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**The Effect of Anxiety on the English as a Foreign Language Learners' Oral  
Performance**

A Case of Third Year LMD Students at Mohammed Kheider the University of  
Biskra

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's  
Degree Sciences of the Language

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate my work*

*To my family*

*To my mother*

*To my close friends*

*To a best friend of mine*

*Mr. Lamkek Farouk*

*To my nocturnal mate*

*Lahcene Charif*

*And to the thoughtful friend*

*Ibrahim*

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*Bamboo trees do*

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## **Abstract**

The researcher noticed that students of third year at Mohamed Kheider University encounter various psychological factors when speaking such as fear of negative evaluation, lack of self-confidence, and anxiety. This latter is our concern. In other words, this research mainly investigates the effect of anxiety on the English as a Foreign Language learners' oral performance. The issue we investigate is a delicate one because of its abstract nature. Accordingly, we established our investigation through a descriptive method by administering questionnaires for teachers of oral expression and students of third year, Licence Master Doctorate, at the division of English at Biskra University. The findings showed that students experience anxiety just because of the idea that they may have to speak whenever they attend oral expression course, let alone when they really attend English courses. The researcher found that students of third year suffer from anxiety before, during, and after communicative task. Thus, we can confirm that our hypothesis of that if we acknowledge the effect of anxiety on third year students of English, it may help them to partially overcome their anxiety. All in all, teachers should take into consideration their students' anxiety; create low anxiety for those who are passive all the time which can be useful for pushing them to speak and work more on their relationship with them because it is the solid foundation for applying different techniques.

**Key Words:** Speaking skill, EFL students, speaking anxiety, foreign language anxiety.

## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**FLCAS:** Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

**LMD:** License, Master, Doctorate

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**الملخص**

GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, the English Language has become an important feature of politics, business and social relationships. Hence English turned to be a Lingua Franca. As Crystal (2003) stated that “all signs suggest that this global language will be English” (P, 28). Due to the rising importance of the English Language over the world which led many countries to turn their attention to teach English in different educational institutions, particularly, universities in which English language learners can study English as a major. Algeria is no exception.

Mohamed Kheider Biskra University included English Language among other languages to be taught and that was in 1998. Since then the number of learners who adore mastering English has increased and the focus is the oral proficiency. The latter is our concern; the teaching and learning process of spoken English at Mohamed Kheider University which is confronted by a lot of barriers and challenges. One of the challenges is ‘Anxiety’.

Psychologically speaking, the speaking skill is hard to be mastered because of the numerous psychological factors like anxiety, inhibition, the fear of being laughed at and other conditions that the learners of English at Mohamed Kheider University are surely exposed to. To put it in a nutshell, the core of our study is to investigate the effect of anxiety on the EFL third year learners’ oral performance. In the present study, the terms “learner” and “student” will be used interchangeably.

### **1. Statement of the Problem**

Speaking is a complicated process among the other four skills and the reason that made us claim so is that of the way the speaking skill is learnt, performed and mastered. That is to say, when the EFL learners try to perform speaking; for example, they do not have much time to think what to say, but when they come to writing there is a

considerable period of time to produce a piece of writing.

The researcher noticed that a huge number of third year students cannot keep speaking in a conversation for three minutes. In spite of the fact that educationalists and teachers provide the EFL learners with tasks, activities, and techniques, the speaking skill still hard to master because of that learners hesitate to speak. Consequently, learner's failure was not only because of linguistic weakness but also of psychological factors such as anxiety. The latter has great deal to do with the EFL learners' oral performance. During the progress of our study, we tend to investigate the extent of the effect of anxiety on third year students' speaking skill.

## **2. Research Objectives**

We have three main objectives of conducting this research. First, we aim to indicate the importance of speaking skill in learning English as a foreign language. Second, we tend to investigate the effect of anxiety on speaking skill, so as to help teachers and students to acknowledge the role of anxiety in the learning speaking process. Finally, proposing some constructive recommendations for students and tutors, so that they might overcome the high level of anxiety or use the lower anxiety in their favor.

## **3. Research Questions**

The objective of this research is to answer the following questions:

1. What is the effect of anxiety on the EFL learners' oral performance?
2. How can EFL learners reduce anxiety?
3. What can teachers do to reduce learners' anxiety?

## **4. Research Hypotheses**

To investigate the questions, the researcher hypothesizes that if teachers acknowledge the effect of anxiety on EFL students' oral performance; it may help them to reduce it.

## **5. Significance of the Study**

Despite the fact that many research have been conducted for different aims within the field of learners' psychology, the principal objective of our study is to highlight how anxiety can have great effect on the oral performance in particular, third year students of English. Moreover, we aim to suggest some useful recommendations for teachers to help their students to reduce speaking learning anxiety and henceforth to improve their oral performance.

## **6. Methodology and Research Tools**

Our research proceeds through a descriptive method because anxiety cannot be easily observed. Such method provides us with facts to investigate the current situation of learning and teaching the oral expression course.

The questionnaire is what we used as a tool, for it is helpful to collect a large amount of data to identify the effect of anxiety on the EFL learners' speaking. We set out two questionnaires one for students of third year LMD English division at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University and another questionnaire for teachers of oral expression to know how anxiety can affect the EFL learners' oral production.

The sample of our study is drawn from enrolled (100) subjects of the third year LMD students of English at Mohamed Khider University Biskra. The subjects are selected randomly from a population of (356) students. The questionnaires were administered during formal classes. In addition, another questionnaire is administered for Oral Expression teachers of third year help us to accomplish our work.

## **7. Limitations of the Study**

The major limitations in the current research might be set out briefly. First, our study is limited to the third year students at the department of foreign languages, division of English at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University from which we select 100 subjects of the

whole number of third year LMD students. Second, the tool is questionnaires for students and teachers which are limited to Oral Expression course. The validity of the obtained results depends on the honesty of students and teachers answering the questionnaires.

## **8. Organization of the Thesis**

To test our hypotheses, we devoted three chapters for this research: the first chapter is dedicated to the speaking skill. First, we gave some definitions about speaking skill. Second, we established the main criteria for choosing speaking tasks which are determined by the learners' needs. Then, we mentioned the types of speaking tasks which can be used by oral expression teachers to improve the students' speaking skill. Also, we acknowledged the characteristics of speaking skill besides some psychological factors hindering the students' speaking such as the fear of making mistakes and lack of self-confidence. Finally, we end this chapter by highlighting the teachers' feedback.

In chapter two, we dealt with the foreign language learning anxiety. First of all, we are going to define the term anxiety. Then, we introduce the anxiety in the language theory such as Krashen's theory of the effective filter hypothesis besides some studies on foreign language anxiety and the instruments used in investigating language anxiety. Furthermore, within this chapter, we will reveal how recognize anxious learners by establishing different types of anxiety. In addition to the sources of anxiety, we tend to set different classifications, the negative and the positive effect on students' learning. Also, we highlight some characteristics of anxious learners. As a last element, we presented the role of teachers to reduce the students' anxiety.

The last chapter highlights the field work. It seeks to discuss the findings obtained from questionnaires submitted to four teachers and 100 students of third year of the English Branch at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra. The data were analyzed through statistic tables and graphs.

# Chapter One

## Overview of Speaking Skill

## **Chapter One: Overview of Speaking Skill**

### **Introduction**

Today, English language circles the globe, inhabits the air we breathe. What started as a guttural tribal dialect isolated in a small island is now the language of well over thousands million around the world. (Adventure of English - 2003 BBC Documentary - Episode 1 - BBC Documentary, n.d.)

As a matter of fact, English is the language of international communication and as any language in the world, it has four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The fact that English is a Lingua Franca raised the awareness of many countries and its individuals to learn speaking English; the latter is what tends to be the most favourable skill, especially for EFL learners.

In this chapter, we are going to consult some definitions of speaking skill and its importance among other skills. In addition, we will present some psychological factors which negatively affect the EFL learners' oral performance.

### **1.1. Speaking Skill**

The purpose behind learning a foreign language is to speak in the main. Speaking is not matter of possessing only the lexis of a particular language but it is also of the social and the cultural knowledge of that language, so that the process of speaking goes successful. As Luona (2004) says "Our personality, our self-image, our knowledge of the world and our ability to reason and to express our thoughts are all reflected in our spoken performance in a foreign language." That is to say, according to Burus & Juyce, (1997), its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, including the participants themselves, their collective experience the physical environment, and the purposes for speaking (as cited in Mary,1999). Rizoi (2006, p. 22) stated that "Speaking is an interactive communicative process that involves speakers and listeners" (cited in Li Hui,

2011) Therefore, speaking is not just articulating sounds but most importantly, it is a matter of conveying messages. Hedge (2000) argues speaking is a skill by which they [people] are judged while first impressions are being formed. By which he meant that speaking is an important skill that deserves more attention in both first and second language teaching and learning because it reflects people's way of thinking and personalities.

## **1.2. The Importance of Speaking Skill**

Despite the fact that the speaking skill is crucial in second language learning and teaching, it has been neglected for many years by traditional approaches, in particular, the Grammar Translation method focused on other skills like writing rather than speaking. However, at present time, the speaking skill has become the core value of any language. Moreover, the very common question you may hear nowadays is "Do you speak English/French?", but not a question like "Do you write English/French.". Ur (2000) declared that "of all the four skills [listening, speaking, reading and writing], speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of the language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing". (Cited in Kouicem, 2010) So, a foreign language, particularly, English is quite demanding in almost any task or job

For the last few decades, no consideration was given to speaking skill, but now it is the focus of many researchers who attempt to shed some light on the importance of teaching speaking skill in the foreign language classes. Supporting this idea, Brown & Yule (1983, p. 2) stated “ The serious consideration of the spoken language as a subject for teaching has a long history, but only made a decisive impact on foreign language teaching in general after the end of the Second World War”. Though researchers did not give full attention to speaking when teaching a foreign language until the Second World War came

to an end, the amount of studies that have been conducted regarding speaking skill during that period is large.

### **1.3. Integration of Listening and Speaking**

Listening and speaking are the most used skills in any language since the beginning of the creation of the human being. The fact that learners are active when speaking the target language has not the meaning of that they can be passive when listening to that language. Supporting this idea Sefero & Uzakgore (2004, p. 2) claim that “Listening is usually an interactive process” (as Cited in Tavil, 2010). In other words, the listener has to know what he/she listens to by asking questions and more clarifications so that they give appropriate responses. Accordingly, we confirm that integrating listening and speaking when teaching English language is of a great importance.

To ensure the integration of listening and speaking, teachers prefer to use information gap activity in which learners listen and speak to complete the missing information; as in real-life situations where they need to discuss with others to get the information they need. Consequently, learners will find themselves practicing their English unwillingly. Students may experience confusion when listening to each other or to a native speaker because of understanding difficulty. Thus, teachers should be of a great help; they should facilitate the task to create for their students an unthreatening environment (Jones, 2004).

### **1.4. Criteria for Choosing Speaking Tasks**

The process of teaching the speaking skill is of a highly importance which consists of tasks and these tasks are established upon some criteria which teachers should follow when creating speaking tasks for their learners.

The purpose of establishing such criteria: Product, purposefulness and interactivity and others is to increase chances for EFL learners to use the target language independently.

