T 2006, P.41). Referring to Darwin’s (1872) theory of evolution, Twenge (2002) confirms that “emotions are flexible in that they serve specific purposes for the survival of the individual. Anxiety and fear primarily serve to warn of potential danger and trigger physiological and psychological reactions.” (cited in Wilson, S.J.T 2006,P.41). In the same vein, James viewed it “as an instinctive senseless and unpleasant reaction to philogenetically predetermined objects or situations.” (cited in Takayuki.N 2008, p.11). In contrast to the previous view, Mowrer introduced his point of view from a behaviorist perspective arguing that anxiety is “a learned response rather than instinctive one. It is anticipatory in nature and triggers living organisms to prepare for negative events or avoid punishment before they occur and hence functions as a motivator to reinforce behavior.” (ibid, p.51)

In the field of psychology, Freud claimed that anxiety is “an unpleasant affective state or condition similar to dread or nervousness, which results in physiological and behavioral manifestations and anxiety (or dread) itself needs no description; everyone has personally experienced this sensation.” (cited in Cook,T 2006). From the two above definitions of anxiety, the word has come to include every kind of situation which can

evoke any variety of negative affect (be it distress, shame, guilt, surprise, or contempt) excluding anger. For May anxiety is “the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value as a self” (cited in Takayuki,N, 2008,p.11). An advanced definition of anxiety is suggested by Spielberger C.D in 1983 that is” a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system.” (cited in Ellis 1999). A similar definition was provided by Hilgrad and his associates that anxiety is “a state of apprehension, a vague fear that is indirectly associated with an object.” (cited in Sila, A 2010,p.83). One of the widespread definitions of anxiety is that of Scovel in which he states that “It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry.” (cited in Brown 2000,p.151).

Anxiety in learning differs from general anxiety in that it “refers to a secondary drive that motivates an avoidance response that assumes anxiety’s reduction.” (Reber cited in Cook,T 2006). Second language anxiety is a complex psychological concept, difficult to characterize accurately. Nonetheless, researchers have provided helpful definitions that clarify this phenomenon. Young D.J (1990) pointed out that the definition of anxiety has frequently changed with the purpose of the research, and that “comparisons across research are often hindered by a lack of consistency in anxiety research” (cited in Mick Hilleson, N.D, p.249). Another variation in the identification of foreign language anxiety, as noted by Scovel, is that anxiety was not “a simple unitary construct, but a cluster of affective states influenced by factors which are intrinsic and extrinsic to the foreign language learner.” (Bailey. K.M. Nunan.P; 1996, p. 249). To put it simply, anxiety varies in foreign language learners according to their individual characteristics, this means that what makes one learner anxious may not provoke anxiety for another learner.

With their seminal article “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety”, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) provided a definition of anxiety peculiar to language learning,

that is, 'foreign language anxiety' which is "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." (p.128). The uniqueness of language learning lies in the fact that learners are required to perform in a language that they do not fully master. It lies also in the fact that learners are much more criticized and negatively evaluated than in other subjects because of the chances of making mistakes in the language class are much greater. Language anxiety also defined as "the fear of apprehension occurring when a learner is expected to perform in the second or foreign language, or the worry and negative emotional reaction when learning or using a second language" ( MacIntyre& Gardner, 1993, cited in Doubney 2005, p.1). Another definition was suggested by Young "foreign language anxiety as worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language." (cited in Lee 2011). The two last definitions imply that foreign language anxiety would take place only in foreign language learning situations, such as in an EFL or ESL classroom. This implies that anxiety is a kind of "situation-specific anxiety." (Foss and Reitzel, 1988, cited in Lee 2011, p.170; Ellis, 1999).

## **1.2 The Causality Relationship between Anxiety and Foreign Language Learning.**

An issue of causal direction stems from the relationship between anxiety and foreign language proficiency. This causal relationship has brought with it a healthy debate in the literature "as to whether anxiety negatively affects language learning or whether anxiety is a result of linguistic coding deficits." ( MacIntyre, 1995b; Sparks and Ganschow, 1995, cited in Krinis.A 2007, p.3). The stated debate has been referred to by Sparks and Ganschow as "the chicken and egg phenomenon-which came first, the anxiety or the language difficulty? Does language difficulty cause anxiety or does anxiety cause the difficulty? (Krinis.A 2007).

Since the mid 1990's, Sparks and Ganschow and their colleagues have questioned the existence of foreign language anxiety, and their position is referred to as the Linguistic Coding Deficit/Difference Hypothesis (LCDH) through which they claim students' native language difficulties, rather than affective variables, as a main source of foreign/second language learning problems. In particular, the hypothesis introduced "the lack of phonological coding skills, which refers to the ability to sequence, breakdown, and put together the sound of language as the center of language learning difficulties." (Sparks and Ganschow, 1991 cited in Ito, N., 2008, p.32). Furthermore, in their 1993 article, they further explained the concept of LCDH by challenging affective explanations for foreign language learning problems stating that students' affective factors such as anxiety are a result of, but are not the cause of their foreign language difficulties. In conclusion, they supported the idea that the linguistic coding differences hypothesis is the cause of students' language learning difficulties, not language anxiety; therefore, language anxiety was considered a "byproduct" of foreign language problems. (cited in Ito, N. 2008, p.33; MacIntyre, P.D, 2002, p.65).

Later in 1995, Sparks and Ganschow conducted a study that provides more details about the idea and supported the Linguistic Coding Difference Hypothesis. The difference in this article compared to the article written in 1993 lies in the fact that they were no longer claiming native language difficulties as the direct and only cause of students' foreign language difficulties. Instead, they suggested that poor native language skills provoke language anxiety which may influence the process of foreign/second language learning.

In order to test their hypothesis, Ganschow and Sparks (1996) selected a sample of 154 females aged 14-16 in a single- sex private school-first year of a three year foreign language course (either French, German or Spanish). They measured their

phonology/orthography; semantics, verbal memory; foreign language aptitude. They administered a questionnaire in order to measure their levels of anxiety through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale ( Horwitz et al., 1986), thus, the students were divided into high-anxiety; average-anxiety, and low-anxiety. Their findings were summarized in four points. First, the three groups were different with the biggest differences obtained between the high-anxiety and low-anxiety groups (as was predicted). Second, there were differences in first language performance in phonology/orthography, and great difference here with the high anxiety group scoring the lowest. Third, there were differences in second language aptitude, with the high-anxiety group demonstrating the lowest second language aptitude. Fourth, there were very significant differences in final second language grade (the low-anxiety group scoring highest). (Macaro.E 2005, P.108-109). The authors concluded that the findings support the hypothesis that native-language skills may serve as the basis for success in the foreign language classroom and the students' level of anxiety (or motivation) about foreign language learning may be associated with the strength of one's language skills (Sparks & Ganschow, 1996).

Recently, Sparks, Ganschow and Javorsky (2000) promulgated the Linguistic Coding Difference Hypothesis, which claims that foreign language learning success is basically dependent on language aptitude and that foreign language anxiety is a result of the learning difficulties. Moreover, they contend that “students with the highest levels of anxiety about foreign language learning may also have the lowest levels of native language skills, especially in reading and spelling.” (ibid, p.646). This point of view implies that the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale measures students' self-knowledge of their language learning skills rather than their anxiety about language learning. (Sparks and Ganschow, 2007). These two above positions dismiss the research conducted by Horwitz and her associates as “misguided”. (Davies.A, Elder.C 2006, p.540). Not surprisingly,

Horwitz (2000) has reacted strongly to this “dismissal” of her work providing a number of counter arguments to Sparks and Ganschows’ Linguistic Coding Difference Hypothesis. Horwitz points out that first language disability may be the cause of anxiety in some learners, but they are not the source of “all anxiety reactions”. According to Horwitz (2000), “about one third of American college learners have been found consistently to have moderate to severe levels of foreign language anxiety.” (p.257). These findings does not lend support to the LCDH because, first, the number of learners who experience foreign language anxiety is clearly greater than the “incidence” of decoding disabilities in the whole number of learners. (Cassady.J.C 2010, p.154). Second, anxiety studies have been conducted at “prestigious universities” whose students have been selected on the basis of The Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and grade point average entrance requirements. Therefore, those students would be even less likely to have first language disabilities. The third significant evidence that dismiss the role of first language deficits is that Horwitz (1986) did not find a relationship between a “test of public speaking anxiety and foreign language anxiety.” (p.257). To put it simply, people who show first language speaking anxiety were most likely not to show second language anxiety and vice versa. Thus, if foreign language anxiety is based on native language skills, “why do learners experience anxiety in their second language but not their first?” ( Horwitz 2000, p. 257). The fourth argument presented by Horwitz in her article “Even Teachers Get the Blues: Recognizing and Alleviating Language Teachers’ Feelings of Foreign Language Anxiety” (1996) she found that many language teachers experienced language anxiety. This result revealed the incomplete and the failure of LCDH explanation of language learning problems because “It would seem surprising that individuals with linguistic processing disabilities would choose to become language teachers.” (p.257)

Another response to the research of Sparks and Ganschow is presented by MacIntyre (1995) who has postulated that learning a language is not merely studying it, and he argues that “the LCDH is incomplete as an explanation for individual differences in second language learning.” (cited in Elatis.J., 1997,p.404). Moreover, he commented that the LCDH ignores the effect of affective variables such as language anxiety, thus, not acknowledging affective variables as the cause of students’ foreign/second language difficulties may be “a significant omission.” (cited in Cassady.J.C 2010, p.101).

To defend their position, MacIntyre and Gardner explored an “important experimental study investigating the causal relationship between anxiety and academic performance. In their study, they intentionally induced anxiety in language learners by introducing a video camera at various points in a vocabulary learning task. (cited in Dornyei.Z 2005,p.200). Seventy one students of French were randomly selected and divided into four groups; the first three experiencing the “camera condition” at different levels of task completion (input, processing, and output stages), whereas, the fourth group was not exposed to the camera. The results of the experiment showed significant increases in anxiety in the three groups, when the video camera was introduced, and clear “deficit in vocabulary acquisition were observed” (Dornyei, 2005, p.200). This study evidenced that anxiety can be a cause of poor performance, and is not an outcome of performance deficit due to weak cognitive skills. Despite of the strength of counter-arguments to the LCDH that have been offered by MacIntyre and Horwitz, it is inappropriate to neglect it entirely. It is true to a great extent that a considerable number of advanced learners who are obviously without learning disabilities are anxious about language learning, but it is also logical to consider that students with learning disabilities would find foreign language learning context anxiety provoking.

### **1.3. Types of Anxiety**

As pointed by researchers, anxiety is a highly complex and “multifaceted” construct. (Dornyei, 2005, p.198; Nerlicki, 2011, p.64). As a result, there are many types of anxiety. Not all of them are directly related to foreign language learning, but many of them have been mentioned in the literature of foreign language learning. These anxieties have a variety of descriptions and categorizations which overlap to a certain degree. Broadly speaking, a distinction is often made between beneficial/facilitating vs. inhibitory/debilitating anxiety. This division was based on the findings of Scovel (1978) who reviewed the literature on the relation between anxiety and second language achievement and concluded that there is a positive, negative, and no relationships between them. (cited in Gardner, Tremblay, Masgoret,1997). Another study conducted by Gardner in which he proposed that anxiety specific to the language learning context tended to be negatively associated with second language achievement (1985).

A debate aroused in the literature of whether anxiety is helpful or harmful. From this perspective, Horwitz (1990) stated that facilitative anxiety is associated with very simple learning tasks, but not those with a considerable degree of complexity like language learning. (cited in Oxford, 1999). In the same vein, Young (1992) interviewed some language learning experts such as Omaggio.H and Krashen.S about their views on the beneficial aspect of language anxiety. The results of the interview revealed that the jury dismisses the existence of helpful anxiety. (cited in Arnold.J 1999). It should be noted however, that anxiety need not always to be considered as a negative factor because as noted by Wrench, Richmond, and Graham (2009, p.55):

Some pressure to do well, of course, can be good for students; we used to “psyche” ourselves up degree for an exam or presentation in class so we could perform at our highest level. But many students psyche themselves up so far they cannot perform at all, or only at a totally inadequate level.

Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) and Brown (2007) lend support to the stated point of view by arguing that a low level of anxiety is beneficial and it is one of the keys of success, however, high levels of anxiety have detrimental effects in foreign language learning.

After categorizing anxiety according to its effect on learning, it can also be divided according to its nature. From this dimension, the literature on anxiety generally distinguishes between “trait and state anxiety”. First, trait anxiety is defined as “a more permanent predisposition to be anxious.” (Scovel, 1978, cited in Ellis 2008, p.691). From its definition, it is most likely to be a feature of an individual’s personality; therefore, it is both constant over time and appears in a wide range of situations. As argued by MacIntyre that “people with trait anxiety have a tendency to get nervous in various or any situations.” (cited in Tetzener, 2006,p.30). Moreover, trait anxiety individuals also tend to have high levels of state anxiety in performance situations. ( Spielmann, cited in Cook, 2006). Second, state anxiety refers to the subjective feeling of apprehension and tension that are experienced at particular time as a reaction to a specific situation. (Spielberger, cited in Ellis 2008). It is claimed by Ellis (2008) to be a combination of trait and situation-specific anxiety. A third perspective from which anxiety has been investigated in various areas is what has come to be known as a situation-specific approach. (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991a, cited in Toth, 2010). From this approach aroused the situation –specific anxiety which is introduced by Ellis (1994). It is viewed as consisting of the “anxiety which is aroused by a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation.” (Ellis, 2008, p.691). The situation-specific view of anxiety is based on the assumption that certain types of situations are more likely to produce anxiety than others, however, this assumption depends on people’s beliefs of what causes them to be anxious. As pointed by Ellis (2012) and Horwitz (1986) that language anxiety is a form of

the situation specific anxiety. That is, it is neither a trait anxiety, which refers to a person's tendency to be anxious, nor is it state anxiety "although it often manifests itself in the physiological signs of the latter, including: perspiration; sweaty palms; dry mouth, and so on" (Bailey, Daley, & Onwnegluzie, 1999, p.64).

#### **1.4 Conceptual Foundations: Components of Foreign Language Anxiety and Related Causal Factors**

Foreign language anxiety has been found to have a detrimental effect on language learning, thus, the components of language anxiety and how it affects students' learning process, especially their performance when speaking a foreign language, have been the central issue for many researchers and a point of focus of various investigations. (Horwitz et al., 1986; Saito & Samimy, 1996). Horwitz et al. (1986) have asserted that the construct of language anxiety is composed of three related performance activities which are communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. The construct of communication apprehension is crucial to the conceptualization of foreign language anxiety. (McCrosky, 1977 cited in Horwitz et al., 1986). The description of these components will provide us with the basis for the concept of foreign language anxiety, and recognize its potential origins. The first component (communication apprehension) will be more detailed than other components because our focus in this dissertation is on the speaking skill.

##### **1.4.1. Communication apprehension (CA).**

Most of the research in the area of communication apprehension is based on McCroskey's conceptualization of it as "the fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons." ( Richmond & McCroskey, 1998 cited in Wrench, Peck, & Gorhan, 2009, p.56). The question of communication apprehension gains a significant importance among second language researchers, and it has

been described as “one of mental health condition that afflicts L2 acquirers.” ( Xiasyan, 2009, p.163). About one of every five persons which means twenty percent of all college students is communicative apprehensive. Usually, communicative apprehensive people do not exhibit apprehension unless they are engaged in a particular type of communication. Another conceptualization of communication apprehension presented by Casado & Dereshiwsky (2001) which states that second language college students who exhibit communication apprehension have mature thoughts and ideas, but they have immature communication skills. They report that their inability to express themselves or to understand each other leads to apprehension of speaking the foreign language.

In the development of communication apprehension, Daly (1991 cited in Tanveer.M, 2007) presents five explanations which can provide an insight into a clear understanding of the causes of language anxiety for foreign language learners. First, he presents communication apprehension from a ‘genetic disposition’ view contending that “one’s genetic legacy” may be a crucial factor to one’s anxiety (p.12). A clearer explanation was given by McCroskey (1997) is that children seem to be born with certain “predispositions” towards communication apprehension (cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.12). Second, he explains communication apprehension from a behavioural point of view and in terms of reinforcement and punishment associated with the act of communication. He asserts that people, who from early childhood are treated negatively by others in response to their attempts to communicate, conclude that staying quiet is the best solution because it is more rewarded than talking. This can have a pedagogical implication, according to behaviourist learning methodology, that the negative responses of teachers to learners’ errors may reinforce their fear of making mistakes, and consequently fear of future attempts to communicate. Related to the previous cause is “the inconsistent pattern of rewards, punishments, and none response for engaging in the same verbal activity. (ibid,

p.13). Another explanation focused on the adequacy of an individual's early communication skills acquisition. Children who have an early rich experience of talking are more likely to be less apprehensive than those who receive less opportunities of communication. In the last explanation, he argues that the children who have been exposed to appropriate social interactive models of communication are usually less apprehensive than those who have been exposed to inappropriate ones. All of the five above explanations indicate that the development of communication apprehension results from individual's psychological characteristics or environment.

Another definition of communication apprehension was given by Horwitz (1986) who states that it is "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people." (p.127). People who specifically had problems speaking in groups or in public most probably inclined to experience even more troubles when speaking in a foreign language class, where "in addition to feeling less control of the communicative situation, they also may feel that their attempts at oral work are constantly being monitored" (Horwitz et al., 1986). This apprehension is viewed according to the learner's negative self-perceptions stemmed from "the inability to understand others and make himself understood." (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989 cited in Ohata, 2005, p.137).

Chen and Chang (2004) suggested a significant point of view which states that the social aspect of language learning causes the learners to be afraid of not being able to communicate appropriately which becomes a frequent phenomenon in language learning settings. The lack of target language skills makes the students feel isolated because expressing themselves becomes a challenging task in a foreign language.

From the perspective that language is a means of communication, not a goal, MacIntyre, Dornyei, Clement & Noels (1998) suggested that the basic purpose of language learning should be to increase student's level of willing to communicate, the more students

are willing to communicate, the more successful the learning will be. Yashima (2002) noticed the fact that a lower level of anxiety was observed among students with higher level of willingness to communicate.

#### **1.4.2. Test Anxiety**

The second component that constitutes foreign language anxiety is test anxiety which is important for a better understanding of the construct of foreign language anxiety. Generally, the term “test anxiety” from a scientific point of view, refers to “the set of phenomenological, physiological, and behavioural responses that accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation.” (Sieber, O’Neil, & Tobias, 1977, cited in Zeidner,1998, p.18). Test anxious students tend to view evaluative situations, in general, and test situations, in particular, as a threat to their personality. Test anxiety is also explained by Horwitz et al. (1986) as “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure.” (p.127). Students with test anxiety often self-demand more than they actually could do and worry about their performance. Another factor that increases test anxiety and decreases performance is time restrictions. For example, Ohata (2005) conducted a study through which he concluded that learners sometimes worry about how to organize their ideas in a short period of time.

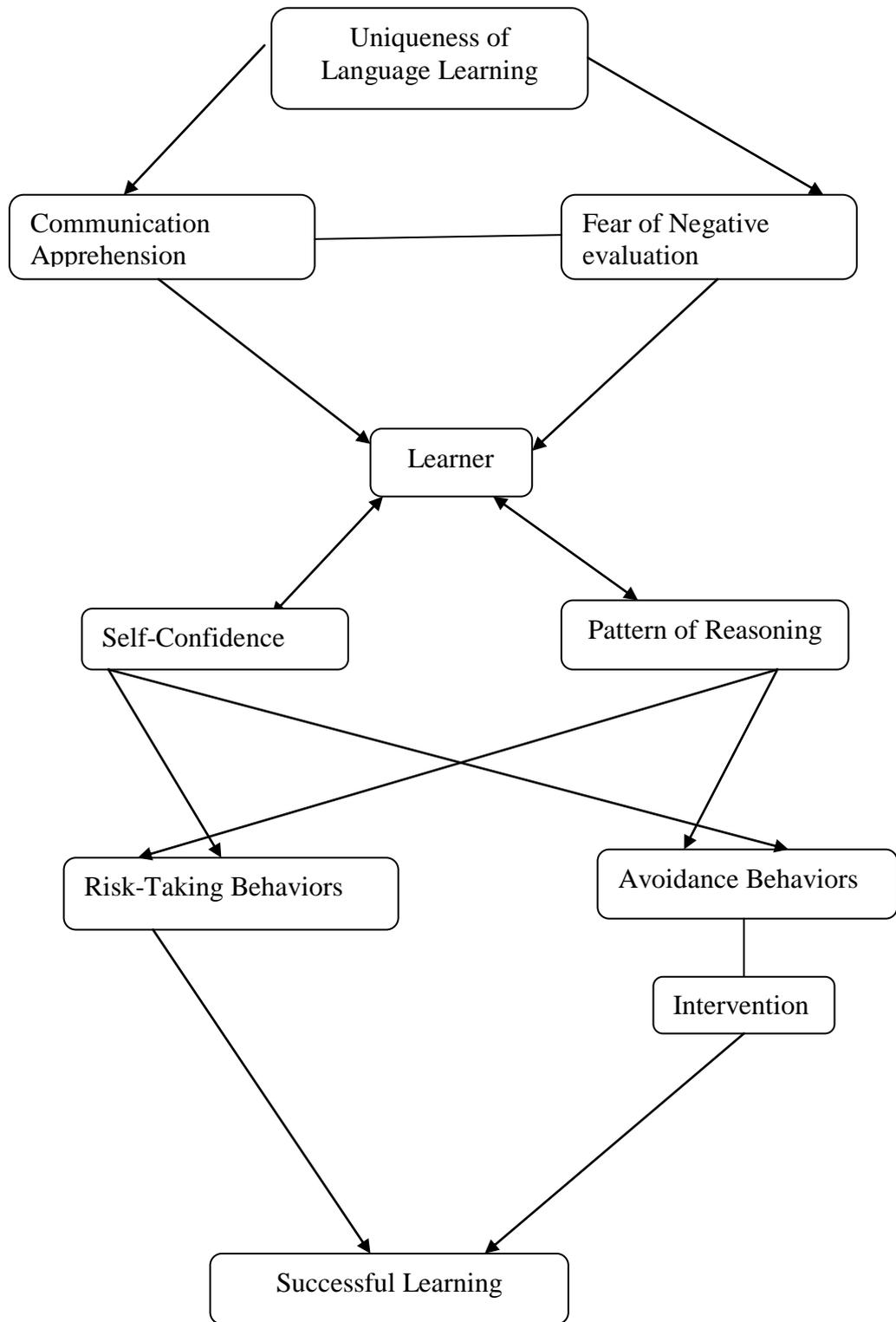
Second/Foreign languages, more than any other academic subject, require “continual evaluation” by the teacher who is the only one who masters the language in the class. (Horwitz, 1986, p.129). A number of researchers suggest that oral testing can be the most anxiety provoking test, since it stimulates both test anxiety and anxiety about oral communication. (Aida, 1994, cited in Nakata, 2006, p.85).

#### **1.4.3 Fear of negative evaluation.**

Fear of negative evaluation is broader than the second component (test anxiety) of foreign language anxiety because it encompasses not only the test taking situations, but any

social, evaluative situation as well such as giving a speech in public, interviews for a job or speaking in second/foreign language class. ( Horwitz et la., 1986, p.127). It is also broader in the sense that the teacher is not the only one who evaluates the students, but the peers also are partially responsible for the evaluation through their perceived reaction. (Shams, 2006, cited in Tanveer.M, 2007, p.14). Fear of negative evaluation, which might occur in any social and evaluative situations, was also defined as “Apprehension about others’ evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively.” (Watson & Friend, 1969, cited in Toth, 2008, p.58). Like communicative apprehensive individuals, people who experience fear of negative evaluation seldom imitated classroom conversation and interact minimally. (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Language students who experience this anxiety “tend to sit passively in the classroom, withdraw from activities that could increase their language skills, and may even avoid class entirely.” (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002, pp.562-563). Students, who experience fear of negative evaluation, have negative attitudes towards language errors, and they consider them as a threat to their image, and a source for negative evaluation either from the teacher or their peers. Consequently, they are silent and do not participate in language activities. (Ely, 1986, cited in Tsiphkides.I, 2009).

Although communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation provide a useful conceptualization for a description of foreign language anxiety as was stated by Horwitz et al. (1986, pp.127-128),and illustrated in the following diagram how it is more than just the combination of these three components “We conceive foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process.” What makes language learning a distinct and unique process is its interaction with the concept of ‘self’.



**Figure1: Conceptual Framework by Noriko Ito (2008).**

## **Section II: Factors Associated with Learner's own Sense of 'Self' and Classroom Procedures**

The previous section has established an overview of the nature of language anxiety, its types, relationship with achievement and, the conceptual basis of language anxiety with relation to its three components. All of the three components are strongly linked with learners' sense of 'self' because it is learners' 'self' which is at risk of being negatively evaluated in any test situation or setting which requires communication in front of others. This threat to one's sense of 'self' usually occurs in a foreign language classroom. This section highlights literature on language anxiety associated with learners' sense of 'self' and language classroom environment and procedures.

### **2.3.1 Self Perceptions.**

All of us suffer from anxiety at least at certain points in our life. Most anxiety is caused by "negative self –thoughts. According to Lucinda Basset of the Midwest Center for Stress and Anxiety, "An average person has around 300 negative self- thoughts a day- that's one every 4.5 minutes. These negative thoughts can create an anxious state." (Wrench et al., 2009, p.55). In an attempt to establish a relationship between FLA and self-perceptions, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (1999) explored a number of demographic and self-perception factors to prove it. Seven variables, including three self-perception variables, accounted for forty percent of the total variance in foreign language anxiety. The self perception factors were students' expectation of their overall achievement in foreign language courses, perceived self-worth, and perceived scholastic competence.