### **1.4.1. Productivity**

The purpose of a speaking task is production in the main. That is the first criterion ever through which teachers should obviously know that a speaking activity is mainly the cause to result language production. Thornbury (2005, p. 90) stated "if students can do an information gap by simply exchanging isolated words, or if only a couple of students participate in a group discussion, the task may hardly justify the time spent setting them up". Thus, the productivity criterion is prerequisite for establishing a speaking task.

### **1.4.2. Purposefulness**

What is the purpose of a speaking activity? is the main question that teachers have to ensure having a convinced answer so that the language productivity can be increased when the students know the purpose of a particular task and that will lead to create a competitive atmosphere for learners such as turning the task into a race can also help (Thornbury, 2005).

### **1.4.3. Interactivity**

The speaking task should be of a real-life value by which students can implement the input they get in real situations. Thornbury (2005: 91) suggested "even formal, monologic speaking tasks such as talks and presentations should be performed in situations where there is at least the possibility of interaction". That means to provide the atmosphere for learners to speak and give questions to each other. Therefore, interactivity is another crucial criterion for selecting a speaking activity.

### **1.4.5. Challenge**

By challenge we mean that the task should be selected in accordance to the student's potentials. As Thornbury (2005) stated "the teacher needs to be sensitive to the degree of difficulty a task presents individual learners and to adjust the task accordingly"

(p, 91). Also, he put forward "this will help them experience the sense of achievement, even excitement that is a part of autonomous language use" Thornbury (2005, p. 91).

#### **1.4.5. Safety**

This can be explained as the atmosphere in which learners smoothly address the challenges they may experience when attempting communication in other words, Thornbury claims that learners should be provided with the right conditions in terms of motivation and positive feedback in one hand and the teacher should be ready for any digression from the task in another hand.

#### **1.4.6. Authenticity**

The students will lose interest if the speaking task is not a real-life related. Thus, teachers have to make sure that the speaking activity is of a real-life use which students can experience the same outside the classroom. Thornbury (2005) suggests in order to become autonomous, learners will need to experience a quality of communication in the classroom that is essentially the same as communication outside the classroom.

### **1.5. Types of Speaking Tasks**

The primary goal of speaking tasks is mainly to teach learners how to express their thoughts, so to establish any task of speaking development, the teacher should give priority to learners needs. We should focus on three effective types of activities that would help teachers to smoothly manage oral courses.

#### **1.5.1. Role Play Task**

Role play activity is an effective type of speaking tasks when learners feel free what to say through the exposure to different chances to practice their language as Ur (1981: 9) claims "the use of role play has added a tremendous number of possibilities for communication practice." In such task, learners are usually given a scenario of a role, then do little of preparation to perform small sense through which they use their own ideas as

well as any other information that they are given by their teacher. Role play task also gives teachers of oral expression the possibility to introduce some interesting variations to a discussion. For example, in a role play about pollution, you may have information saying 'you are the planet earth; you do not think people are listening to you' which means you have to give a kind of speech to the human beings acknowledging the bad effects of the exaggerated use of the natural sources.

### **1.5.2. Free Discussion Task**

When the teacher enters the classroom of a foreign language and says 'today we are going to talk about oil pollution. What do you think?' Probably, the learner's reaction is that of looking at each other and wondering what to say. Therefore, free discussion task is of a great importance and should not go spontaneously. The teacher has to select the topic according to learners' knowledge and experience. Moreover, he or she should clarify the objectives of the free discussion task, in doing so, may push the learners to speak. Hedge (2000) believes that the crucial advantage that free discussion provides is that it gives learners the opportunity to practice and acquire the strategies required in interpersonal communication like turn-taking. (as cited in Fatoum, 2012)

### **1.5.3. Dialogue**

Dialogue is a daily activity that all foreign language learners do that because of the great benefits they may have. The teacher can divide the students into pairs where they are already given a scenario of a dialogue, for instance, in a post office, and to start such task, the teacher should demonstrate the dialogue with a confident student, and then allow the students to do it in pairs. Student-student pair work can have two different forms: two students perform a dialogue where the others listen to them, this kind of form called 'Open pair work'.

The second form is called ‘Closed pair work’ in which all students perform in pairs at one time and the teacher should play the role of observer and feedback provider if necessary. With such task the interaction moves from teacher-student interaction into student-student classroom interaction. Even in large classes and insufficient materials, setting up pair work is not an impossible management challenge (Thornbury, 2005).

#### **1.5.4. Information Gap Activity**

This type of speaking tools is excellent to make students interact with each other where two speakers have different parts of information making up a whole which means that each one is going to share particular information that the other has no idea about it, in order to reach an outcome (Harmer, 1998, p. 88), we mention some of information gap activity use:

- Increasing students' motivation for speaking.
- Ensuring equal students' participation.
- Developing both accuracy and fluency of students.
- Improving students' ability of negotiating meaning.

#### **1.5.5. Group work**

It is commonly used task in the English classes through which the EFL teachers divide their learners into small groups and no more than five students per group in which they tackle a particular topic of their interest. Most importantly, psychologically speaking, such activity boosts the EFL learners’ sense of contribution. As Jones (1996, p. 1) stated “These activities give you a chance to express your ideas and hear the views of other students in the class”. Group activity makes students know each other more in terms of mentality because that help them to be comfortable when interacting and of course the role of the teacher is guiding the discussed topic by giving chance to every student to express their ideas.

### **1.5.6. Story Telling**

It is one of the most important tasks of not just helping students to practice the target language, but also it gives learners a chance to know each other more through which they can feel more comfortable when speaking with each other. As Thornbury (2005, p. 95) states that story telling activity is “Universal function of language and one of the main ingredients of casual conversations”. Such task has been an essential tool for learners to practice their English for many years; in the past story telling activity was based on series of pictures on which a story is demonstrated to be told by the students, but recently it is more personalized in which learners have to tell their own stories. (Thornbury, 2005, p. 96)

### **1.5.7. Problem-solving**

It is another useful activity through which students find themselves obliged to speak because they are asked to make a solution for a specific issue in groups. As it is defined by Barker & Gaut (2002) “A problem-solving group is a group of people who work together to a problem by collecting information about the problem, reviewing that information, and making a decision based upon their findings” (Cited in Boussiada, 2010) The problem-solving task can be imaginative or realistic; the former is used at most by teachers in which they ask their students to imagine, for instance, they are in a desert island alone and there are all what they need of food and water, and then the teacher asks them that they have to list eight to twelve things they think are necessary to keep alive.

During the activity students are allowed to discuss in pairs or in groups the reasons, the suggestions and to reject whatever they do not like and modify what they like, so they are free to discuss until they agree upon one solution.

## **1.6. Characteristics of the Speaking Skill**

To enhance speaking, learners should follow the process of practicing their English language through which they acquire communicative competence. Fluency and accuracy

are a dichotomy, though they are linked and both go together in a language. Therefore, learners should have the knowledge of how the language system does work appropriately and correctly.

### **1.6.1. Fluency**

Most English language learners aim to master fast speaking without any pauses. In doing so, they think that they are good speakers as Thornbury (2005, p. 7) suggests that "even proficient speakers need to stop from time to time to allow the formulation of an utterance to catch up with its conceptualization" which means, to reach fluency, students should have the ability to speak English in different situations and experience no constant blocks where they cannot express a specific idea as Douglas (2007, p. 407) claims "fluent speakers can participate in any conversation with a high degree of fluency."

Moreover, when we say that good speaker uses pauses does not have the meaning of using it constantly and in a way that is not meaningful. For Thornbury (2005) "natural sending pauses are those that occur at the intersection of clauses, or after groups of words that form a meaningful unit. Unnatural pauses on the other hand, occur midway between related groups of words". That is to say when speaking there should be a natural amount of distribution of pauses (Bygate, 2009).

### **1.6.2. Accuracy**

When English language learners reach that good level of fluency. Richards & Rodgers (2001, p. 157) argue that learners start to realize that they need the other part of dichotomy to master the English language which is 'accuracy' (Cited in Kadri, 2014, p. 8) The latter means to speak well on professional issues in English. Also, to develop a high level of accuracy, that means to use grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary somehow in a perfect way (Hedge, 2000, p. 61), so learners of English should focus on the grammatical structure, pronunciation and vocabulary (Ellis, 2005, cited in Kouicem, 2009).

### 1.6.2.1. Grammar

Any language has its own system of organizing words and sentences to meaningfully form a speech. A common fact is that a sentence needs subject, verb and often an object. Harmer (2001, p.12) defines grammar as “the description of the ways in which words can change their forms and can be combined into sentences in that language” and to say that grammar is crucial in any language, he also adds "if grammar rules are too carelessly violated, communication may suffer" That is why high level language learners should learn grammar, whether it is written or spoken. The spoken grammar is completely different from the written one and Thornbury (2005) lists the following features of speaker grammar:

- Clause is the basic unit of construction
- Clauses are usually added (co-ordination)
- Head+ body+ tail construction.
- Direct speech favoured.
- Vagueness tolerated
- A lot of ellipsis
- Many question tags
- Performance effects, including:
  - Hesitations
  - Repeats
  - False starts
  - Incompletion
  - Syntactic blends

### **1.6.2.2. Vocabulary**

Vocabulary is "the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning" (Lewis, 1993). Thus, vocabulary is crucial to English language teaching because without sufficient vocabulary, students cannot understand others or express their own ideas. Hence, accuracy does not only include correct vocabulary, but also correct grammar and pronunciation (Harmer, 2001). Accordingly, we will shed some light on pronunciation in the following section.

### **1.6.2.3. Pronunciation**

The importance of teaching pronunciation lies in making students aware of stress, sounds and intonation. Moreover, the more they listen, the perfect pronunciation they seem to acquire. The focus of learning pronunciation is about the areas of word, phrase and sentence stress and intonation to have the knowledge of rising and falling tones (Harmer, 1998).

## **1.7. Students Psychological Problems of Speaking**

The EFL learners suffer from many difficulties which can be social, linguistic or psychological. The latter is what they suffer in common, we will mention some psychological problems learners may face when speaking

### **1.7.1. Fear of Making Mistakes**

Fear of making mistakes is a psychological factor among many that hinder students from practicing their speaking in English class. The EFL learners think that they have to perform speaking perfectly from the first time. That is to say, they misunderstand the meaning of learning speaking as Ur (2000, p. 111) states "learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom, worried about making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply of the attention that their speech attracts." Here comes the role of the teacher to implement the idea of that mistakes equals learning

and they mostly can learn from their mistakes, so that they overcome reasons that cause them the fear of making mistakes such as looking foolish in front of their peers, also because they are less confident. (Kurtus, 2001)

### **1.7.2. Lack of Self-confidence**

Students who are less confident suffer from doubting their potentials of speaking English in communicative task. As Ni Hui (2012, cited in Djamila, 2014) describes those students and says "they are usually found to be extremely fearful and timid, reluctant to express their opinions and even unable to utter a complete meaningful sentence in class". The reason of being less confident to practice their speaking is commonly related to that when they realize that their conversation partners do not understand them or when they do not understand other speakers (Johanna, 2012, p. 102). However, to build students' confidence, the teacher should maximize students' exposure to English which is a good strategy to establish self-confidence among learners. (Ye. Htve as cited in Johanna, 2012)

### **1.7.2. Anxiety**

Anxiety is the most experienced psychological factor by EFL learners when they are incapable to perform speaking production. Hortwitz et al (1986) state "anxiety is the subjective feeling of tension apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system." In the same line Hortwitz (2001) advocated that anxiety seems to be recognized as one of the most highly examined variables in psychological research (Cited in Djabari, 2013) Concerning the causes of anxiety, Hostwitz et al (1986) established three main causes of students' anxiety which are: First, communication apprehension that refers to the students ability to communicate in the target language. Second, fear of negative evaluation is related to other students' evaluation and the third one is test anxiety which addresses students' fear of being tested.