The language classroom setting, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), naturally provokes anxiety in some learners, as it often includes continual evaluation from others as well as from the learner him/herself. Such an environment creates chances of being

evaluated which might serve as “a reminder of the learner’s current L2 competence in comparison to others’ or idealized images of him/herself as a successful language learner.” (Eharman, 1996, cited in MacIntyre et al., 1997, p.548). Simply stated, when communicating in a language which they do not fully master, learners feel that they are not totally representing their personality and their intelligence. As Horwitz et al. (1986) clearly note “any performance in the L2 is likely to challenge an individual self-concept as a competent communicator and lead to reticence, self consciousness, fear, or even panic.” (p.128). Self concept is defined by Laine (1987) as “the totality values having reference to himself as object.” (cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.20). This self concept, according to Horwitz et al., is the main factor differentiating language anxiety from other forms of academic anxieties (ibid, p.128). They pointed out that the difference between learners’ true self and the ‘actual’ and limited self they are able to communicate through their imperfect L2 skills at any given moment in the foreign language distinguishes FLA from other academic anxieties such as those associated with mathematics or science.

As stated by Brown (2007), anxiety is “intricately intertwined with self-esteem”(p. 161). In this respect, Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (2000) called the cycle of high anxiety, low self esteem, and low achievement a “self-fulfilling prophecy of foreign language anxiety.” (Cited in Cassady, 2010, p. 26). Krashen (1985) also suggests that anxiety can arise according to one’s degree of self-esteem. For example, people with low self-esteem may worry about what their peers or friends think, in fear of their negative responses or evaluation. (cited in Dewaele, 2005). According to Horwitz et al., people who have high levels of self-esteem are less likely to be anxious than are those with low self-esteem. In general psychology, Greenbey et al. (1992) posited a Terror Management Theory (TMT) to the effect that individuals with high self-esteem are less likely to be

anxious and that threats to self-esteem cause anxiety. (cited in Chan,Chin, & Suthiwan, 2011, p.112).

Foreign language anxiety was found to be related to the personality trait of perfectionism. This point of view was evidenced by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) who examined the relationship between FLA and perfectionism in pre-service English teachers in Chile. They concluded that anxious students share many similar characteristics with perfectionists and these similarities may make the language learning process unpleasant, especially when learners become worried over the opinions of others, and they have a higher level of concern over errors. The construct of language anxiety is closely related to attitudes and motivation. For example, the instrument used in Gardner's socio-educational modal (the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery) "includes a classroom anxiety scale that measures students' embarrassment or anxiety level within the paradigm of attitudes and motivation." (Zheng, 2008, p.3).

### **2.3.2 Learners' Beliefs about Language Learning.**

Because of the fact that learning a language poses a threat to learners' self-image, learners react to this by generating some beliefs peculiar to language learning and its use. The importance of learner beliefs lies in the fact that they underlie behavior to a large extent (Horwitz, 1988, cited in Chen & Thompson, 2009, p.91). Bandura (1986) also explained this point in terms of the theory of human behavior by stating that individuals possess a system of self-beliefs that enables them to have control over their thoughts, feelings, and actions. According to this theory "What people think, believe, and feel affects how they behave." (cited in Mills, Herson, and Pajares, 2006, p.277). Literature about anxiety suggests that certain beliefs about language learning can play a role in creating feelings of tension and frustration to the students in the class. ( Horwitz et al., p.127). For instance, the two following statements are such reported beliefs; "I just know I have some

kind of disability. I can't learn a foreign language no matter how hard I try" (ibid, p.123). "I never learned the preposition; I cannot learn this bloody language. My English appear is not good enough; I can't express very well." ( Tanveer,2007,p.1). Horwitz (1989) stated the belief that the target language is very difficult, and the belief that there is such a thing as language aptitude and that one lacks it. (cited in Cook, 2006, p.27).

The above beliefs have been found to cast a considerable effect on foreign language performance. Such beliefs have been referred to by researchers as 'erroneous' and 'irrational' to indicate certain wide spread "beliefs about language learning which can be a source of anxiety." ( Gynan, 1989,cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p.220). Horwitz (1988, cited in Ohata, 2005, p.138) proposed various kinds of learner beliefs ranged from the learner's unrealistic and erroneous conceptions about language learning. These beliefs are summarized in four points. First, some learners give great importance to the accuracy of their speech in comparison to native-like accent. Second, some view that two years is enough to master a foreign language. Third, some hold that learning a language is a matter of translating from English or any foreign language. Fourth, some others believe that language learning is a gift peculiar to certain individuals not all of us. Gynan (1989, cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p. 221) stated that pronunciation is the most important aspect of language learning.

In an attempt to establish a relationship between beliefs about language learning and foreign language anxiety, Banya & Chen (1997) correlated the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory with the FLCAS and found that Taiwanese students with positive beliefs were less anxious. (Cited in Cook, 2006, p.28). Another aspect which is important to language anxiety is students' beliefs about error correction. In this line, research on language anxiety indicates that while most students are apprehensive about making errors in language class, few students are afraid of correction (Horwitz et al.). This

point is further explained by Cascian and Rapallino (1991) who found that students believed that error correction in general was important for language learning; however, despite the agreement of most participants on receiving written correction, they were divided on what type of oral correction was best. (Cited in Chen & Thompson, 2009, p.93). In a similar study, Bang (1999, cited in *ibid*) found that most students acknowledged the necessity of oral correction, but they disagreed on when and how it should be done. Therefore, although students may believe that error correction is important for language learning, there is no unified opinion on how this error correction should be implemented.

The above unrealistic perceptions or beliefs on language learning and achievement can lead to feelings of tension, nervousness, and frustration towards students' own performance in foreign language. As noted by Horwitz (1989) "the beliefs language students bring to the classroom contribute to anxiety reactions, negative self-concepts as language learners and negative expectations for language learning." (cited in Cook, 2006, p.26). In the same vein, in his review of literature on language anxiety, Ohata (2005, p.138) explained that unrealistic beliefs can lead to anxiety in students, especially when the beliefs and reality clash. He suggests that the learners begin learning with the belief that pronunciation is the single most important aspect of L2 learning; they will naturally feel frustrated to find the reality of their "imperfect speech" even after practising for a long time. These beliefs are most likely to stem from learners' perfectionist nature. The perfectionist learners like to speak fluently, with no grammar or pronunciation errors, and with the same easiness as native speaker, these ideal images and standards induce an ideal situation for the development of language anxiety. (Frodt, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990, cited in Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002, p.564).

### **2.3.3 Instructors Beliefs about Language Teaching**

As learners' beliefs about language learning, some instructors' beliefs about language teaching can also be a source of anxiety for English foreign language learners. Brandl (1987) argued that instructors' belief that their primary role is to correct rather than to facilitate students' mistakes creates foreign language anxiety in students. (Cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p.220). In addition, most of instructors believe that to be serious and strict is necessary for motivating students and that the instructor should keep a distance. The same observation was made by Young (1991) that some teachers believed that their role is to "drill students and constantly correct their errors." (Cited in Cook, 2006, p.27). The researchers also reported that students consider error correction as a necessary feature in language learning process, but they are anxious about making errors. (Horwitz, 1986; Young 1990, cited in Tanveer, 2007).

Gregersen (2002) emphasized the importance of the effect of teacher's behaviours and beliefs on anxious learners. Furthermore, Jurkowitz (2008) asserts that students feel more anxious with instructors who perceive their role as 'authoritative' rather than 'facilitative'; who points to students at random; and who corrects mistakes in a way that embarrasses them in front of their peers. Xiao (2000) indicated that Chinese students feel intimidated in classrooms due to the authoritative attitude of their teachers and their lack of personal involvement with students. (cited in Jurkowitz, 2008). For example, one Chinese speaking student revealed in the interview that she is currently in the teacher's class who is very strict and not supportive. She expressed her feelings of stress and anger by saying "I will never forget the day that he called on me in front of everybody to send me to a counselor. He could have just called me privately instead of humiliating me in class." (Kojima, 2007, p.96). Other beliefs suggested by Placios (1998, cited in Tallon, 2003) which are the absence of teacher's support, unsympathetic personalities, lack of time for

personal attention, favoritism, and the sense that the class does not provide students with the tools necessary to match up with the teachers' expectations. These beliefs, as hypothesized by Kern (1995, cited in Cook, 2006, p.27), if they mismatch with students' beliefs, they can cause language anxiety. Therefore, recognizing and being aware of these beliefs by both the learners and teachers is crucial for effective reduction of language anxiety in learners.

#### **2.3.4 Classroom Procedures**

Just like learners' and teachers' beliefs, different activities in the classroom, especially those that demand students to present orally and speak in front of the whole class, have been found to be the most anxiety provoking. For example, Koch and Terrell (1991, cited in Arnold, 1999, p.65) found that more than half of their subjects in their Natural Approach classes revealed that oral skits and oral presentations in front of the class are the most anxiety provoking activities. They also found that students become more anxious when they are called upon to respond individually, rather than when they are given choice to respond voluntarily. Moreover, students were found to prefer speaking the foreign language in pairs or in small groups. Similarly, Young (1991, cited in Ohata, 2005, p.139) found that more than sixty eight percent of her subjects reported feeling more comfortable when they were not obliged to speak in front of the class. This point was well elaborated by Horwitz et al. in these statements, "Sometimes when I speak English in class, I am so afraid I feel like hiding behind my chair. When I am in my Spanish class I just freeze! I can't think of anything when my teacher calls on me. My mind goes blank." (p.123).

Error correction also turned out to play an important role in creating anxiety as asserted by Horwitz et al. (1986) that "harsh error correction causes anxiety" (p.127). Although many students believe in the necessity of error correction, the manner of doing it

is often cited as a cause of anxiety. Those studies investigated the teacher-student interactions report that students are more concerned about how (this means when, what, where, or how often and so on) their mistakes are corrected. (Koch & Terrell, 1991; Horwitz, 1988, cited in Ohata, 2005, p.138).

The stated classroom procedures suggest that any measure to treat language anxiety should consider learning environments because a number of researchers found that these environments play a crucial role in creating anxiety. For example, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986, cited in Cook, 2006, p.28) induced anxiety in an experiment by creating a “cold emotional environment” with a rolling video camera present. This was compared with a “warm emotional environment” without one. They concluded that the students in the supportive environment were characterized by less interpretive language. Thus, communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches are often recommended by the researchers to provide such an unthreatening environment where students’ talk is higher than the teacher’s one. This is deemed to be essential because “the rapport [the student] feels with the teacher as well as with...classmates may be crucial in determining the success or failure of the venture [practice in communication]” (Svignon, 1972, cited in Samimy, 1994, p.30). This spots the light on interpersonal relations or communication which plays an important role in the arousal of anxiety.

#### **2.4 Section III: The Three Stages of Language Learning**

The previous sections have reviewed the findings of the past research on LA and its three general related causes which form its conceptual foundations, and some causal factors concerning the learner’s own sense of ‘self’ and ‘classroom procedures’. This section highlights the psycholinguistic sources of LA that occurs in all the three stages of language learning input, processing, and output.

It is evident that communication in foreign language requires foreign language learning. ( MacIntyre & Baker, 2003, p.67). However, the sophistications or difficulties included in the process of learning a foreign language may also cause language anxiety for EFL learners. From a purely linguistic perspective, “students’ anxiety about FL learning is likely to be a consequence of their language learning difficulties.” (Sparks, Ganschow, & Javorsky, 2000, p. 251). Chastain (1988) asserted that the appropriate use of linguistic knowledge is a requirement for creating a meaningful oral message for the intended audience. (cited in Arnold, 2003, p.1). While conveying oral messages, the non-mastery of linguistic knowledge provides possibilities of making mistakes, which leads to negative evaluation, which is one of the main conceptual foundations of foreign language anxiety.

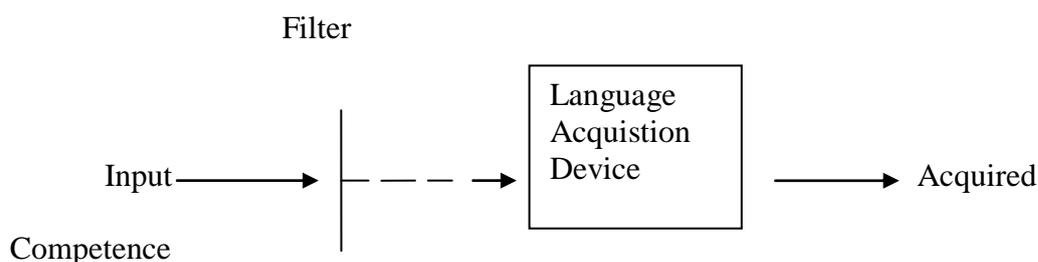
Language anxiety has been hypothesized to affect specific cognitive processes involved in language learning. In this line, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a) proposed a three-stage mode of foreign language anxiety drawing on a model suggested by Tobias (1979, cited in Toth, 2006, p.26). This model suggests that FLA may affect one or more stages of the learning process. The description of language learning stages in relation to language anxiety will clarify the reasons behind the FL learners’ mistakes and the sources of linguistic problems they encounter in learning and using the target language. This allows us to understand FLA in classrooms while communicating in the target language.

#### **2.4.1 Input**

Input is the stage of language learning in which the learner is presented with new information for the first time. It triggers ‘Language Acquisition Device’ (LAD), “an innate language specific module in the brain” (Chomsky, cited in Lightbown and Spada, 2006, p. 38), which is responsible for the further process of language learning. Foreign language students can experience anxiety at the input stage (input anxiety) when they encounter new information in the foreign language such as a new word or phrase in the target language.

Input anxiety is similar to receiver apprehension which is defined by Wheelless (1977, cited in Wrench et al., 2009, p.59) as “The degree to which individuals are fearful about misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or being unable to adjust psychologically to messages.”

The input is essential for language learning as asserted by Krashen (1985, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.20) in his ‘input hypothesis’ that “ speech cannot be taught directly but emerges on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input.” The incomprehensibility on the part of learners stems from the ‘affective filter’ which prevents them from using the entire comprehensible input.” Lightbown and Spada (2006), in explaining the relationship between affective filter and language achievement, stated that for a successful language acquisition, a learner’s affective filter needs to be lower because a high one leads a nervous or bored learner to ‘filter out’ input which makes it inappropriate for acquisition. (p.37). This explanation is illustrated by the following diagram:



**Figure 2: Operation of the Affective Filter.**

(Source: from Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition by S. Krashen, 1982.)

Furthermore, Tobias (1977, cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000, p.475) pointed out that the effectiveness of input may be reduced by ‘affective filter’ because it limits the anxious students’ capacity to pay full attention to what their teachers say and minimizes their

ability to represent input internally. In a study conducted by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994b), they concluded that learners' with high level of input anxiety often ask their teachers to repeat sentences more frequently in comparison to their low anxious counterparts. (Cited in 2000, p.475). Input anxiety is usually a source of misunderstandings between interlocutors which may lead to a breakdown of communication and an increased level of anxiety.

#### **2.4.2 Processing**

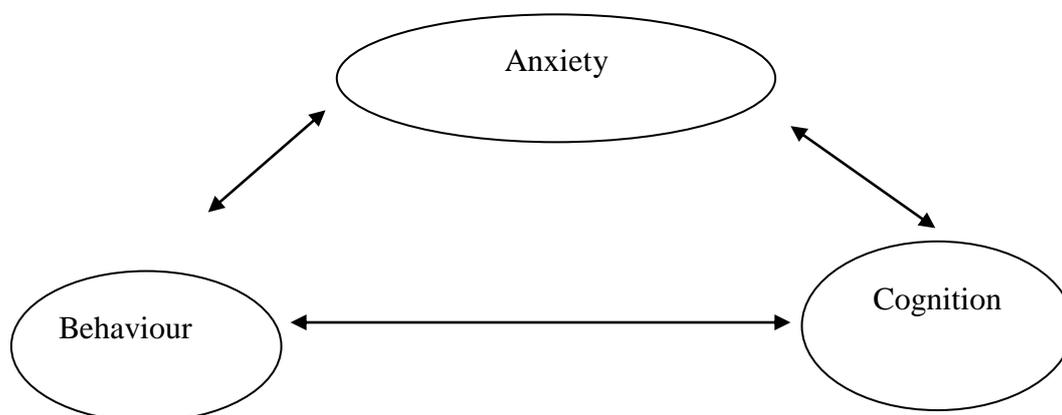
Anxiety at the processing stage, called processing anxiety, is defined by Onwuegbuzie et al., (2000) as the “apprehension students experience when performing cognitive operations on new information.” (p.476). These cognitive operations have been explored in the ‘Information Processing Model’ by the cognitivits like Segalowitz (2003, cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.39) in terms of how they are performed in human brain, and have explained how the learners cannot process and use everything they know about a language at a given time.

Psychologists believe that the production of any linguistic rule needs processing information and paying attention on the learners' part by using cognitive sources. However, they propose that there is a limit to the amount of information a learner can pay attention to. (Lightbown & Spada, 2006).

The most demanding language skill is the speaking one, particularly in the foreign language because it requires a number of mental activities at one time like “choosing words, pronouncing them, and stringing them together with the appropriate grammatical markers and so on” (ibid). The performance of these operations while communicating needs “complex and non-spontaneous mental operations.” and failure to do so may “lead to reticence, self consciousness, fear, or even panic.” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.128). Similarly, concerning the listening skill, Chen (2005) stated that students encounter difficulties in

recognizing and linking the pronunciation of the words they hear due to the slow mental processing abilities of some students as stated by one of his subjects “The pronunciation is familiar to me but I forgot what the word is.” (p.10).

Where processing mental capacity may cause anxiety, conversely, as suggested by Tobias (1986), anxiety may restrict cognitive processing on tasks that are more difficult, and both together may cause impaired performance or altered behavior.( cited in MacIntyre & Gardner,1995).Thus, researchers have found a recursive or cyclical relationship among anxiety, cognition, and behavior. ( Leary, 1990; Levitt, 1980 cited in MacIntyre, 1995, p.92).



**Figure: 3 Recursive relations among anxiety, cognition and behavior**

As it is shown in figure two, anxiety, behaviour and cognition are mutually inter-related. MacIntyre (1995) demonstrates this relationship in the following example:

For example, a demand to answer a question in a second language class may lead a student to become anxious; anxiety leads to worry and rumination. Cognition performance is diminished because of the divided attention and therefore performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self deprecating cognition which further impairs performance, and so on (p.92).

The Cognitive Processing Model can also explain another essential source of LA for the difficulty EFL learners feel in remembering and retrieving vocabulary items while communicating in the foreign language. In this respect, Toth (2006) reported that the most frequently cited problem interviewees assigned to anxiety concerned the retrieval of

vocabulary items from the “mental lexicon”, that is to say, finding the words students needed. One of the subjects commented; “when I’m in such an anxious state, words simply didn’t come. Actually, I think they don’t come to mind because I’m afraid they won’t.” (p.26). What is crucial as suggested by Toth (2006) about these ambiguous forgetting of words is that the required vocabulary items were either incompletely, or incorrectly retrieved from long term memory, which reveals that anxiety may have interfered at some point with the procedures for accessing them. This lends support to Tobias’ (1977) claim that “processing anxiety can impede learning by reducing the efficiency with which memory processes are used to solve problems.” (cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000, p.475).

### **2.4.3 Output**

Anxiety which is related to communicating in the foreign language is more likely to occur at the output stage, which depends entirely upon the successful completion of the stages: input, and processing. Anxiety at the output stage may interfere with the retrieval of previously learned material and might impede the students’ ability to produce the foreign language. (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Tobias (1977) suggests that output anxiety involves interference, which is appeared after the completion of the processing stage but before its reproduction as output (cited in Onwuegbuzie, 2000). As reported by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994a), it is at this stage that language learners are required to show their ability in using the language. Consequently, MacIntyre and Gardner (1994b) asserted, “high level of anxiety at this stage might hinder students’ ability to speak... in the target language” (cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000, p.475).

There is no clear division between the three stages of anxiety because they have been found to be somewhat interdependent; each stage depends on the successful

completion of the previous one, which provides a more comprehensible definition of the language learning process. The definition is as follows:

Language learning is a cognitive ability that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students. Anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it. For example, when responding to a question in a class, the anxious student is focused on answering the teacher's question and evaluating the social implications of the answer while giving it. (MacIntyre, 1995, p.96).

In brief, faulty input, or “acquisition of deviant linguistic forms”, as Krashen (1985, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p. 23 ) believes and “ slow and non-spontaneous mental processes.” (Horwitz 2001, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.23) can clarify the problems included in the process of foreign learning. This further explains the sources of anxiety experienced by the EFL learners at the output stage, especially in case of communicating in the target language. The description of the output stage suggests various implications for language teachers who demand quick feedback from learners or expect them to speak fluently and the slow mental process results in apprehension and reticence in the learner.

## **2.5. Section IV: Socio-cultural Factors**

Social and communicative aspects of language learning can create language anxiety, thus it can be considered as one of the social anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991b, cited in MacIntyre, 1995, p.91). The previous section reviewed the difficulties in learning a foreign language as the potential sources of LA at the three stages of language learning within the classroom setting. However, language anxiety may also be an outcome of social and communicative aspects of language learning. This section reviews the literature on LA from socio-cultural perspective of language learning and its use.

### **2.5.1. Social Environment for Foreign Language Learning**

Two types of social environments are provided while learning a second or foreign language; one where the target language is not used as a native language (L1) in the

community, and the other where it is used as L1. The first type of environment supplies only limited and sometimes faulty input to FL learners. As Krashen (1985, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.24) states, for such learners “the only input is teachers’ or classmates’ talk- both do not speak L2 well.” Learners in such environments are exposed to language only in the classroom where they have insufficient time to practice the language. The limited exposure to the target language and the lack of opportunities to practice speaking in such environments do not allow FL learners’ communicative abilities to entirely develop and result into apprehension and stress for them when they encounter a communicative situation both in and out of the class.

Prior history of visiting foreign countries has also been found to be a source of FLA variance (Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999). Some researchers claim that students who have visited the country whose language they are studying will suffer from lower levels of language anxiety, in the same line with Schumann’s (1977, cited in Wilson, 2006, p.142) belief that “social distance” between students learning a second language and members of that target language group would be reduced by “lengthy residence”.

In contrast, the second type of environment provides learners with greater opportunities to be exposed to the target language. However, albeit in this case, some researchers suggest that learners’ use of ‘cognitive skills’ and ‘metalinguistic awareness’ (world and social knowledge) may interfere with language learning and they may not be able to achieve native-like proficiency as a child can achieve (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.30). Krashen explains this child-adult difference in the achievement success in terms of the level of ‘affective filter’. He believes that ‘affective filter’ may exist for the child foreign language acquirer, but it is seldom high enough to prevent L1-like levels of attainment and for adults, it is rarely low to allow L1-like attainment.

### **2.5.2. Errors in Social Setting**

It is obvious that errors are an inherent part of language learning; errors can be a source of anxiety of some individuals because they focus on how to make positive social impression when speaking a new language (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, cited in Horwitz & Gregersen, 2002, p.562). Errors in social settings are mostly neglected, especially if they do not interfere with meaning because interrupting people's conversations is deemed to be impolite. Interlocutors only react to an error if they cannot detect the speaker's meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p.32). The classroom environment is the only setting where error correction occurs frequently; this leads many learners to frustration and embarrassment by making them aware of their deficiencies.

### **2.5.3. Social Status, Power Relations and a Sense of Identity**

From a socio-cultural point of view, status is crucial in people's interaction with one another in social relationships. In any social context, there exists a status relationship between interlocutors that bring with it an impact on language and language use, and this is believed to be an important aspect of social interaction. For example, "what can be said, the ways it can be said, and possibly, what language to use, and even how much must be said" (Carrier, 1999, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.25). Carrier, considering the role of status on L2 listening comprehension, asserts that the listener has to consider the status relationship as part of the social context in order to determine the appropriateness of verbal reaction in response to the spoken messages (ibid).

Sociolinguists agree on the fact that social relationships can have a deep impact on conversational interaction. Wolfson (1989, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.24), in her Theory of Social Interaction, posits that inequality status or social distance "disfavor attempts and negotiation." In the same line, the social rank theory postulates that emotions and moods are highly influenced by the perceptions of one's social status/rank; that is the degree to which one feels inferior to others. A common result of such perceptions is "submissive

behavior”. It is suggested that “shame, social anxiety, and depression are all related to defensive submissive strategies when individuals find themselves placed in unwanted low status/rank positions”(Gilbert, 2000, p.174). Similarly, studies of classroom interaction on the pattern of social relationship found that the social relationship between teachers and students gives them an unequal status relationship as interlocutors which can impede “successful second language comprehension, production, and ultimately acquisition” (Pica, 1987, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.26). A sense of power, social distance, and self -identity exists in interaction between L1 and L2/FL speakers, as argued by Pierce; “I feel uncomfortable using English in the group of people whose English language is their mother tongue because they speak fluently without any problems and I feel inferior” (1995, p. 21).

In such an interaction, FL speakers may feel anxious due to the fear of social embarrassment and a threat to their social identity. Language, from this perspective, seems essential because it is used to convey this identity to other people. Especially when speaking a foreign language “our self image becomes more vulnerable when our expression is reduced to infantilized levels, which inevitably leads to anxiety” (Arnold, 2000, p.3). FL speakers’ fear of losing self-identity and preserving positive self-image is worsened when their attitudes towards the target language community and culture are hostile (Dewaele, 2002, p.26).

#### **2.5.4. Age**

Some researchers have explored the debate on whether a learner’s age might have anything to do with his/her anxiety when learning a foreign language. In this respect, Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999), who investigated the relationship between learner variables and language anxiety, found that in their two hundred and ten participants, whose ages ranged from eighteen to seventy-one, there was a positive and statistically significant correlation

between anxiety and age. In the multiple regression analysis, age contributed to four percent of the prediction of foreign language anxiety (ibid). This would indicate that in that study, the older the student, the higher his/her language anxiety was likely to be.

#### **2.5.5. Gender**

Some language anxiety studies have investigated possible differences between female and male participants as regards anxiety levels. In this line, Gobel and Matsuda (2003, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.29) asserted that gender-related anxiety research has yielded conflicting results. Spielberger (1983, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.29) in her study on state anxiety found, “females are more emotionally stable than males in their reactions to highly stressful and relaxing circumstances”. Similarly, in Kitano’s study (2001, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.30) of Japanese college students, male students have been found to feel more anxious when they perceived their spoken Japanese less competent than that of others; whereas, such feeling was not observed among female students.