## **8. Teachers' Feedback**

Feedback is the information given back to the listener during a conversation, it shows speaker's attitude towards the listener and how it influences the listener's attitude towards the speaker. Grombczewska (2011, p. 2) states "Feedback is information concerning the comprehension and reception of the speaker's message given by the listener" (Cited in Marlena, 2011). Feedback can be of teachers and can be of classmates to each other. The former is cleaved into metalinguistic and corrective feedback; metalinguistic is also called explicit feedback and is where teachers provide the students with the linguistic form of their grammatical errors. Whereas corrective feedback refers to the implicit feedback through which the teacher asks for clarification by rephrasing the learners' words or utterances. To sum up, Mackey (2007, p. 30) claims "through interaction that involves feedback, the attention of the learners is paid to the form of errors and is pushed to create modification". That is to say, when students are engaged in a communicative activity, they tend to centre their attention to any type of language production mistakes.

Student-student feedback can be different from teacher's feedback in terms of precision and respect for others' feelings because there are some students who get hurt when their errors are corrected by their partners. Thus, teachers should play their role as guide and provide non threatening atmosphere in which they start accepting the fact that no one is out of criticism.

## **Conclusion**

For recent decades, learning speaking skill has become the focus of most EFL learners. Therefore, we shed some considerable light on what does speaking skill mean, also we put forward to demonstrate how much the speaking skill is important in EFL classes. That is to say, EFL students intend to master the speaking skill which reflects how

good they are in learning the target language. Moreover, research studies provide EFL teachers with insights into the valuable criteria of integrating learners in different tasks and such criteria help teachers to establish the right activity for communication. In the end of this chapter, we discussed some psychological factors that hinder students to speak English. Moreover, we put forward definition of feedback and we clarified that feedback can be of two different types: explicit and implicit feedback, and then we shed light on another type of feedback which is student-student feedback that can cause embarrassment for some learners. These are the main points through which the chapter aims at bringing insights into the area of speaking skill in EFL classes.

# Chapter Two

## Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

## Chapter two: Foreign Language Learning Anxiety

### Introduction

For the last few decades, numerous researches have been proving that learning and teaching communication skills is essential in our casual and professional life. The English language has become quite demanding in Algeria, and that is why English is taught in every institution around the country, even though the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing are established in each syllabus for teaching English, but the focus still speaking to almost all learners because it is common thought that communication makes maintenance of the social and the occupational relationships.

To master communication skills, it needs situational and social context (Gu Yueguo, 1998. Cited in Azizifar *et al*, 2014) It needs real-life situations where they can practice their English, in doing so, learners may encounter linguistic and psychological difficulties. The latter is experienced in common according to recent researches that investigate different psychological variables which learners are exposed to such as lack of self confidence, shyness and the most examined one is ‘Anxiety’ which can be the trigger for other psychological variables.

Under the title of ‘Foreign Language Learning Anxiety’, this chapter is mainly devoted for treating anxiety from different angles. We begin by introducing some definitions about anxiety, then presenting the different types of anxiety. In addition, we put forward the sources of anxiety throughout two known different classifications of Hurwitz, Cope and Dolly, Young that can help teachers of foreign language to address anxious learners. Moreover, we show how anxiety affects students’ learning and we establish some characteristics of anxious students. At the end of this chapter, we present the role of teachers in reducing learners’ anxiety.

## **2.1. Foreign Language Learning Anxiety**

Foreign language learning anxiety is a phenomenon by which the attention of large number of researchers was attracted. Researchers like Hortwitz who created the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale through which we can measure learners' anxiety level of foreign language learning.

### **2.1.1 Definition of Anxiety**

Anxiety is being uncomfortable when performing a specific task, particularly, speaking a foreign language. It has been in the limelight of language research for decades (Djebbari, 2013, p. 55). That is to say, it is recognized as one of the most highly examined variables in psychological research (Hortwitz, 2001). Therefore, it is not easy to define in simple words (Brown, 2007). As Scovel (1978) defines anxiety "It is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension or worry" (Cited in Brown, 2007). So, it can be the trigger to other psychological variables.

In one way or another, we all have had experienced the feeling of being anxious where we forget and make mistakes, even though we are well versed about a specific topic as Dorney (2005) claims that "Most of us will have had the experience that in an anxiety-provoking climate our L2 knowledge often deteriorate: we forget things that we otherwise know and also make silly mistakes".

When speaking about anxiety in the classroom, we can find Hortwitz *et al.* (1986, p. 128) define anxiety as "a distinct complex of self perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to the classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Moreover, Gardener and MacIntyre (1993) viewed foreign language anxiety as "The apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a foreign language with which the individual is not fully proficient". That is to say, the learner worries about what is going to happen when s/he should speak English language in

a particular situation that s/he knows a little about. As defined in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, anxiety is “uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future”; while according to the Collins Cobuild Dictionary anxiety is “A state of intense apprehension or worry often accompanied by physical symptoms such as shaking, intense feelings in the gut”.

### **2.1.2. Anxiety in the Language Learning Theory**

The process of learning a foreign language is the same as acquiring the mother tongue language as Krashen stated in his well known hypothesis of “The Affective Filter Hypothesis”. This hypothesis explains the ability of some learners to learn foreign language instead of others. Moreover, it clarifies the relationship between some affective factors and the process of second language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, cited in Achbi & Sbaa, 2011). Krashen claims that the same we have been exposed to our first language, we should be exposed also to the input of the foreign language so that we can master it. However, he stated, there are many factors that can affect the way the input is passed and received. Anxiety is no exception; it is a crucial variable which affects the pass and the reception of the input in learning a foreign language.

Learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter (Gass and Selinker, 2008). In other words, Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated that anxious learners seem to have a high affective filter which prevents them to learn the second language naturally and successfully.

Anxiety is as a 'mental block' that prevents second language learners from using the foreign target language (Hortwitz *et al.*, 1986). Consequently, a comprehensible input is not enough, but it should be presented in a safer environment where learners' anxiety is

low (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, when the anxiety is ‘high’, it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, comprehensible input is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to occur.

### **2.1.3. Studies on Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign language learning anxiety has been the subject of a growing body of research because of that it is one of the main internal variables that can limit the development of second language acquisition process as MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) stated that anxiety is one of the best predictors of success in the second language. According to Djigunovic (2006), researchers have been interested in the relationships of anxiety to second language learning since 1960s (Tianjian, 2010).

Anxiety has been investigated by researchers through three perspectives when studying the relationships of anxiety to language learning (As cited in Djebbari, 2013):

- Trait Anxiety is rather steady personality quality, it is “an individual’s likelihood of becoming anxious in any situation” (Spielberger, 1983, cited. in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 87).
- State Anxiety is a temporary anxiety, a response to a particular anxiety-provoking stimulus such as an important test (Horwitz, 2001, p. 113).
- Situation-Specific Anxiety refers to the constant and multifaceted nature of some anxieties (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991 cited in Horwitz, 2001, p. 113).It is aroused by a specific type of situation or event such as public speaking, examinations, or class participation (Ellis, 1994).

The latter perspective, situation-specific anxiety, achieved better results than other perspectives as MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) suggested that every type of anxiety has been investigated by different group of researchers; some are concerned with trait anxiety,

others dealt with state anxiety, and other researchers have taken situation-specific anxiety. The latter is more likely to have plausible findings.

#### **2.1.4. Instruments Used in Studying Foreign Language Anxiety**

The investigation into the anxiety of foreign language learning due to 1960s (Djiguvonic, 2006) and since then many researchers used different instruments such as questionnaires, interviews and diaries which are orientated to learners and teachers (Young, 1991). The commonly used instrument is so-called Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale or FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986) and it is used to measure the students' English language anxiety. This scale includes questions such as "I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class", "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English" and "It embarrasses me when I volunteer answers in my English class". However, whatever the instrument the researcher uses in investigating foreign language anxiety, s/he is able to investigate any aspect of foreign language learning.

## **2.2. Types of Language Anxiety**

Boredom, shyness and other psychological variables that affect foreign language learning, anxiety is no exception. Since it is related to the psychology of the individual, so it does not occur as a single issue; it can rather acquire forms of manifestation (Abderrezzag, 2009). Although some types have been recognized before others, most of researchers indicate all types of foreign language anxiety, state and trait anxiety, situation-specific anxiety (Achbi & Sabba, 2011).

### **2.2.1. Trait Anxiety**

According to Spielberger (2005) trait anxiety is a general characteristic of an individual's personality as Levitt (1980) defines it "a constant condition without time limitation". Based on this definition, individuals, who experience an anxiety trait, will tend

to experience trait anxiety all the times and whatever the situation is. People who develop a more anxiety-trait are much more prone to reacting to a large level of stimuli, and will be more able to worry in less dangerous and hard situations (Spielberger, 2005). Unlike people who suffer from state anxiety, a person who is trait anxious is likely to feel anxious in a variety of situations (Woodrow, 2006).

### **2.2.2. State Anxiety**

State anxiety is an unpleasant feeling which can seriously disturb the individual's ability to react positively to any situation and in a certain environment (Abderrezzag, 2009). Unlike trait anxiety, state anxiety is not enduring characteristic of an individual's personality as Spielberger (1966) stated "transitory state or condition of the organism that varies in intensity and fluctuates overtime" (Cited in Jean, 2006) For instance, the apprehension that a learner experiences before taking an examination (Spielberger, 1983, cited in Jean, 2006).

### **2.2.3. Specific-Situation Anxiety**

Upon the work done by Spielberger, MacIntyre and Gardner identified another type of anxiety which is situation specific anxiety (Pappamihel, 2002, cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2001). Situation specific-anxiety is considered to be "the probability of becoming anxious in a particular type of situation, such as during tests (labeled as 'test anxiety'), when solving mathematics problem ('math anxiety'), or particularly when speaking second language ('language anxiety')", (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 2). In brief, situation-specific anxiety is referred to the general orientation of anxiety and certain situations or in a learning context where the learner finds him/ herself uncomfortable when reading a passage or speaking in a second language. (Abderrezzag, 2009, p. 8)

### 2.3. The Role of Anxiety in Learning Foreign Language

The common sense of the word ‘Anxiety’ is that feeling that makes the individual feel stressed and not performing well in a particular task. However, does that mean that anxiety is only debilitating, specifically, learners? Nowadays, researchers have been conducting studies about how anxiety can be facilitative. Upon their researches they make a distinction between the two forms of anxiety: Facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety.