On the contrary, Cheng (2002), who investigated English writing anxiety in Taiwanese learners, found that females were significantly more anxious than males. In another research (Aida, 1994, cited in Wilson, 2006, p.130); however, no statistically significant correlations between LA in learning Japanese and gender were noticed. Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999), who also investigated possible relationships between anxiety and gender with their participants, found no statistically significant correlations. Similarly, results of a Belgican study of university students (Dewaele, 2002), indicated that gender did not correlates significantly with communicative anxiety in either French or English languages.

Elkhafifi (2005) found that females and males exhibited different levels of anxiety depending on the kind of anxiety experienced. Female students presented significantly

higher levels of general Arabic language anxiety than males, but no statistically significant differences were seen between sexes in Arabic listening anxiety.

## **2.6 Section V: Manifestation of Language Anxiety and its Effective Reduction**

The previous sections have reviewed foreign language anxiety and its sources from different aspects namely psychological, linguistic, and socio-cultural. This section highlights literature on some anxiety manifestations and its effective alleviation strategies which are crucial for this study.

### **2.6.1 Manifestations**

Several studies on FLA have investigated its symptoms and manifestations. Their findings reported that anxiety negative outcomes are manifested in a form of changed behavior.

Physiological symptoms of FLA are numerous like learners' sweaty palms, nervous stomachs, accelerated heartbeat and pulse rates (Rardin cited in Tanveer, 2007; Saito.Y& Samimy K.K, 1996; Horwitz et al., 1986). Later, in her study of second language anxiety, Von Worde (2003) postulates that other physical symptoms were reported by her students included "headaches, tears, foot tapping, and desk drumming." (p.45). She further adds that the students stated that they knew about their nervousness before coming to class; therefore, their classroom performance was affected. Others mentioned more internalized manifestations, for instance, losing patience, becoming angry, and so on.

Another significant study by Gregersen (2005) on non verbal behavior of anxious and non-anxious language learners found that "anxious foreign language learners tended to maintain more tense facial muscles, limiting the movement of the brow...had more limited eye contact with the teacher, sometimes even closing their eyes completely...sat upright in their chairs...stroke the hair, or play with a pen." (p.393).

From a psycholinguistic perspective, FLA may manifest itself as “distortion of sounds, inability to reproduce the intonation and rhythm of the language, ‘freezing up’ when called on to perform, and forgetting words or phrases just learned or simply refusing to speak and remaining silent.” (Young 1991, cited in Saito & Samimy, 1996, p.240). Other manifestations of FLA in terms of behavior include avoidance behaviours by missing class, and they also have unrealistic high performance standards (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). Concerning classroom behaviours, anxious learners freeze up in role-play activities; participate less than their counterparts (Horwitz et al., *ibid*).

### **2.6.2 Alleviation of Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign language classroom anxiety is an educational phenomenon which cannot be prevented or avoided, thus the success of foreign language learning to a large extent depends both on the teacher’s ability to ally the debilitating effects of classroom anxiety and the learners’ ability to cope with their anxiety. As a result, a large body of research has suggested a variety of strategies to cope with language anxiety in classroom which can provide further explanation of how to deal with it in social contexts.

Some of the foreign language anxiety reduction strategies cited in the literature are shifting the student’ negative self-thoughts by focusing on positive experiences (MacIntyre& Gardner, 1991, cited in Gregersen & Gardner, 2005, p.388). In this respect, Pappamihel N.E (2002) suggested helping students to evaluate potentially threatening situations as a different “light can circumvent these negative appraisals” (p.347). Also by increasing feelings of self-efficacy, FL students can trust their abilities to deal with negative results. As opposed to harsh error correction, as labeled by Horwitz (1986), using affective error correction techniques is another effective method of anxiety alleviation. (Gregersen, 2003, cited in 2005, p.389).

In an attempt to find a more comprehensible ways of coping with anxiety, Foss and Reitzel (1979) suggest verbalization of any fears as a strategy to cope with language anxiety (cited in Worde, 2003). In this line, Young (1990, cit in Tanveer, 2007) also provides some suggestions such as using an anxiety graph to pinpoint the highest level of anxiety of a given interaction; for anxiety is stemming from learner's self perceptions, providing supplemental instruction or a support group. For anxieties arising from classroom procedures, it is beneficial to use pair and small group work; manipulate language games; and to have role playing with preparatory activities to keep class rapport. Moreover, he found that the students were more comfortable with their instructors' smooth error correction than the harsh one, and with friendly teachers who had a good sense of humor. Consequently, equal status relationship between teachers and students is significant to anxiety alleviation.

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**METHODOLOGY**

**CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY**

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## **Chapter Two**

### **Methodology**

#### **2.1. Method**

Since our research problem is the status of the foreign language anxiety as a debilitating factor influencing the speaking skill and the reasons underlying this phenomenon. Therefore, we think the descriptive method is the most appropriate procedure to investigate it as “many research problems in education lend themselves well to descriptive methods” (Turney R.L, Robb G.P, 1971, p.52).

In this study, a quantitative-qualitative approach has been followed since a different approach to studying the construct of language anxiety is needed in order to gain deeper insights into the issue. One such approach is mixed method designs because they “arguably contribute to a better understanding of the various phenomena under investigations” (Angouri J., 2010, p.46). Earlier, Green et al. reviewed studies adapted a mixed methods approach that postulates the combination of two paradigms ( quantitative/qualitative) which is of great benefit for constructing “comprehension accounts” and providing answers to a questions wide range of research (1989, cited in Litosseliti, 2010,p.30). Moreover, Young argued that it is more appropriate to investigate language anxiety from a variety of perspectives or approaches (cited in Ohata, 2005, p.139). Therefore, this approach allows us to investigate this phenomenon more adequately and comprehensibly.

As stated above, the mixed method approach we have used combines the quantitative and qualitative procedures. The quantitative study was achieved through a questionnaire that was administered to the students because, as it is known to the majority of researchers, it saves time, effort, and financial resources for the researcher. The other approach which is a qualitative one was realized through a structured interview that was

administered to teachers because it is among the best tools that probe the subjects' experiences.

## **2.2. Participants**

For the present study, there were sixty five participants. Sixty participants were first year students of English at Biskra University from a total population about five hundred and sixty students. The university generally has more females than males in its population. Of the sixty subjects, seven were males (twelve percent) and fifty three were females (eighty-eight percent). Their age ranged between eighteen and forty two. Concerning the five teachers who participated in this study; they are practitioners with an average experience. Three of them are teachers of oral expression, and the two others are teachers of educational psychology.

The reason behind choosing the first year university students is that, as stated earlier in this dissertation, "anxious students are common in foreign language classrooms (at least in beginning classrooms on the university level" (Horwitz et al., p.131). Two reasons were behind including the stated teachers in our study; first, to have more reliable and in-depth data because of their rich experience of teaching, and second, to gain further guidance in order to ensure that the study was being conducted appropriately.

## **2.3. Instruments**

### **2.3.1. Questionnaire of the Students**

The questionnaire was created to elicit learners' responses to statements about foreign language anxiety sources and the speaking skill. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first one was a background information section about age and gender. The second contained questions as a likert-scale response section, and the third part was divided in its turn into three parts; the first one includes eight closed items (yes/no), the

second, three multiple choice items questions, and the third one includes an open-ended question which require a short answer.

### **2.3.2. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale**

The research instrument used for the second section of the questionnaire was a modified version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) created by Horwitz et al. (1986). There were several reasons which led the researcher to use the FLCAS in her study. First, this scale had been created on the basis of previous in-depth qualitative research, which made it as one of the most comprehensive and valid instruments that were valid to measure the anxiety which is specific to the context of foreign language classroom. Actually, it is nowadays the most frequently used scale which is often abbreviated as in our case or adapted in other research studies that focused on similar purposes.

For the present study, several modifications were made to the FLCAS in terms of terminology and the number of questions included. The words “language” and “foreign language” appearing in the original FLCAS were replaced with the word English. Moreover, the number of questions was reduced to only fourteen statements comprising four items that have been devoted to the part of fear of negative evaluation, two items for communication apprehension, one item to the test anxiety, and seven items to the general classroom anxiety.

The items that are presented in the FLCAS are reflective of the three anxieties that are considered as conceptually significant aspects of FLA according to Horwitz’s theory. Namely, communication apprehension (a sample item is 1; ‘It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in English’), fear of negative evaluation (for example, item 7; ‘I worry about the consequence of failing my English class’, and test anxiety (such us item 12; ‘the more I study for a language test, the more confused I get’).

The questionnaire contained fourteen items each one on a five point scale ranging according to strongly agree (scale point five), agree (scale point four), neither agree or disagree ( scale point three), disagree ( scale point two), and the last one is strongly disagree ( scale point one). It is worthy to note that a high score indicate a high level of anxiety.

### **2.3.3. Interview of the Teachers**

The interview which was administered to teachers was a structured one because it is the appropriate type in our case as it enabled us to build rapport with the interviewees. This rapport was gained through the trust felt between the interviewer and her interviewees due to previous knowledge about the topic of the interview on the part of teachers. Thus, the interview was conducted smoothly question by question and spontaneously. The interview consisted of fourteen questions ranges from the main parts of our dissertation which are, the debilitating effect of anxiety on language learning, its linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural factors, and finally, its signs and effective reduction strategies.

### **2.3.4. Procedures**

At the end of the first semester of 2012, the researcher visited four language classes and distributed the questionnaires to the students in the presence of their teacher. The participants were required to give them back the next session. After collecting the questionnaires, the researcher realized that the students' feedback was incomplete in terms of their number and content. The potential causes of the failure of getting a good feedback from the students is that they have not received a comprehensible explanation of the parts of the questionnaire, in addition, they claimed that they have forgotten them at home. Therefore, this trial of distributing the questionnaire can be considered as piloting it.

Later, during the second semester of the academic year 2011-2012, the researcher redistributed the questionnaire; however, this time during a lecture which was comprised

of the whole participants needed for this study. After the students' agreement to answer the questionnaire, they were given full instructions by their teachers, about how to complete the questionnaire, and they were provided with clarifications about the purpose of its design.

They were informed that the completion of the questionnaire would be an important part of a scientific project, and consequently their participation would be very appreciated and acknowledged. They were informed that right or wrong answers were not sought, only their opinions were sought. The questionnaire was not an examination, and their evaluation was not intended but their answers would be of great importance to the researcher. Furthermore, they were not required to identify themselves in the questionnaire. It took the students twenty minutes to complete the questionnaires and then they were collected.

Teachers' on their part were interviewed. The interview was conducted with three teachers of oral expression and two teachers of educational psychology courses. The interview was mainly devoted to probe teachers' attitudes about the effect of foreign language anxiety on speaking English as a foreign language, and also to know their beliefs about classroom procedures in relation to the foreign language anxiety. In addition, the teachers were very helpful as they accepted to be interviewed and tape recorded. The interviews lasted from ten to thirty minutes besides they were conducted in the staff room.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

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## CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Data Analysis

As stated previously, our sample is 60 first year students of English at Biskra University. Based on the second section of the questionnaire which includes questions related to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, the students were grouped into high and low anxious students. The responses to the questions were focused on the high anxious students since our main goal is to uncover the sources of foreign language anxiety.

**Note:** High and low anxious students are measured by counting the scores of the scale; high anxious students score around 45 to 70, whereas low anxious students score around 14 to 44.

High Anxious Students	Low Anxious Students
60%	40%

**Table 1: The number of anxious and non anxious students**

Referring to table one, it can be concluded that more than half (60%) of the students have experienced high levels of foreign language anxiety. This indicates that FLA is present in our case study with a considerable degree.

#### **Section one:** Background information

1- Specify your gender

Males	Females
16.66%	83.33%

**Table 2: students' gender**

Table two denotes that females were the dominant gender (83.33%) while males presented the minority gender (16.66%). These results are obvious since, as indicated before, our University includes more females than males in its population.

Anxious males/the whole number of males	Anxious females/the whole number of females
82%	56%

**Table 3: The percentage of anxious students according to their gender**

The above table presents the degree to which males and females were anxious. The results reported that the majority of males (82%) exhibited anxiety while females were less anxious in comparison with males (56%).

2- Your age

years	students	percentage
18	4	6%
19	17	28.33%
20	19	31.66%
21	9	15%
22	6	10%
24	1	1.66%
25	2	4.03%
30	1	1.66%
42	1	1.66%
Total	60	100%

**Table 4: students' age**

Table four demonstrates the ages of the students who participated in this study. Almost all the participants were young; except for one student who aged 30 who exhibited a low level of anxiety by scoring 36 and another aged 42 who scored 31. This indicates that being younger or older affects the degree of anxiety in students; in our case, the older the student, the lower the anxiety will be.

**Section two:** Questions related to the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale.

Note: SD= strongly disagree; D= disagree; N= neither agree nor disagree;  
A= agree; SA= strongly agree

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	11.11%	11.11%	11.11%	25%	41.66%
2. I keep thinking that the other students are better in English than I am.	8.33%	27.77%	5.55%	44.44%	19.44%
3. I tremble when I know I'm going to be called on in English class.	5.55%	16.66%	11.11%	38.88%	27.77%
4. I don't worry about making mistakes in the English class.	0%	50%	13.88%	27.77%	8.33%
5. I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.	8.33%	19.44%	25%	30.55%	19.44%
6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	8.33%	11.11%	8.33%	44.44%	33.33%
7. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.	5.55%	11.11%	8.33%	44.44%	30.55%
8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.	8.33%	8.33%	5.55%	41.66%	36.11%
9. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	0%	8.33 %	8.33 %	50%	36.11%
10. I am afraid that my teacher of English is ready to correct every mistake I made.	16.66%	33.33%	11.11%	25%	13.88%

11. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	0%	19.44%	11.11%	52.77%	13.88%
12. The more I study for a test, the more confused I get.	2.77%	19.44%	11.11%	52.77%	13.88%
13. I feel lost by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.	2.77%	13.88%	8.33%	55.55%	22.22%
14. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	5.55%	19.44%	22.22%	30.55%	22.22%

**Table 5: FLCAS Items with Percentage of Students Selecting Each Alternative.**

Table 5 summarizes the students' responses to the FLCAS items, which are reflective of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the oral English classroom. According to this table, the respondents supported the FLCAS items indicative of speaking anxiety such as "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in the English class (item 11)" (52.77%); "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class (item 6)" (44.44%). They denied statements like "I don't worry about making mistakes in the English class (item 5)" (50%). The high anxious students were more worried to speak and felt threatened when asked to present themselves or their self-image which is threatened by speaking English in the presence of other people.

The students' expectations and fear of being unable to understand all the language input was also associated with communication apprehension. Students' endorsed the items "It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English (item 1)" (41.66%), and "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting (item 9)"

(50%). They believe that mastery of the target language and comprehending it is a matter of understanding every word that was spoken.

Anxious students also suffered from the fear of being less competent than other students or being negatively evaluated. They reported “I keep thinking that other students are better at English than I am (item 2)” (44.44%); “I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me, when I speak English (item 14)” (30.5%); “I worry about the consequences of failing my English class (item7)” (44.44); and “It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class (item 8)” (41.66%). Moreover, these students, like those in Horwitz et al. (1986) study, feared making mistakes by rejecting the statement “I don’t worry about making mistakes in the English class (item 4)” (50%), and “I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make (item 10)” (33.33%). The students of the present study seemed to be supportive to error correction despite their fear of making them.

Students’ reactions to the two items associated with test anxiety are striking in the sense that they agreed on the statement “I am usually at ease during tests in my English class (item 5)” (30.55%), nevertheless, they accepted the statement “ the more I study for a test, the more confused I get (item 12)” (52.77%). These contrasted results revealed that the students’ test anxiety is a temporary one in the sense that it exists before the testing situation, but whenever they are confronted with it, their anxiety is automatically diminished.

Students’ response to the item “I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English (item13)” (55.55%) denoted and supported the view that anxiety related to the foreign language learning process is unique and different from other academic anxieties. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

To conclude, among the 14 statements reflective of foreign language anxiety, 8 were supported by a third or more of the students surveyed, 4 were supported by half or

more of the students, and two were rejected by half or a third of the students. Therefore, they were supportive to most of the FLCAS.

**Section Three:** questions related to learner’s self perceptions, beliefs about language learning, and classroom procedures.

a- yes/no questions:

Q1 Is English difficult to learn?

Yes	No
13.88%	86.11%

**Table 6: the students’ attitudes towards the difficulty of learning English**

Table 6 represents the students’ perception of learning English as a foreign language in terms of difficulty. In this respect, the majority of students (86.11%) reported that they didn’t consider it an awkward task to learn English. In contrast, some students (13.88%) supported the fact that they have difficulty in learning English. This implies that our students didn’t have negative attitudes towards learning English.

Q2: Is pronunciation the most important aspect of language learning?

Yes	No
77.77%	22.22%

**Table 7: students’ attitudes towards the importance of pronunciation**

Referring to the above table, most of the students (77.77%) asserted that pronunciation is the most important aspect of language learning while few of them (22.22%) rejected this idea. By giving too much importance to the aspect of pronunciation,

the students risk of being too demanding at the expense of their speaking skill (fear of mispronouncing words makes them silent)).

**Q3:** Are you embarrassed when the teacher asks you to correct your own mistakes?

Yes	No
38.88%	61.11%

**Table 8: student's attitudes towards error correction**

According to table 8, more than half of the students (61.11%) exhibited a positive attitude towards error correction and agreed upon it unlike some of them (38.33%) who completely rejected self-correction.

**Q 4:** In a course where I have been doing poorly, my fear of a bad mark makes me less efficient?

Yes	No
61.11%	38.88%

**Table 9: The effect of fear of negative evaluation on students' performance**

The above table indicates that a considerable number of students (61.11%) displayed that having negative expectations of their evaluation, reduces their performance and makes them less efficient. However, for the minority of students (38.88%), their fear of having a bad mark was not a reason of being inefficient.

**Q 5:** Do you practice English outside the classroom?

Yes	No
66.66%	33.33%

**Table 10: The students' degree of practicing English outside the classroom**

Table 10 shows that two thirds of the students (66.66%) reported that they practice English outside the classroom while the other students which make one third (33.33%) do not practice English outside the classroom. This implies that the students are interested in English language, thus they try to adopt it by practicing it everywhere.

Q 6: Have you ever visited an English speaking country?

Yes	No
5.55%	94.44%

**Table 11: The number of students who have visited an English speaking country**

According to the above percentages, almost all the students (94.44%) haven't visited English speaking country except few of them (5.55%) that had the opportunity to do so.

Q 7: Do you worry about grammatical mistakes when you speak English?

Yes	No
69.44%	30.55.%

**Table 12: the students' attitudes towards making grammatical mistakes**

Table 12 represents that more than half of the students (69.44%) worry about grammatical mistakes when they speak English unlike few of them (30.55%) who are not afraid of grammatical mistakes while speaking.

Q 8: Is your teacher authoritative?

Yes	No
27.77%	72.22%

**Table 13: The students' attitudes towards their teacher's behavior**

Table 13 indicates that most of the students (72.22%) claimed that their teacher is not authoritative whereas other students (27.77%) stated that their teacher is authoritative. These two positions were justified by more than half of the students (53.33%). Therefore, the following attitudes and explanations were provided by those students. For the students who did not justify their answers, they maybe did not understand the question itself or they are intimidated to judge their teachers.

Non-authoritative teacher	justifications	Percentage
	a- Communicator	50%
	b- Helpful	10%
	c- Modest	5%
	d- He involves his students	15%
	e-Uses smooth error correction	20%

**Table 14: the students' justifications of the non-authoritative behavior of their teacher**

The above justifications of the students reported that teacher's characteristics as a non-authoritative teacher are as follow: communicator (50%); helpful (10%); modest (5%); the involvement of his students (15%); and the use of smooth error correction (20%).

Authoritative teacher	Justifications	Percentage
	a- Teacher's talk is longer than students' talk	40%
	b- Direct questions to the students about unknown topics on their part	30%
	c- Too serious and strict	25%
	d- The use of complicated language	15%

**Table 15: The students' justifications of the authoritative behavior of their teacher**

Table 15 shows the justifications stated by students about their authoritative teacher behaviors which are as follow: teachers talk is longer than students' talk (40%); ask direct questions to his students' about topics which they do not have idea about (30%); too serious and strict (25%); and the use of complicated language (15%).

**b- Multiple choice items**

- 1- Which of the following skill is most stressful to you?

Option	Number	Percentage
listening	2	6%
speaking	22	61%
reading	4	11%
writing	8	22%

**Table 16: The most stressful language skill for the students**

Table 16 denotes that the most stressful language skill that was cited by the students is the speaking one (61%), then comes the writing skill (22%), after it is the reading (11%), and the last one is the listening skill (6%).

2- What do you wish your teacher do when you make mistakes?

Option	Number	percentage
Correct the mistakes directly	22	61%
Correct the mistakes indirectly	14	39%
Ignore the mistakes	0	0%

**Table 17: The students' preferences of error correction methods**

According to the data in table 17, the method of correcting mistakes directly was the most preferred one by students (61%); less than half of the students (39%) supported the indirect method of error correction while none of the students (0%) agreed on ignoring the mistakes on the teacher's part.

Q3 :What type of activities that cause you to be stressed and anxious?

Option	Number	Percentage
Speaking in small groups	4	11%
To be called upon to respond individually	11	31%
Speaking in large groups	15	42%
Respond voluntarily	6	16%

**Table 18: The anxiety provoking activities to students**

The above table shows clearly that speaking in large groups (42%) and to be called to respond individually (31%) represented the most anxiety provoking for students; however, speaking in small groups (11%), and responding voluntarily (16%) indicated the least anxiety provoking.

b-In your opinion, what kinds of situations cause stress or anxiety for you?

The above question was developed in order to identify causes of anxiety of students especially when they had to speak in English. Out of 36 questionnaires of the high anxious students, twenty-seven of the respondents answered this open-ended question. Thus, the result of this finding is based on the answers given by the respondents.

For better understanding, the researcher identified the causes given by the respondents through an open-ended questionnaire and the results were then tabulated. The table was divided into fifteen different causes of anxiety. Then, the researcher calculated and identified which causes are the highest among the students.

Causes of Anxiety	Number	Percentage
1- Speaking in large groups	6	16%
2- When called on to respond individually	2	5%
3- Tests	3	8%
4- The ignorance of others when starting to speak	1	3%
5- Role play	2	5%
6- Making grammatical mistakes	2	5%
7- Mispronunciation	2	5%
8- Vocabulary retrieval	2	5%
9- Presentation without preparation	2	5%
10- lack of knowledge about the class subjects	2	5%
11-Oral presentations	4	11%
12 -Fear of teacher's and peers' negative evaluation	4	11%
13 Bad marks	2	5%
14- The teacher is not serious	1	3%
15 -Output anxiety	3	8%

**Table 19: The causes of anxiety stated by the students**

From the above data in table 19, it can be concluded that a considerable number of students are afraid of speaking in large groups (16%). Other sources of anxiety ranging from English proficiency, pedagogical instructions, and fear of evaluative situations such as being called or to respond individually, role play, making grammatical mistakes, mispronouncing, vocabulary retrieval, presenting without preparation, and fearing of bad marks, were reported by the students with the same percentage for each (5%). Other two

causes were present which are tests and output anxiety (inability to express or transmit information) with a percentage of 8%. Behavioural causes like the ignorance of others when starting to speak and the non-seriousness of the teacher were also present with a percentage of 3%. The last two causes were oral presentations, and fear of teacher's and peers' negative evaluation with a percentage of 11%.

### **3.2 Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire**

As a lot of research works on FLA have reported its negative effect on language learning and particularly speaking a foreign language, it becomes evident that FLA must be reduced by teachers and overcome by students for successful foreign language teaching/learning. Therefore, the main aim of this exploratory research was to investigate the sources that language anxiety can stem from for EFL learners while learning, and; especially communicating in the second language learning process. Accordingly, the main objective was to suggest some strategies to alleviate it. The results of our study confirm our hypothesis and seem to corroborate the findings of previous research on language anxiety, despite the existence of some conflicting details. Moreover, despite the high correspondence of the results to the past research, the study also found some discrepancies compared to some previous studies on language anxiety.

The results of our study indicated that the scores of the FLCAS, which form the second section of our questionnaire, were high enough to show that anxiety affect the first year students of English at Biskra University. The students' responses to the items of the questionnaire, which are reflective of the conceptual components of foreign language anxiety, were high and nearly similar for each component. First, the students' agreement about the items eleven and five of the FLCAS, and the first question in the second part of the third section which aimed at finding out what language skill was the most stressful for the students revealed that speaking in the foreign language (English in our case) was

reported by more than half of the students to be the most anxiety provoking situation for them. These findings are consistent with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) and Saito & Samimy's (1996) contention that speaking in a foreign language is often cited by students as their most anxiety-producing aspect of language learning.

The three components related to FLA were corroborated by the students of this study. The first component of FLA which is communication apprehension was widely cited by the subjects, and it was embodied in their endorsement of the items one and nine of the FLCAS which represent the students' unwillingness to participate when they do not understand what the teacher says in the foreign language. This is in line with MacIntyre and Gardner's claim that communication apprehension emanate from the learners' inability to understand others and make the others understand them. (1989, cited in Ohata, 2005, p.137). The students also reported in the open-ended question and item six of the FLCAS that they were apprehensive about oral presentations without preparation in the class, besides, they were overwhelmed by feelings of tension and anger when they could not express their ideas or answer the teachers' question. These results supports Casado & Dereshiwsky's work (2001) which states that communication apprehensive students have mature thoughts and ideas, but they have immature communication skills to express them.

For the second component of FLA which is test anxiety, the study yielded conflicting findings which contradicted previous research. Hence, the participants of the present study showed a positive attitude towards having tests in their English class even if they revealed that studying for a test makes them more confused. Unlike Sieber et al. who (1977) held the view that students generally consider test situation as a threat to their personality. (cited in Ziedner, 1998). Moreover, what is new in our study is that the students exhibited tension and fear before the test situation, but whenever they were involved in the test, their fear was reduced and overcome gradually.