Anxiety in itself cannot be negative most of the times and in supporting this Maclellan (1986, p. 40) stated that:

Anxiety is usually a warning that alerts a person to the fact that something is wrong and prepares him or her to face the anxiety-producing situation. A lack of anxiety may result in an “I-don’t-care” attitude that, in fact, may increase the potential for failure. Moderate levels of anxiety, however, are beneficial. They supply motivation and added energy and increase one’s ability to focus on the task at hand. On the other hand, too much anxiety can be damaging, causing “hyped-up” and jittery feelings so intense that effective use of energies towards achieving a goal becomes impossible (cited in Binti Abdul Aziz, 2007, p. 6)

A low level of anxiety can be helpful for learners to enhance their learning and speaking performance in particular. According to Scovel (1978) facilitating-anxiety keeps the learner motivated and ‘fight’ the new information and pushing them to do more efforts to reduce the negative impact of anxiety (cited in Ellis, 1994). Moreover, anxiety does not only hinder achievement but in some cases improves and develops it (Dorney, 2005). Horwitz (1990) found that anxiety is only useful for simple learning activities. However, unlike facilitating anxiety, debilitating anxiety is more related to insufficient performance; also it hinders learners’ performance in different ways, both indirectly through worry and self-doubt and directly by reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language (Oxford, 1990), for instance, debilitating anxiety negatively affects the students’ preparation before and during exams, such as revising until the last second before the exam

starts or thinking that they will not finish answering all the questions on time (Alpert & Haber, 1960, cited in Abderrezzag, 2009).

Despite the fact that researchers have distinguished two forms of anxiety; facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety, Scovel (1978, p. 139-139), he argued that they “work...in tandem, serving simultaneously to motivate and to warn, as the individual gropes to learn an ever-changing sequence of new facts in the environment” (cited in Jean, 2006). By which he meant that facilitating and debilitating anxiety can be simultaneously experienced by the learner.

## **2.4. Sources of Anxiety**

Anxiety is what learners suffer from when learning a foreign language during different tasks, whether these activities are of productive or of receptive skills, and whatever the level of anxiety is experienced, researchers have been trying to identify the various causes for anxiety. Researchers such as Hortwitz, Hortwitz, and Cope established a classification which consists of three causes; also there is Dolly’s classification in which six sources have been included.

### **2.4.1. The Classification of Hortwitz, Hortwitz and Cope**

Three components of foreign language anxiety were described by Hortwitz, Hortwitz, and Cope in their classification: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

#### **2.4.1.1. Communication Apprehension**

Communication apprehension is what learners think of foreign language anxiety, Hortwitz, Hortwitz, & Cope, (1986, p. 127) define it as “a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communicating with people”. Those learners who doubt their oral communication skills, speaking and listening, they feel uncomfortable when communicating in public. Therefore, they avoid being anxious by being silent, even though

they have a good knowledge as Hortwitz & Young(1991) stated “communication apprehension occurs in cases where learners lack mature communication skills although they have mature ideas and thoughts” (Cited in Shabaani, 2012). To conclude, those learners who suffer from communication apprehension are likely to be less able to learn a second language and develop their communicative skills (Hortwitz, 1996. Cited in Ben Alahem, 2013)

#### **2.4.1.2. Test-Anxiety**

When speaking about test-anxiety, we obviously can recognize that this source of anxiety is of test-related, and then we can define it as worry and fear which learners experience before and during a test. Sarason (1984) defines test-anxiety as “the tendency to view with alarm the consequences of inadequate performance in an evaluative situation” (Cited in Chan Wu, 2004, p. 293). That is to say, test-anxious learner suffers from the fear of bad evaluation by the instructor as Hortwitz *et al.* (1986) claimed that “test-anxiety refers to a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure”, and then add that learners believe that whether performing perfectly during a test or not; performing less than perfect is a failure. Both learners with high or low level in English language may experience a particular degree of test-anxiety may make errors.

#### **2.4.1.3. Fear of Negative Evaluation**

As a third component, fear of negative evaluation is considered to be an extension to test-anxiety (Tanveer, 2007) where learners ignore that making mistakes equals learning. Therefore, they prefer not to speak in public, so based on that result we can say that fear of negative evaluation is related to communication apprehension (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991 Cited in Ben Alahem, 2013). In addition, the fear of negative evaluation might be of the teacher or of classmates through their reactions and gestures (Shams, 2006, p. 10, cited in Tanveer, 2007). To conclude, the cause of the fear of negative evaluation can be of that

learners may not be certain of the way they express their ideas to others and also being unable to understand what others speak about which leads learners to get frustrated (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991 cited in Ben Alahem, 2013).

All of the components have great effects on the foreign language learning; they are closely related to each other, but have not the meaning that this classification is the only combination of anxiety sources in foreign language learning. Rather, we will discuss another classification of ‘Dolly’ in the following section.

#### **2.4.2. The Classification of Dolly J. Young**

Dolly J. Young put forward a different classification from Hortwitz *et al* classification in that Dolly J. Young gave more details and different sources of foreign language anxiety and this classification includes: personal and interpersonal anxiety, learners’ beliefs about language learning, and others.

##### **2.4.2.1. Personal and Interpersonal Anxiety**

The title suggests different issues related to the individual and individuals interaction. We will present in this type of source the following issues such as competitiveness, self-esteem, ability, social anxiety, and existential anxiety.

Competitiveness is when learners compare themselves to each other as Bailey (1983, p. 96) defines competitiveness as learners’ “desire to excel in comparison to others” (Cited in Toth, 2010, p. 33); consequently, they may experience anxiety when recognizing that they are insufficient in performing a task. Thus, based on this definition, we can come to that “anxiety results when competitive learners perceive themselves as less competent compared to others, that is, when they feel unable to compete” (Toth, 2010, p. 33). To conclude, when learners tend to compete in EFL classes, it is likely to feel anxious, if they doubt their potentials. In brief, competitiveness as a source of anxiety is related to the

learners' self-esteem; they may not feel anxious when competing because of that the other is performing better than they do, if they believe in their own abilities.

Self-esteem is how learners evaluate their potentials as Arnold (1999, p. 12) defines it “inevitable evaluations one makes about one’s own worth”, it is involuntarily judgments that the learner, for example, makes when feeling confident about the consequences of a particular task. Arnold adds that self-esteem is a basic requirement for successful cognitive and affective activity. Moreover, self-esteem can determine learners’ success or failure; learners with a high self-esteem are more likely to develop their speaking skill in particular. On the other hand, learners with a low self-esteem may have insufficient achievements. Brown (1977) claims that “A person with high self-esteem is able to reach out beyond himself more freely, to be less inhibited, and because of his ego strength, to make the necessary mistakes involved in language learning with less threat in his ego” (Cited in Djebbari, 2013, p. 57). That is to say, the high level of self-esteem works as an effective factor; it protects learners to not get anxious due to making mistakes during the process of learning.

The ability as a cause for foreign language anxiety has a great deal to do with the level of learners’ anxiety in that of the higher the learners’ ability, the lower their anxiety as the investigation was conducted by Hembree (1988, p. 73) that says “The higher the student’s ability level, the lower the test anxiety” (cited in Young, 1991, p. 427). Therefore, Young (1991, p. 427) explains that the students who have that kind of believe that they have low ability level in doing a particular task are more likely than other to experience foreign language anxiety.

Social anxiety expresses the anxiety related to society; it has been related to the difficulty of speaking in public, communication apprehension, (Young, 1991) and since people or learners care about others judgments about their performance in a specific

activity (Leary, 1982, cited in Young, 1991) which makes them starting to lose their positive self-image about themselves; consequently, they experience the social anxiety. Such learners prefer to keep calm, passive, and they respond only when necessary. Krashen suggests that “psychological phenomena are particular to the foreign language setting, such as the concepts of "group membership and existential anxiety” (cited in Young, 1991, p. 428), the latter is what we will discuss in the next section.

Learning a foreign language means knowing a new culture; existential anxiety is another cause of Foreign Language Anxiety where learners experience the fear of losing their identity and their self-image (Radin cited in Young, 1991). She adds that a learner with such anxiety thinks as follows: “if I learn another language, I will somehow lose myself”. To conclude, learners who suffer from such anxiety, they fear to fall into ‘assimilation’ as sociologists call it; they may forget their culture when learning another language.

#### **2.4.2.2. Learner’ Belief about Language Learning**

Many researchers investigated the idea of that learner’s beliefs about language learning can be a cause of language anxiety, however, Hortwitz *et al.* (1986) were the first who claimed that learner’s beliefs may cause language anxiety, also Young (1991) goes with the same idea (cited in Kalajahi, 2014). As Gynan reports that each individual or learner have their own language aspect that they are interested in, for instance, some prefer grammar, others focus on communication, and others, for popularity, they give great importance to translation and traveling countries where language is spoken (Cited in Young, 1991). Therefore, on the one hand, for teachers it is helpful to know the focus of their learners so that to develop their language skills, and on the other hand, it may be a source of anxiety in that when learners make mistakes and their expectations about the

mastery of a particular aspect of the language is not achieved because they give it a great attention (Young, 1991).

Many researchers established the idea of that instructor beliefs about language learning may be a cause of language learning anxiety (Oxford cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2011). On the one hand, most of the instructors believe that creating threatening atmosphere for learners may enhance their performance as Branbl claims that “the majority of the instructors considered a little bit of intimidation a necessary and supportive motivator for promoting students’ performance” (Cited in Young, 1991, p. 428). On the other hand, some instructors think that they have to be less friendly and correct learners’ mistakes constantly, also they think of teaching as a teacher-centered. Such instructors are more likely to create language anxiety for their students (Young, 1991).

#### **2.4.2.3. Instructor-Learner Interaction**

The idea of that instructor learner interaction can be a cause of language anxiety is reported in various researches such as Hortwitz et al and others (Young, 1991). Error correction is considered an important issue in instructor-learner interaction as Oxford suggested that “Harsh error correction, ridicule, and the uncomfortable handling of mistakes in front of a class are among the most important instructor-learner interaction issues related to language anxiety” (cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2011, p. 19). Accordingly, students may feel ‘stupid’ in front of their peers because of the incorrect answer (Young, 1991). Moreover, studies conducted by Hortwitz, Koch and Terrell, and Young feel that correcting students errors is crucial for improving performance, but instructors should take into consideration the how they do error correction to avoid causing apprehension for learners.

#### **2.4.2.4. Classroom Procedures**

Whatever the activity which is held in the classroom, students are required to speak in the target language; therefore, learners may experience anxiety. Koch and Terrell came to the following result “The most producing-anxiety activities are oral presentation and oral skits” (Cited in Young, 1991), also quizzes and when they are called on to speak in front of their classmates; these two activities are considered as stronger sources of anxiety. Moreover, there are some students as reported in Young (1990) who feel at ease when they do not have to speak in front of their peers. (Cited in Young, 1991)

#### **2.4.2.5. Language Testing**

Language testing is among many sources of language anxiety in which students are exposed to apprehension, and they are anxious due to unfamiliarity of the given test; it is when they find that the kind of activities which have been taught by the instructor are totally different from those they may have during tests (Young, 1991). In addition, Young adds that whenever the teachers give more evaluation to their students and establish vague tests, the students are going to feel more anxious.