The items seven, eight, ten and fourteen of the FLCAS represent the last component of FLA which is fear of negative evaluation. The students were supportive of three items (seven, eight, and fourteen) which indicate that fear of failure (item seven) or bad marks, as shown in their responses to the open-ended question, and fear of negative evaluation of the peers (item fourteen). The response to the last item was consistent with Watson and Friend's definition of fear of negative evaluation which states that it is "Apprehension about others' evaluation ...and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (1969, cited in Toth, 2008, p.58). Moreover, the students' negative attitude towards making errors (question four in section three), and their unwillingness to volunteer answer in the class, are in the same perspective of Ely's (1986) description of the students who experience negative evaluation in which he asserts that they have negative attitudes towards language errors and evaluation of their peers and teacher. Thus, they suffer from unwillingness to participate in language activities (cited in Tsiphkides, 2009). The results of our study do not support the findings of some previous studies (Watson & Friend, 1969, cited in Toth, 2008) regarding the fear of negative evaluation on the teacher' part, because the students exhibited a positive attitude concerning it which is embodied in item ten of the FLCAS.

Some students' self-perceptions were investigated in this study. First, the students' reactions to the second item of the FLCAS suggest that, in classroom settings, they feel that they are less competent in comparison to their fellows due to the non-mastery of the language which makes them feel that they cannot reveal their personality and intelligence. This finding is consistent with Eharman's (1996) contention that L2 environment functions as a reminder of the students' L2 competence in comparison to others (cited in MacIntyre et al., 1997). Self-esteem was also present in the students' responses to the last item of the FLCAS and the open-ended question in which they stated that they were afraid of others'

negative evaluation which is a sign of the low self esteem. This result has been explained previously by Krashen (1985, cite in Dewaele, 2005) who suggests that anxiety can arise according to ones' degree of self-esteem. Since the students of this study showed high level of concern over errors and fear of the opinions of others, they are likely to exhibit the personality trait of perfectionism which is related to FLA as proved by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002).

Another aspect which is important in this study is the learners' beliefs about language learning. Some of these beliefs were presented in our research. First, certain beliefs about error correction existed in this study. In this line, the students held a positive position towards error correction in response to the third question in the third section. This is in the direction of Horwitz et al.'s (1986) view that few students are afraid of correction. However, as it has been cited in the past research (Cascian & Rapallino, 1991; Bang, 1999, cited in Sparks & Ganschow, 2007) that most of students acknowledged the importance of error correction, but they disagreed on the manner to do. Another belief, which states that pronunciation is the single most important aspect of L2 learning, was strongly advocated by our participants. This supports Ohata's position that anxiety arises in students when their unrealistic beliefs and reality clash. He further stated that when considering pronunciation as the most important aspect of language, the students risk of being shocked of facing the reality of their 'imperfect speech' despite their efforts to pronounce correctly (2005, p.138).

Most of the participants in this study reported that their teacher is not authoritative. According to their justifications, the non-authoritative behavior of their teacher lies in the fact that he is mainly a communicator, besides; his helpfulness, modesty, involvement with his students and the use of smooth error correction. Therefore, our results mismatch with Young (1991) who claims that most teachers believe their role is to drill students (cited

Cook, 2006), and Brandl (1987) who argued that teachers believe that they should be strict and keep distance (cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999).

For the majority of the students who cited that their teacher is authoritative, their justifications revealed that their teacher's main characteristic is a controller in addition of being too serious, using highly complicated language, directing questions to the students that they lack knowledge about. This lends support to Jurkowitz's (2008) who stated that authoritative teacher asks students questions by pointing to them at random and embarrasses them in front of their peers.

The classroom procedures are another significant aspect to identify anxiety in foreign language learners. In this respect, our students presented speaking in large groups and oral presentations as their most anxiety provoking activities in both the open-ended question and the question related to the most stressful activity to them. Moreover, in the same question, they stated that they are more anxious when they are called upon to respond individually than when they are asked to respond voluntarily. These results lend support to Koch and Terrell (1991) who found that more than half of their subjects revealed that oral presentations in front of the class are the most anxiety provoking anxiety and they become even more anxious when they are to respond individually rather than when they are asked to respond voluntarily.

The three stages of learning which are input, processing and output have also been present in this investigation. First, the subjects reflected their input anxiety by responding positively to the items one and thirteen of the FLCAS which states that the learners become anxious when they do not understand the teacher's talk or they are overwhelmed by the number of rules to learn to speak English. The students' responses to the two above items were in line with Wheeless (1977, cited in Wrench et al., 2009) who reported that

input anxiety is similar to receiver apprehension (see section three in the review of literature).

The second stage which is the processing one has been also showed by the participants of this study through their notes which revealed their fear of making grammatical mistakes and mispronouncing words. These results are in the direction of the works of Lightbown & Spada (2006) and Chen (2005). (See the second section of the literature review). Another feature of this stage was cited by the students (in the open-ended question) which are the retrieval of vocabulary items. The latter supports Toth's (2006) investigation which found that the most frequently cited problem interviewees assigned to anxiety concerned the retrieval of vocabulary items.

The output anxiety which occurs in the last stage of learning, the output stage, also exists in our investigation when some of the students reported their inability to answer the teacher's question even if they know the answer. This corroborates with MacIntyre & Gardner's (1994b) claim which points out that high output anxiety might impede students' ability to speak in the target language (cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 2000).

Some socio-cultural factors underlying FLA exist in this study. The first factor is the social environment for foreign language learning. In our case the social environment available is the one where English is not used as a native language in the community, thus, our students are exposed to English only in the classroom where they only listen to their teachers' or classmates' talk as Krashen stated in his input hypothesis (1985 cited in Tanveer, 2007). Prior history of visiting English speaking countries is also a source of anxiety as noted by Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) since almost all of our students have never visited an English speaking country. However, more than half of the students reported practising English outside the classroom. This is probably due to their positive attitude

towards the English language and it represents an alternative that they cannot offer to travel abroad.

Regarding errors in social settings which is another source of anxiety, our participants have a positive attitude towards error correction, albeit their fear of making mistakes. While approving of error correction, the students differed in the way of doing it as reported by Cascian and Rapallino (1991, cited in Sparks & Ganschow, 2007). In this study, the students cited the direct method of error correction as their first and most preferred followed by the indirect method of error correction; finally they totally rejected the ignorance of mistakes.

The factor of age conflicts with previous research like Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999), who concluded through his study that the older the student, the higher his/her language anxiety was likely to be. On the contrary, in the present work, the younger the student, the higher his/her anxiety is likely to be. This implies that in our case the young students feel inferior to and less confident than their older counterparts.

Our investigation yielded interesting results regarding the gender variable and anxiety in students in the sense that male students were more anxious than the females counterparts. This finding is consistent with Gobel and Matsuda's and Spielberger's (2003, 1983; cited in Tanveer, 2007) works (See the fourth section of the literature review), while it contradicts Chang's (2002) and Elkahfifi's (2005) investigations of this phenomenon. (See the fourth section of the literature review).

### **3.3 Analysis and Discussion of the Interview**

#### **Facilitative vs. Debilitative Anxiety**

As most of previous research, the teachers involved in this study acknowledged the debilitative/facilitative effect of anxiety on language learning. However, one teacher dismissed the existence of helpful anxiety as in the study of young (1992, cited in

Arnold,1999) by saying that “ I disagree that anxiety can help learners in exams because they are unable to focus on certain instructions and their vision is blurred.” (T3). For the rest of teachers who held the position that anxiety has both negative and positive effect on language achievement, they attributed this double-edged effect to its degree as many past researches did (Wrench et al., 2009; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001; Brown, 2007). They all argued that low level of anxiety is beneficial; however, high levels of anxiety have detrimental effects on foreign language learning. In this respect, one of the teachers reported that “ If anxiety is too much, it will inhibit the learning process, but if it is low, it will push the learner to do well and work harder to achieve his/her goal and to get high grades”(T1).

### **Causes of Language Anxiety in Oral English Classrooms**

As discussed before, a considerable number of students become anxious when speaking English in class, especially when they are asked to answer questions or give presentations. When asked to comment on what caused their students to become anxious, the teachers identified a multitude of sources such as classroom procedures, linguistic difficulties, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and the socio-cultural factors.

#### **Communication Apprehension**

As claimed by Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001) that second language college students, who exhibit communication apprehension, have mature thoughts and ideas, but they have immature communication skills. A teacher in the present study reported “...the students are not themselves; they have ideas; they want to express them, but they face their L2 low proficiency.”

#### **Fear of Negative Evaluation**

Probably influenced by the personality trait of perfectionism that emphasizes perfect performance, the teachers in the present study also noted that their students feared making mistakes and being laughed at, which made them anxious when speaking English to others in class. Like previous studies (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). They affirmed "...they are afraid of speaking in front of their peer, making mistakes or making fun of them, thus appearing foolish." (T1); "When they deal with teachers, they feel blocked, frustrated, bored, or even stop learning at all." (T5).

#### Fear of Losing Face

Similarly, fear of losing face also is a source of anxiety for many students when speaking English in class. This view is clarified by one of the teachers in our study who noted that "we are face saving society; we are ashamed of talking in public. Accordingly, our students are afraid of any presentation in front of others."(T4).

#### Students' Beliefs about Language Learning

Students' beliefs and attitudes towards learning and speaking English were a significant part of the teachers' responses in this investigation. They supported Horwitz's (1988, cited in Chen & Thopson, 2009) claim that the importance of learner beliefs lies in the fact that they underlie behavior and identify anxiety to a large extent. As a teacher reported, "they think that English is easy to grasp, but when they find that the language is vague with many rules, they are going to face difficulties. This leads to a certain degree of anxiety" (T4). This report is in line with Ohata (2005) who explained that unrealistic beliefs can lead to anxiety in students, especially when the beliefs and reality clash. Another teacher stated that "...some students believe that females have the ability to learn language more than males as one of my students revealed "...I'm a boy; I 'm not done for these studies." (T2).

#### **Teachers Beliefs**

Teachers' beliefs about language teaching were another cause for anxiety in oral English classrooms. Most of our teachers acknowledged the existence of the authoritative type of teachers which confirms Brandl's (1987, cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999) claim that instructors believe that to be serious and strict is important for motivating students and keep distance. One teacher gave a description of the authoritative teacher by pointing out "He is the one who needs complete abilities and complete discipline; there is no space for learners to behave freely." (T3). Another teacher stated that "Many teachers do not have positive expectations or they expect their students will not do well." (T5).

### **Classroom Procedures**

Different classroom activities in the classroom were cited by our teachers to be anxiety provoking for students, especially those that require students to present orally in front of others. Three teachers asserted that answering the direct questions and oral presentations were the most anxiety provoking for their students (T1, T2, T3). This finding was confirmed by the research of Koch and Terrell (1991, cited in Arnold, 1999). One of the teachers revealed that "My students become anxious when I designate them to answer on a question in which they lack information on the subject, or to talk about something personal. (T4). Error correction is also one of the most significant features of classroom procedures. Regarding this procedure, most of teachers pointed that the acceptance of error correction on the part of students is relative. This means it depends on the attitudes of the learner. However, one teacher reported "...students are very often ashamed and afraid of being corrected in public."(T3). Regarding the method of error correction, all of the teachers rejected the direct and spontaneous method since it induces anxiety in their students; instead they opted for the indirect method of correcting at the end of the lesson and without specifying who made the error. They were in the direction of Horwitz's (1986) who claimed that harsh error correction induces anxiety. For example, one of the teachers

revealed that “The teacher should not stop the student and corrects him in public; he should gather all errors made by the students and corrects them all together.”(T2).

### **The Linguistic Factors**

The frequent linguistic aspects that were cited by all of the teachers to be the most anxiety provoking in the present study were vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. These results were consistent with Toth’s (2006) and Chen’s (2005) investigations. One teacher added a small detail “...the students are unfamiliar with certain skills like listening, speaking, especially when it comes to oral class particularly when they are asked to speak in front of their peers.” (T3).

### **The socio-cultural Factors**

Our teachers mentioned two socio-cultural factors underlying anxiety in their students. The first one is the social environment where learning takes place. In this regard, one of the teachers asserted “Our students are not integrated; the Algerian society is not English speaking; our students are not acquainted with the technology of chatting and exchanging ideas with people abroad. We use French customs and traditions more than the English ones.” In this case, the previous contention is in line with Onwuegbuzie et al. (1999) who stated that the prior history of visiting foreign language countries as a source of FLA. The second factor which is gender was acknowledged to have an effect on the level of anxiety by the teachers of this study. In this respect, they claimed that females were less anxious than males. This corroborates with Spielberg (1983, cited in Tanveer, 2007). One of the teachers revealed that “Females tend to be more outgoing, participate more in the class than males.” (T3).

### **Signs of Anxiety**

The interviewees identified several signs of anxiety in their students ranging from physiological to psychological ones. The physiological symptoms were turning red or pale,

some bodily gestures like nervously joining their hands together, sweating, stomachaches, and beating hearts. The psychological symptoms lie in their shaky grammar, keeping silent, changing their voices, and so on. These FLA manifestations were reported by previous research ( Rardin, cited in Tanveer, 2007; Saito & Samimy, 1996; Horwitz et al., 1986).