### **2.5. The Effect of Anxiety on Students’ Learning**

The word “effect” in the title above shows that anxiety has been distinguished into two facets that may contribute in developing or hindering the language learning process as Scovel (1978) reports that “Anxiety can be either facilitating or debilitating” (Cited in Chan & Wu, 2004, p. 294). That is to say, facilitating anxiety can function as a trigger for learners to address the unfamiliar activity. Whereas, debilitating anxiety function as a barrier for learners in which they tend to escape the new learning task. Therefore, researchers establish a distinction between the negative effects and the positive ones.

### **2.5.1. The Negative Effects of Anxiety on Students' Learning**

Many researchers have been proved that anxiety has a great effect on language learning; in terms of that anxiety hinders and demotivates learners from enhancing their language skills. Researchers have reported that anxiety can affect learners' degree of motivation, performance, and their grades.

#### **2.5.1.1. Motivation**

Learners with a high level of anxiety due to, for instance, vague test in speaking, writing or concerning other skill, they may come to be less motivated because of the high degree of anxiety they are exposed to as it is suggested by Gardner and Lalonde (1987), Hashimoto (2002) "Foreign language anxiety was found to be negatively related to FL motivation" (cited in Khodadady & Khajavi, 2013, p. 272).

#### **2.5.1.2. Performance**

Motivation plays a great role to help learners to perform well in different skills, but if motivated learners become anxious, they would insufficiently perform during language classes. McIntyre & Gardner (1991) claims that "anxiety have been proved that it negatively affect performance in the second language" (cited in Chan & Wu, 2004, p. 296).

#### **2.5.1.3. Grades**

Grades are of a great importance for learners to pass a particular degree. Various studies showed that grades can be affected by different psychological variables such as lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, and anxiety. This latter is the focus of many researchers as it is the trigger for other problems in language learning. Researchers like Hortwitz et al. Liao, and Aida have investigated the effect of anxiety on grades and they found that anxiety can have a debilitating effect on grades (Chang & Wu, 2004).

## **2.5.2. The Positive Effects of Anxiety on Students' Learning**

When we ask a layman about the relationship between anxiety and foreign language learning, their first impression is that anxiety cannot have a positive effect on language learning; however, there are many researchers who have been investigating the positive effect of anxiety on FLL as Scovel found that “Some researchers suggested that language anxiety was ‘helpful’ or ‘facilitating’ in some ways...” (Oxford as cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2011, p. 22) The effects; for instance, can appear on motivation, marks, competitiveness, achievement, and others.

### **2.5.2.1. Motivation**

Anxiety as a positive variable called ‘facilitating anxiety’ that has a great deal with promoting learners motivation in that it thought “to be motivators to the learners in putting the efforts in the language learning” (Ellis, 1991, as cited in Jain & Sidhu, 2013, p. 116). In addition, the lower the anxiety is, the more students are motivated; Ellis suggests that low anxiety can be as trigger so that they make more effort in doing particular task (Cited in Achbi and Sebaa, 2011).

### **2.5.2.2. Competitiveness**

Bailey was among many researchers who investigated the relationship between anxiety and competitiveness in second language learning through which he claims that such relationship may determines learners’ success (Cited in Brown, 2007). This study was of her personal experience through which she uses a dairy to list the situations in which anxiety improves her performance or hinders it (Hedge, 2000, cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2011). Also, Bailey suggests that she feels anxious when competing; consequently, she becomes more motivated to prepare for her lessons in language class (Brown, 2007).

### **2.5.2.3. Achievement**

As anxiety can have a negative effect on learners' achievement, it can also have a positive one as Dorney (2005) puts forward that anxiety can even enhance students' achievement in a way or another. Moreover, the best scores were achieved by those students who experience higher levels of anxiety (Hortwitz, 2001).

## **2.6. Characteristics of Foreign Language Anxious Learners**

Learners who suffer from language anxiety are likely to show different reactions and signs which tell that, at most cases, their level of anxiety is very high. Therefore, teachers of foreign language should be aware of anxious learners' symptoms because it helps them to address those students who suffer from anxiety. Signs of anxious learners can be classified into the following: general avoidance, physical actions, physical symptoms, and others (Oxford, 1999 as cited in Arnold, 1999).

### **2.6.1. General Avoidance**

Anxious learners tend to react in different ways that show they are having a high level of anxiety; therefore, they cut the class or, for example, they may show carelessness thus lack of volunteering in language class, also they feel that they cannot answer even the simplest questions besides other signs such as forgetting the answer, coming late, arriving unprepared, and low level of verbal production. (Oxford, 1999)

### **2.6.2. Physical Actions**

The way the learners acts or behave reflects the inner feeling of being anxious; anxious learners may squirm or fidget where they move awkwardly on their chairs. Moreover, they play with hair or clothing, nervously touching objects, display jittery behavior, and being unable to correctly produce the sounds or intonation of the target language even after repeated practice (Oxford, 1999).

### **2.6.3. Physical Symptoms**

Psychological conditions can affect the physical ones in that anxiety has the power to cause the body some physical symptoms. Anxious language learners experience different issues on the body such as a headache, experiencing tight muscles, and feeling unexplained pain or tension in any part of the body (Oxford, 1999).

### **2.6.4. Other Signs of Language Anxiety**

Anxious learners may also experience other signs in language classroom; for instance, they tend to be withdrawal where they avoid having a part in a conversation. In addition, they go over studying on a particular lesson without any real understanding. Anxious learner can be detected when they repeatedly answer with one word (monosyllabic responses). Moreover, they are characterized by lack of eye contact, hostility (stop being friendly) and self criticism through which they get at themselves (Oxford, 1999)

## **2.7. Teachers' Role in Reducing Students' Anxiety in Foreign Language**

### **Learning**

There is no doubt that learner of foreign language when speaking may get exposed to some psychological variables and one of these variables is anxiety which has been proved that it has a great impact on students' performance. The title teachers' role is to 'reduce' not to 'demolish' students' anxiety because low anxiety helps a lot as we mentioned in page (39). However, here comes the role of teachers who are capable of addressing the anxious learners by making some interventions (Aida as cited in Achbi & Sebaa, 2011). Researchers provided some tips for teachers to help anxious learners such as creating relaxed atmosphere, teacher-student relationship, group work, and others.

Before giving any speaking or other types of activities which may help students to improve their skills, teachers should provide a relaxed atmosphere for learners so that

lessens their high anxiety as Dorney (2001, p. 40) stated “We need to create a pleasant and a supportive classroom atmosphere”. The main question is that “How teachers can create a relaxed atmosphere?”, the answer can be by applying the norm of tolerance; it is convincing learners that making mistakes is a part of natural learning; consequently, they will not feel embarrassed when making mistakes (Dorney,2001, p. 41). Furthermore, cracking some jokes or what is known as a sense of humour that teachers can apply so that learners feel more comfortable. Dorney (2001) also suggested that giving the chance for learners to make their own physical environment is helpful too in reducing their anxiety. At least but not at last, teachers can use music and games which helps students to relax (Oxford, 1999).

Once learners are shown that they are welcomed by their teacher in a friendly way, they are going to feel safe and to stop squirming or hesitating to take a part in a conversation as Pianta (1999) claims that well achievements are realized when learners feel secured by the close relationship between them and their teacher (Cited in Saidi, 2014). Therefore, the stronger the teacher-student relationship is, the more the students are eager to learn.

Another procedure that teachers should apply is ‘group work’ which gives students more sense of belonging to a group; it makes the anxious learners to feel safe and boost their self-esteem and self-confidence (Dorney, 2001). Once learners find that they all together have achieved a worthy score in a particular task, they start develop their self-confidence as individuals and then as a group (Allright & Bailey as cited in Saidi, 2014). Dorney (2001) claims that when learners work as a team they encourage each other to participate, as a result, they create for each other that spirit of cooperative learning through which they find that they share the same goals, which in turn generate the unity; consequently, anxious learners are no more stressed.

## **Conclusion**

Since 1960s researchers have been trying to investigate the issue of anxiety in foreign language learning through, firstly, giving different definitions for language anxiety such as being uncomfortable when speaking, having a mental block, and feeling stressed when trying to perform a particular task. Researchers have been using various instruments to manage to reach valid interpretations concerning language anxiety, so they used tools such as: dairies, interviews, and especially what Hortwitz calls FLCAS Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale which is commonly used by researchers. Consequently, researchers came up with the so called facilitating and debilitating anxiety; they are two forms of anxiety that help or hinder the learning process, also they established sources of anxiety such as the classifications of Hortwitz et al which consists of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Other causes classification of Dolly, J Young which comprises of personal and interpersonal anxiety, learners' beliefs about language learning, and others. Moreover, researchers discussed the negative and the positive effects on language learning in terms of motivation, grades, achievement, and the like. Most of researchers agreed on that they should identify the anxious learner first through some signs like general avoidance and physical symptoms to give the chance to provide their students with the right atmosphere; for instance, being friendly, humorous, and giving group work activities, so that their learners overcome the language anxiety to go smoothly on improving their skills.

# Chapter Three

## Fieldwork

## **Chapter Three : Fieldwork**

### **Introduction**

The current chapter represents the field work in which we intend to establish the findings that we obtained through the descriptive method using questionnaires for students and teachers. Though we had the intention of conducting an experimental research to investigate the delicate issue of the effect of anxiety on the EFL learners' oral performance, we resorted to the descriptive method instead due to time restriction and social problems. The goal of this chapter is to investigate the effect of anxiety on third year students of English at Mohamed Kheider Biskra University, as well as to explore teachers' attitudes towards language anxiety and its influence on students' speaking performance.

#### **3.1.1. Design and Description of the Data Collecting Tool: Students'**

##### **Questionnaire**

The questionnaire was administered to third year LMD students at the department of English mainly because we observed that they face difficulties in speaking especially due to anxiety. We have randomly selected one hundred (100) students from ten groups as our sample, however, only 62 answered and handed back the questionnaire. Once the questionnaires were gathered and checked, nine (9) copies were omitted since they were not completely answered. The questionnaire used is of semi-structured type divided into four main sections. The first section concerns background information about students; namely age and gender. The second section is about the speaking skill which aims at understanding how students evaluate their speaking level, as well as the obstacles they face in language performance. In the third section, it includes a likert scale of eight (8) questions aiming at investigating students' perceptions about anxiety. As for the fourth section, it consists of four (4) questions: two close-ended and two open-ended. This part aims at providing insights about what makes students less anxious.

### 3.1.2. Analysis of the Results

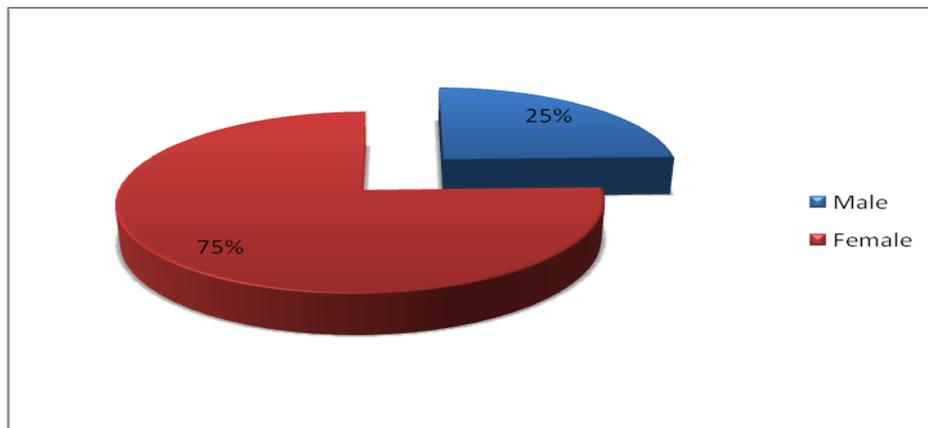
#### Section One: The Students' Profile

##### Q1: Specify your gender

**Table 1:**Students' Gender

Options	Participants	percentage
Male	13	25,52%
Female	40	75,47%

**Graph 1:** Students' Gender



As it is showed in the chart above, (75%) of the sample represents females by (40) which prove that they are the dominant gender; whereas, the rest of the sample (25%) represents males by (13).

##### Q2: Your age

Through the analysis of the questionnaire, we noticed that the participants' age is between 21 and 23 years old; thus, the answers were not different from one another. Accordingly, they would share the same experiences when learning a foreign language. As far as this thesis is concerned, we can say that the younger the learners are, the higher the anxiety will be. That is to say, we can have rich findings throughout our population.

## Section Two: Specific Questions

### Q3: Have you chosen English freely?

**Table 2:** Learners' Choice of English

Options	Participants	percentage
Yes	47	88,67
No	6	11,33

**Graph 2: Learners' Choice of English**

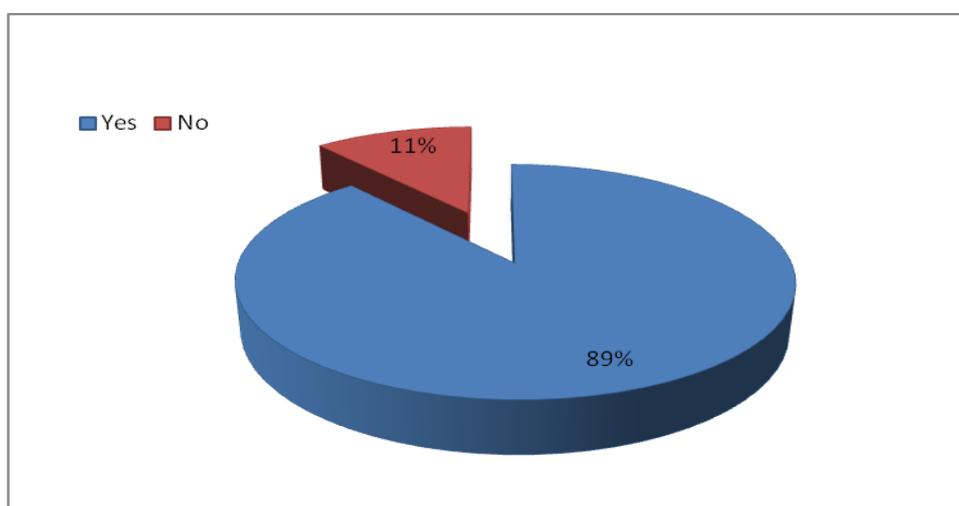


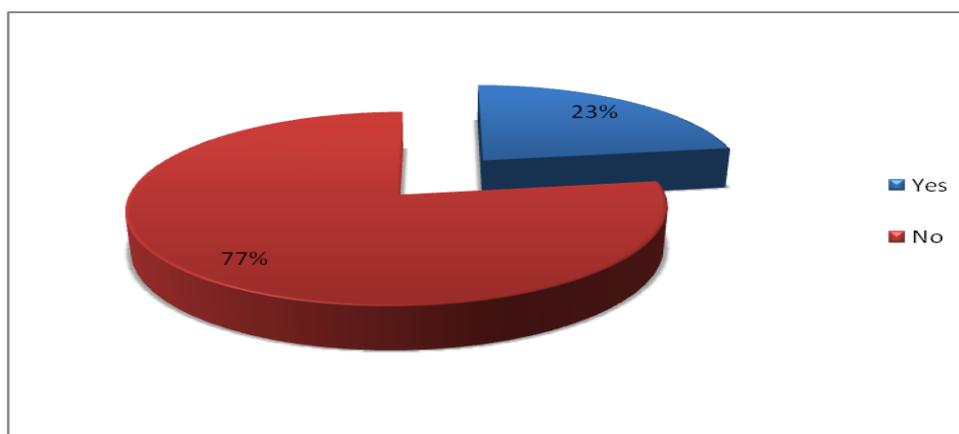
Table 2 shows the number of students who chose English willingly besides those who chose English unwillingly; the students who chose English freely represent (88,67%) due to their passion to learn it, they need it in academic settings, and critically, they learn English to apply for a job. Accordingly, they are going to be more confident to learn and less anxious when performing in the classroom. Whereas, the findings indicate that learners who chose English unwillingly (11,33%), they do study English because they were obliged to do so and therefore experience a high level of anxiety.

#### Q4: Do you think that learning English is difficult

**Table 3:** Participants' Attitudes towards Learning English

Options	Participants	percentage
Yes	12	22,64%
No	41	77,36%

**Graph 3:** Participants' Attitudes towards Learning English



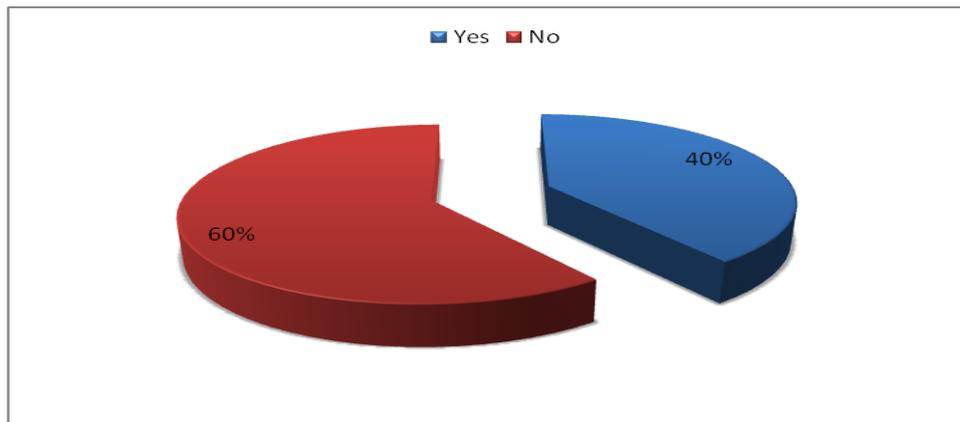
In this question, students were asked whether or not they face difficulties when learning English as a foreign language. From the above results in table 3, a noticeable dominance of the second option that represents the majority of students who answered by 'yes' (77,36%) which explains that a huge number of third year students find learning English easy. At the same time, twelve students (22,64%) declared that they do find English difficult because of the lack of the authentic materials, also they ignore the techniques for improving their level; thus, they may suffer from a high level of anxiety.

#### Q5: Do you speak English outside the classroom?

**Table 4:** Students' Affirmation of Using English outside the Classroom

Options	Participants	percentage
Yes	21	39,62%
No	32	60,37%

**Graph 4:** Students' Affirmation of Using English outside the Classroom



Concerning the fact that the researcher noticed lack of use of the English language in real world, a question was included with the aim of finding any reasons that make them anxious. The results obtained show that (39,62%) of third year students practice English outside the class with the aim of boosting their confidence and prepare themselves before performing inside the class. However, the rest of the students (60,37%) answered by 'No' owing their negative option to the fear of negative feedback from people and the lack of English use in the Algerian society.

**Q6: Do you find the oral expression course stressful?**

**Table 5:** Stress within Oral Expression Course

Options	Participants	percentage
Yes	25	47,16%
No	28	52,83%

**Graph 5:** Stress within Oral Expression Course

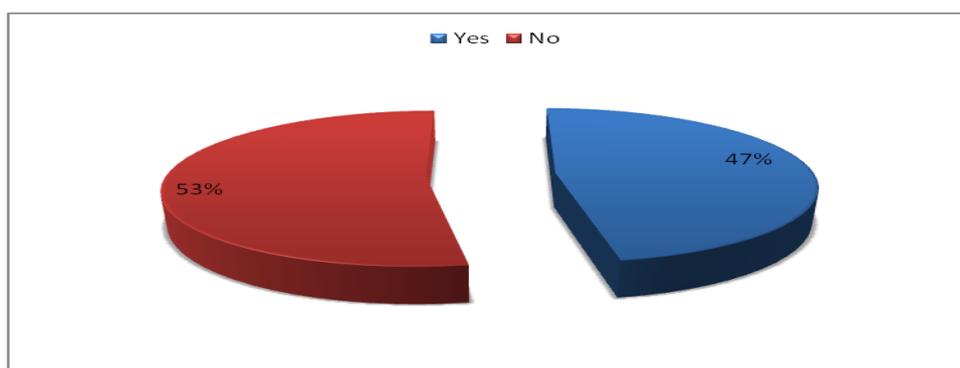


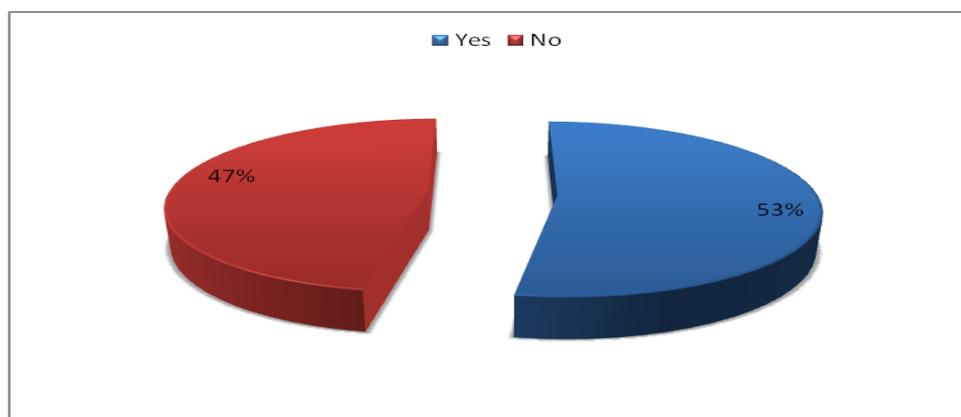
Table 5 demonstrates the students' attitudes towards whether they find the oral expression course stressful. As the obtained data show, there is a slight difference between the two options 'Yes and No'; students who finds the oral expression course stressful represents (25%) due to the exposure to many skills, fear of making mistakes, and most importantly, the discussed subjects are uninteresting. Whereas, (52,83%) answered by 'No' because the teachers' personality; they are friendly and understandable.

**Q7: Does peer pressure raise your anxiety?**

**Table 6:** Students' Opinions about Peer Pressure

Options	Participants	percentage
Yes	28	52,83%
No	25	47,16%

**Graph 6:** Students' Opinions about Peer Pressure



This question was addressed to students in order to reveal whether peer pressure affects the students' level of anxiety or not. Based on the presented data in table 7, clear results show a slight difference between the two options. (47,16%) responded with 'No' because they are self-confident and they consider their peers as a trigger to compete and learn more. However, Students' answered by 'Yes' represents (52,83%) because of peers' feedback and especially, they justify, "when they are better than us in terms of knowledge".