### **Strategies to Cope with Language Anxiety**

Language anxiety, being a volatile psychological phenomenon, has been found to have a great influence on learning to speak a foreign language. Many studies on LA have proposed a multitude of strategies to cope with this “multifaceted dilemma” (Tanveer,2007, p.55) and this study is in the same vein with this pattern. Fortunately, all the teachers involved in this research appeared to have provided interesting way of reducing language anxiety.

The most frequent suggestion that participants made was to make the language classroom environment more comfortable and friendly, one where students are free to talk without fearing to make of making mistakes or looking stupid. Away to create a less stressful classroom atmosphere, as suggested by a teacher, is that “We should focus on the positive side of the learner’s problem, for example, when I have a student who commits a lot of grammatical mistakes but instead he explains and tries to convey the message, so it is not good each time to focus on these grammatical mistakes, but it is always good to focus on or showing him that he is good and reward him by telling him that he can transmit the message” (T4). This method is consistent with research (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, cited in Gregersen, 2005; Pappamihel, 2002; Wrench et al., 2009) who focused on positive experiences of learners to alleviate their anxiety.

Pair and small group work and workshops were strongly believed by our teachers to be effective methods for the students to overcome their anxiety. As stated by one of the

teachers “When grouping students together, they realize that they share nearly the same difficulties. This sense of sharing common problems reduces their fear of negative evaluation from each other” (T5). These methods were proposed by past research (Price, 1991, cited in Andrade & Williams, 2009; worde, 2003).

The learner centered approach and the communicative language teaching were adopted by the teachers of this study because they believe that they are the best methods to make the learners cope with their anxiety though they mentioned that they do not follow a specific method, it is implied from their explanations that they follow the two stated approaches.

Games were also cited in the literature as a way to ally FLA (Wrench et al., 2009; Young, 1991, cited in Tanveer, 2007). In this respect, one of the teachers noted that “games is a very good way to make the atmosphere very relaxed. In games, the students are interested in competition and forget about anxiety” (T2). Another teacher emphasized the use of humour as an effective way to alleviate anxiety by reporting that “humor refreshes the students’ mind and makes them forget about their worries and anxieties” (T3).

Although many of the participants’ responses shared many similarities with the strategies to cope with language anxiety reported in the previous research, a different strategy was also found, one which is associated with the most recent technologies. A teacher added a new insight to the communicative language teaching by stating that

Communicative language teaching is the best way to involve students and make the participating, know each other, interact with their peers and even if they do not have a chance in the classroom, they can do it outside the classroom via social networks like facebook and emails since they know each other, and thus, they reduce what is called peer anxiety (T5).

### **3.4 Recommendations and Future Directions**

The results of this study confirmed the existence of high levels of LA in most of the learners who are learning English despite the widely use of recent communicative language teaching techniques and the large body of research that addressed it. This suggests that the issue of LA needs an in-depth investigation regarding all its aspects. Furthermore, though it is important that language teachers acknowledge the existence of anxiety as a main source of students' failure in communicating in the foreign language, it is crucial that instructors help them to diminish their worries and anger. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations and future directions can be made.

First and foremost, EFL teachers should realize the existence of FLA in learning and particularly speaking English language and then find the most appropriate strategies of its effective reduction. They should identify their students in terms of high anxious students and their manifestations of anxiety and low anxious students. Moreover, they should apply suitable strategies to help them overstep these feelings. Suggestopedia and community language learning are among the best methods to reduce anxiety.

Second, as students reported the lack of visiting English speaking countries which is a significant cause of their communication apprehension, a communicative approach in which students are provided with authentic materials like communicating with native speakers via social networks or exposed to tape recording of the standard English, in addition to teaching them the different aspects of language in context may provide students with more chances to practice their speaking skills.

Third, to trigger and create active participation atmosphere in the classroom discussion, the students need to be provided with friendly, enjoyable, informal and supportive learning environments. This can be achieved through teachers' friendly, sense of humor, helpful, making students feel relaxed and free when speaking in the class. This

can also reduce, albeit not removing, the effect of the inequality relationship between students and teachers to a considerable extent.

Fourth, in order to alleviate students' fear that their mistakes in front of the teachers will affect their final scores, more emphasis should be given to formative assessment (assessment for learning) and feedback rather than summative assessment (assessment of learning) and feedback.

Fifth, the teachers should explore a classroom discussion about the feelings of anxiety and try to minimize the sense of the competition among their students.

Sixth, to make the students feel that they are successful EFL learners, instructors should avoid providing students with activities that increase their fear of failure. They should, first, check their background knowledge about the task, in terms of sufficient ideas and lexis, before giving it to students.

Seven, it is also crucial that teachers should make their students confront their unrealistic beliefs by arising in them the awareness of "reasonable commitments for successful language learning" (Horwitz, 1988, cited in Onwuegbuzie et al., 1999, p.239). These beliefs can be confronted by rising the students' awareness regarding the speed of speech delivery in the target language can be achieved (ibid, p.233).

Eighth, SLA researchers have identified many linguistic difficulties, which have been found in this research as anxiety provoking, but the solutions available are insufficient for instructors and students who face this problem. Therefore, an in-depth research into solutions to alleviate this phenomenon is needed for future research.

Finally, there should be a kind of training courses for teachers in order to make them aware of this complex and multifaceted issue and, hence ally it.

Recommendations on the basis of the finding of this study are not completely comprehensible and each language teacher can offer different strategies of anxiety

reduction based upon his/her personal observation of the phenomenon. Similarly one of the teachers of this study declared that “I always act upon experience” (T4).

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Although past research has provided a worthy insight into anxiety from both statistical and descriptive aspects, the phenomenon, due to its sophisticated and multifaceted nature, requires further investigation from different and various perspectives and approaches. This study, conducted through a self-administered questionnaire and a structured interview, was an attempt to recognize the real nature of the phenomenon from a different view.

The results of this study indicate that the most anxiety provoking skill in FL (English) learning is speaking skill. The majority of research subjects reported that students feel anxious and nervous while speaking English in front of others. Some EFL learners even revealed that they seem 'foolish' when they cannot speak English well or when they commit mistakes and others reported that they try to flee from situations which demand speaking in front of others. What is special in speaking is the public nature of the skill; this poses a threat to people's self-concept and self identity, which they have shaped in their native language as reasonable and intelligent individuals ( Horwitz et al., 1986, p.128). Every situation that increases the chances for EFL learners to show their imperfect speech in front of others may provoke anxiety in them. This situation could be group participation or class presentation is likely to challenge learner's communicative abilities.

Foreign language classroom is a highly provoking anxiety situation sue to its evaluative nature; evaluation by the teachers, peers, and by a learners' own 'self' associated with unrealistic beliefs about FL learning. The feelings of anxiety increase through the teachers' harsh error correction and the focus on performance rather than learning. Anxiety has also been found to stem from the students' feeling of low proficiency in general linguistic knowledge which they try to hide. The participants reported difficulties in grammar and pronunciation which were commonly considered to hinder EFL

learners to be fluent, and thus were considered to be major obstacles in achieving the desired performance goals in English language. The learners' expectation of these problems while speaking English, they get frightened. The lack of success when trying to achieve the anticipated performance reinforces the learners' lack of confidence in their general linguistic knowledge and results into debilitating level of anxiety in them when they are required to respond to any communicative situation. The FL difficulties were found to stem from the lack of comprehensible input and opportunities to practise the speaking skill (output) in the social contexts where English is not used as an L1. Many students reported that though they know certain vocabulary items and sentence structures, but when it comes to communication, they cannot produce what they have as background knowledge. This indicates, from psycholinguistic perspective, that when learners' cognitive processes of language use (speaking) are not rehearsed due to lack of practice, in or outside the classroom, these difficulties are likely to be a permanent source of trouble for the FL learners.

In addition to the above psycholinguistic factors, some socio-cultural aspects of English language learning can also cause LA for EFL learners. In their interaction with their teachers, the learners may have a feeling of inferiority and inequality relationship with their teachers. This leads them to be apprehensive and avoid any communicative situations which are associated with their teachers. The level of anxiety may also arise due to the fact of being younger. Young students exhibit the lack of confidence and uncertainty about their abilities; however, their old counterparts are less anxious maybe because of their past experiences. Gender was found to be another factor of anxiety arousal since male students was found to be more anxious than females. They reported that females are more talented in languages than males. Furthermore, students may feel anxiety in speaking

English because of the fear that they may lose their face or self-identity they have formed in their native language.

However, for effective reduction of LA, the comparison of the findings of this study with those of the past research indicates that there is no specific remedy for language anxiety. Both the strategies found in this study and previous studies could “certainly work as prescription of anxiety but it might as easily be advice on ‘what good teachers’ should routinely do” (Oxford, 1999, cited in Tanveer, 2007, p.63). All such instructions are excellent but also useful to non-anxious students; therefore, the advice cannot be other than general (ibid).

To conclude, from this study, language anxiety may not require specific strategies of its reduction, but what is crucial to it is the careful attitude of the language teacher in order to get an in-depth understanding of this phenomenon to identify anxious learners. Then, it demands the implementation of modern communicative approaches that emphasizes creating chances for an environment that is conducive to learning.

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## Appendices

### Appendix1: The Surdents Questionnaire

Dear students,

This questionnaire is an attempt for gathering information needed for the accomplishment of a master dissertation. It is not a test, so there is no “right” or “wrong” answers and you don’t even have to write your name on it. We direct this questionnaire in order to investigate the sources of foreign language anxiety. We would be very grateful if you could help us in accomplishing our research in felling in the questionnaire.

#### Section one: background information

1. Specify your gender

a- Male

b- Female

2. Your age is

.....

#### Section two: questions related to the foreign language classroom anxiety scale

Fill in the boxes with 1, 2,3,4,5 which stands for:

1= strongly agree, 2= disagree, 3= neither agree nor disagree,4= agree,5= strongly agree.

1. It frightens me when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in English

2. I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am

3. I tremble when I know that I’m going to be called on in English class

4. I don’t worry about making mistakes in the English class

5. I am usually at feel at ease during tests in my English class

6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class

7. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class

8. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class
9. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting
10. I am afraid that my teacher of English is ready to correct every mistake I make
11. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class
12. The more I study for a test, the more confused I get
13. I feel lost by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English
14. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English

**Section three: questions to learner's self perceptions, beliefs about language learning and classroom procedures.**

a- Answer by 'yes' or 'no' the following questions by filling in the box with "x"

1. Is English difficult to learn?

Yes  no

2. Is pronunciation the most important aspect of language learning?

Yes  no

3. Are you embarrassed when the teacher asks you to correct your own mistakes?

Yes  no

4. In a course where I have been doing poorly, my fear of a bad mark makes me less efficient

Yes  no

5. Do you practice English outside the classroom?

Yes  no

6. Have you ever visited an English speaking country?

Yes  no

7. Do you worry about grammatical mistakes when you speak English?

Yes  no

8. Is your teacher authoritative?

Yes  no

Please, justify your

answer.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

b- Choose one answer that corresponds to your opinions, from the list of choices by filling in the boxes with an "x".

1. Which of the four skills is most stressful to you?

- a- Listening
- b- Speaking
- c- Reading
- d- Writing

2. What do you wish your teacher do when you make mistakes?

- a- Correct your mistakes directly
- b- Correct the mistakes indirectly
- c- Ignore the mistakes

3. Which type of activities those cause you to be stressed and anxious?

- a- Speaking in small groups
- b- To be called upon to respond individually
- c- Speak in large groups
- d- Respond voluntarily

C in your opinions, what kinds of situations cause stress or anxiety for you?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

**Key terms:**

**Anxiety:** the state of feeling nervous or worried that something bad is going to happen.

**Anxious:** feeling worried or nervous.

## **Appendix2:**

### **The Interview of Teachers**

- 1- Do you think that anxiety facilitates or inhibits learning?
- 2- Anxiety can help learners to do well during their exams? Do you agree?
- 3- What kinds of situations and language classroom activities have you found to be anxiety-provoking for the students?
- 4- What do you think are the causes of students' anxiety while speaking English?
- 5- Have you noticed any particular kinds of beliefs or perceptions about learning and speaking English in your students and do you think they play a role in causing language anxiety for the learners? Please explain.
- 6- What are the linguistic factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners?  
(Difficulties in learning grammar, memorizing and retrieving vocabulary items while speaking, and so on).
- 7- What are the socio-cultural factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners (social status, power relations, gender and so on).
- 8- Do teacher's beliefs cause anxiety in learners? Please explain.
- 9- What signs of anxiety have you noticed in anxious learners during your experience of teaching English to EFL learners?
- 10- What method of teaching do you use? Do you think that it encourages learners to learn effectively?
- 11- What are other teaching methods you believe are effective for learners?
- 12- Do you think that there are some learners feel anxious when the teacher corrects their mistakes?
- 13- In your opinion, what correction methods are best for learners?
- 14- What are the techniques you use to establish a relaxed atmosphere in the class?