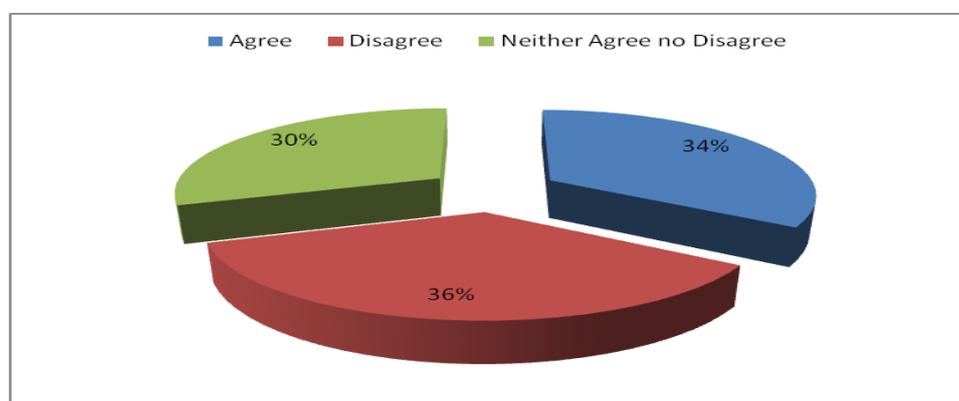
### Section Three: Foreign Language Anxiety

**Q8: I'm frightened when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.**

**Table 7:** Students' fear of misunderstanding the teacher

Lack of self-confidence	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	18	33,97%
<b>Disagree</b>	19	35,84%
<b>Neither</b>	16	30,18%

**Graph 7:** Students' fear of misunderstanding the teacher



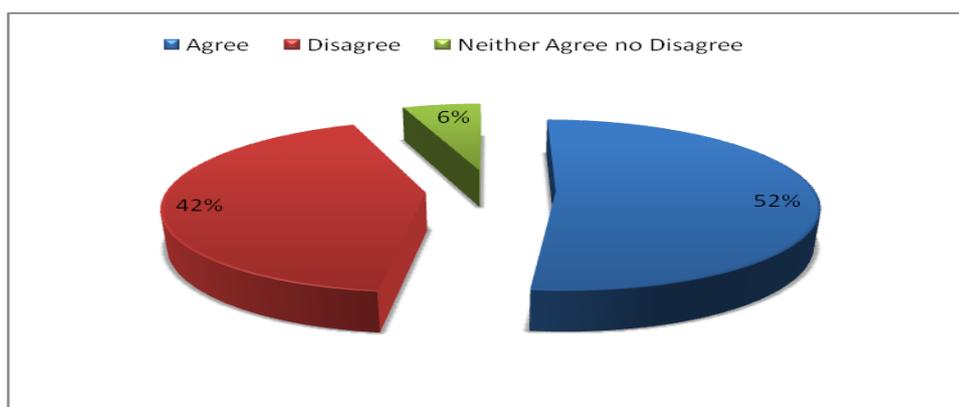
This statement was aimed at knowing whether students can keep up with their teacher when s/he speaks. As the table shows, 30% represents those who were neither with nor against the statement, followed by 36% do not agree with the statement, whereas, 34% represents the percentage of those who fear to misunderstand the teacher when speaking. That is to say, the fear the students encounter can be a probable cause for language anxiety.

**Q9: I do not worry about making mistakes in language class**

**Table 8:** Students' Fear of Making Mistakes

Fear of making mistakes	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	27	52,83%
<b>Disagree</b>	22	41,50%
<b>Neither</b>	2	5,66%

**Graph 8: Students' Fear of Making Mistakes**



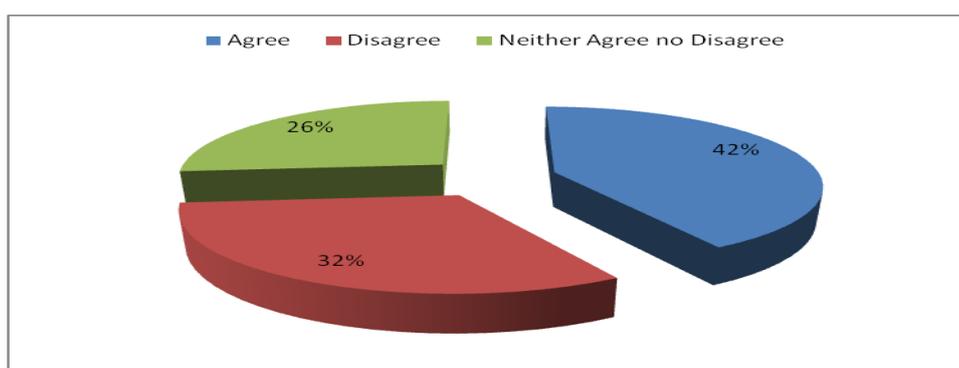
We can clearly observe from the above results that the half of the target sample respondents 52% agreed that they do not worry about making mistakes in language class and only (6%) of the respondents were neither with the statement. Nevertheless, less than a half of the participants (42%) disagreed with the statement, so we can conclude to that the fear of making mistakes plays a great role in raising the students' anxiety; as a result, they will be speechless in language class

**Q 10: I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class**

**Table 9: Students' Reaction when Requested to Speak**

Students' anxiety within class attendance	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	22	41,50%
<b>Disagree</b>	17	32,07%
<b>Neither</b>	14	26,41%

**Graph 9: Students' Reaction when Requested to Speak**



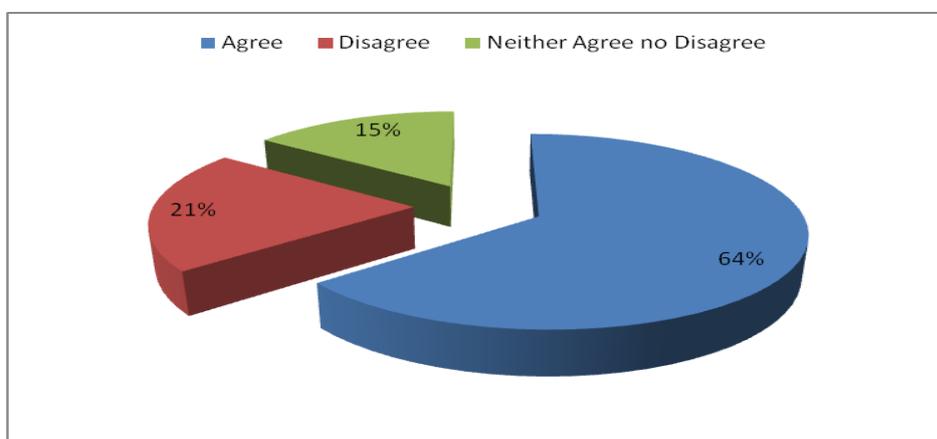
The statement was addressed to students of third year to know whether they tremble when they are called on in the class. 32% was the percentage of respondents who do not tremble when they are asked to speak in language class. Those who were neither agreed nor disagreed represent 26%. Nonetheless, the highest percentage by 42% was of those who agreed on the statement, which means, they may get anxious just because they are asked to speak.

**Q11: It would not bother me at all to take more English classes**

**Table 10:** Students’ Attitudes towards Extra English Classes

Students’ English classes attendance	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	34	64,15%
<b>Disagree</b>	11	20,75%
<b>Neither</b>	8	15,09%

**Graph 10:** Students’ attitudes towards Extra English Classes



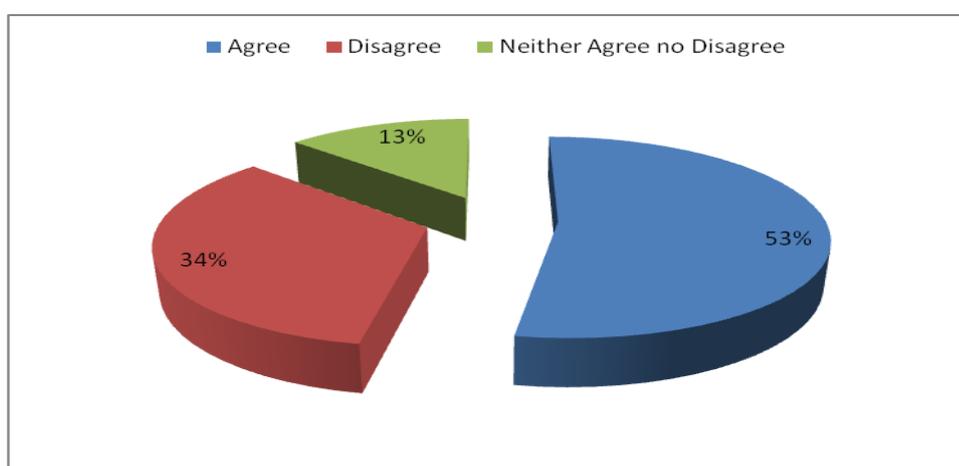
Graph 10 demonstrates respondents’ attitudes towards attending extra English classes. As the obtained data show, the highest students’ response was “agree” with 64%, followed by 21% for “disagree”, then 15% was given to “neither”. The results proved that the respondents are eager to attend more English classes than the ones they usually have.

**Q 12: I keep thinking that the other students are better at speaking than I am**

**Table 11: Students' Self-confidence**

Students' lack of self-confidence	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	28	52,83 %
<b>Disagree</b>	18	33,97 %
<b>Neither</b>	7	13,20 %

**Graph 11: Students' Self-confidence**



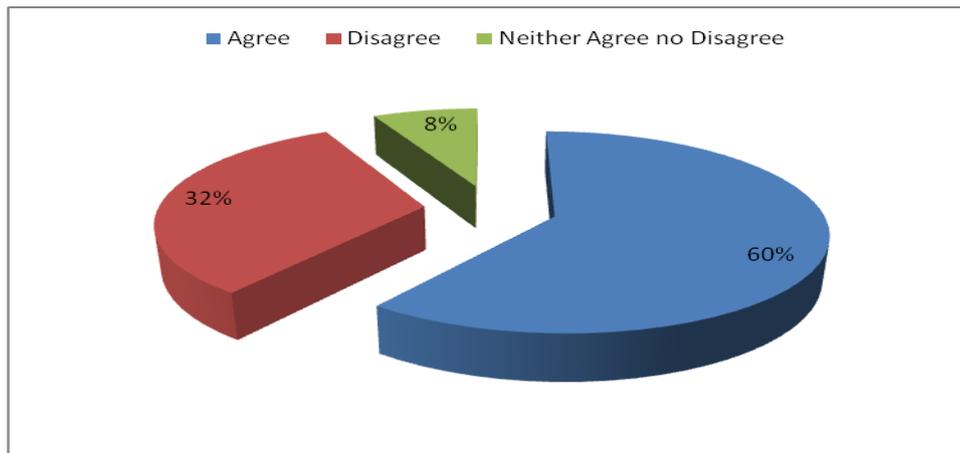
In this statement, we aimed to know how confident the students are when speaking in front of their classmates. As table 11 shows, the highest percentage is of those who agreed by 53% while the respondents who disagreed represent 34%, whereas 13% were neither with nor against the statement. That is to say, there are students who fear to receive their peers' negative feedback and there are students who trust their potentials.

**Q 13: I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the class**

**Table 12: Speaking Panic within Class**

Students' panic within class	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	32	60,37%
<b>Disagree</b>	17	32,07%
<b>Neither</b>	4	7,54%

**Graph 12: Speaking Panic within Class**



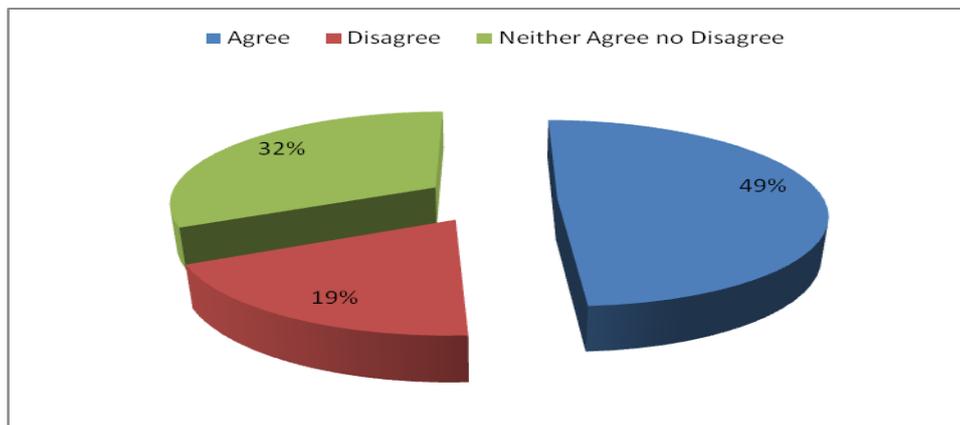
Regarding this statement, it is addressed to students to know if they panic when they are not prepared to speak. According to the findings in graph 12, the lowest percentage (8%) was of those who neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Students who are against the statement represent (32%) and those who agree with the statement represent 60%; they feel anxious because of not being prepared.

**Q 14: I worry about the consequences of failing my English class?**

**Table 13: Fear of Failure**

Students' panic within class	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	26	49,05 %
<b>Disagree</b>	10	18,86%
<b>Neither</b>	17	32,07%

**Graph 13: Fear of Failure**



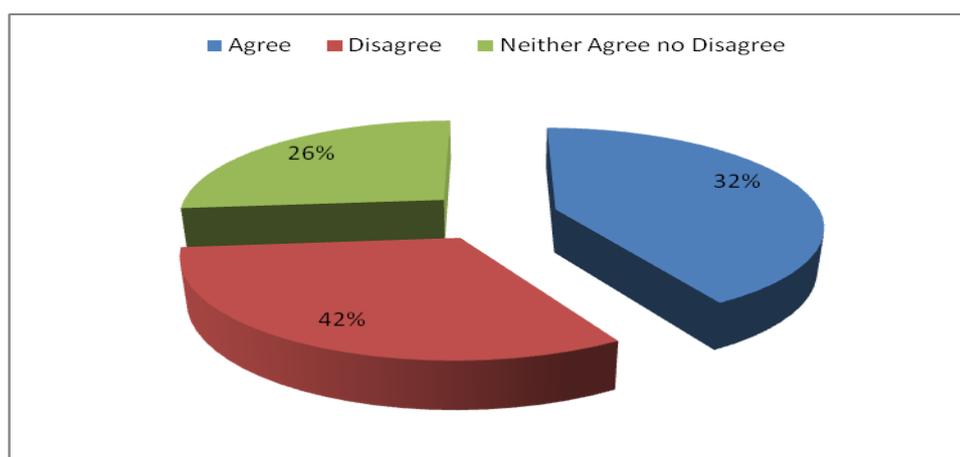
In this statement, we tend to know the students' perception about the fear of failure. 32% were neither agreed nor disagreed, while 19% disagreed with the statement. Most of the students (49%) agreed; this fear may cause them anxiety due to the idea of the unwanted consequences.

**Q 15: I am usually at ease during tests in my English class**

**Table 14:** Students' State of Mind during Tests

Students' good mind state during tests	Participants	Percentage
<b>Agree</b>	22	41,50%
<b>Disagree</b>	17	32,07%
<b>Neither</b>	14	26,41%

**Graph 14:** Students' State of Mind during Tests



This statement was addressed to students to know whether they feel anxious or not during tests. The results revealed that the majority of respondents (42%) do not feel at ease when attending tests, followed by 32% represents those feel at ease during tests, then 26% of the respondents neither agree nor disagree.

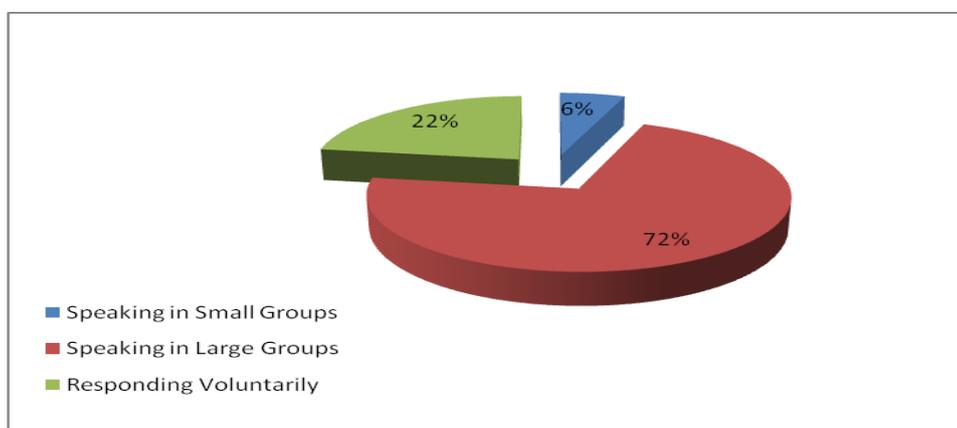
## Section Four: Students' Anxiety Reduction

### Q 16: What makes nervous when speaking English in the classroom?

**Table 15:** Students' Speaking Nervousness within Class

Options	Participants	Percentage
Speaking in small groups	3	5,66%
Speaking in large groups	38	71,69%
Responding voluntarily	8	22,64%

**Graph 15:** Students' Speaking Nervousness within Class



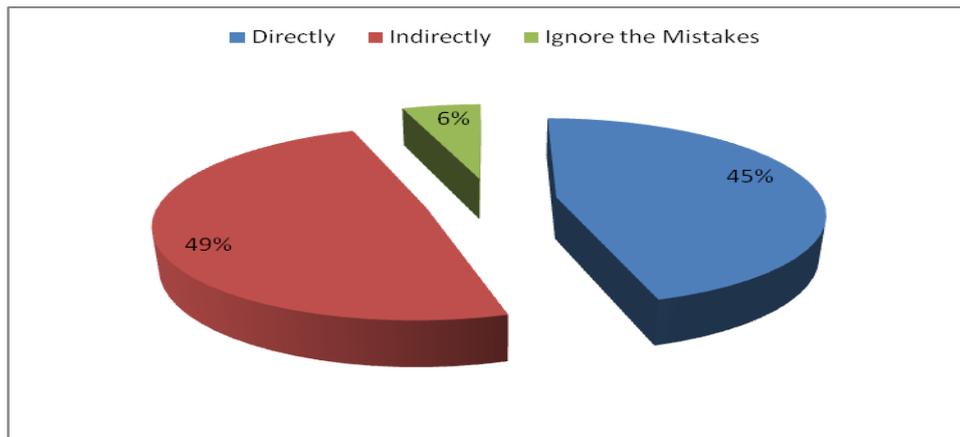
Concerning this question, it was addressed to students to reveal what make nervous when speaking in the class and we included three options. As the table shows, speaking in small groups (6%) and responding voluntarily (22%) cannot be of a convinced reason which make students nervous. However, speaking in large groups is what makes students anxious due to their personality; they are introverted students.

### Q 17: When you make mistakes, do you prefer your teacher to correct them

**Table 16:** Students' Opinions towards Teachers' Feedback

Options	Participants	Percentage
Directly	24	45,28%
Indirectly	26	49,05%
Ignore the mistakes	3	5,66%

**Graph 16: Students' Opinions towards Teachers' Feedback**



Concerning teachers' feedback, we asked students about how they prefer their mistakes to be corrected and we included three options. There is a close percentage between "directly" and "indirectly" with only 4% difference. The former scored 45% while the later scored 49%. That is to say, they are aware of the importance of feedback; thus, the teacher should know when to correct students' mistakes directly or indirectly and in a critical way. Just 6% of the respondents prefer their teacher to ignore their mistakes.

**Q18: What helps you feel comfortable when speaking in the classroom?**

Teachers should be well-versed not just about their subject, but also about their learners' needs. That is why we addressed this question, with qualitative nature, aiming to collect some viewpoints and provide teachers with honest answers from students because they feel free when expressing themselves on papers, rather acknowledging their needs face to face with their teachers. We would like to acknowledge that the majority of respondents sample answered the question and they provided us with rich answers. What make students feel comfortable when speaking in the classroom, the respondents reported the following:

- When the teacher is well prepared.
- Familiarity with topics and being provided with a considerable period of time before speaking.

- Teachers' personality; being humorous, understandable, and appreciative.
- Throughout different activities such as pair work and free topic discussion.
- Receiving corrective feedback; they should not intimidate us, but rather, by using an effective way to correct our mistakes.

**Q 19: How can your teachers help to make you less anxious?**

To be a good teacher of a foreign language does not mean to be good only at the academic level, but also a good teacher should have a good background about their students' psychology; for instance, a specific level of anxiety students may encounter when learning a foreign language which affect their language enhancement in a negative way. Therefore, we asked this question to students to provide us with insights about their preferred activities and techniques they like to be exposed to mainly feel less anxious. Accordingly, respondents answered the questions with the following points:

- The teacher should not point at students to answer.
- The teacher should boost students' self-confidence by giving them advice.
- The teacher should have a sense of humour.
- The teacher should not go through many skills in one single session.
- The teacher should have an individual talk with the anxious student.
- The teacher should implement the idea of that making mistakes is part of learning.
- Extensive practice; holding meetings via social networks such as Skype to discuss casual topics, in particular, discussing students' needs.

**3.1.3. Interpretation of the Results**

To begin with, the first part of the questionnaire was mainly about students' profile. The EFL students were asked couple questions about their gender and age; the former was remarkably dominated by females (75%) through which we can say that females are more

motivated to learn a foreign language than males do. The second was about age in which we noticed the frequency between 21 and 23 years old. That is to say, youngsters are more attracted to learn a different language which can be, due to their age, in their favour.

The second section consisted of five (5) different specific questions regarding the process of learning English. We started the section with the choice of learning English whether it was willingly or not. Since our finding concerning the students' choice of learning English is (89%) free, so, surely there is a scintilla of confidence and according to what they justified their choice by that they love learning English. Thus, here comes the role of teachers to boost that confidence. However, there will be some difficulties when learning a foreign language. Speaking about difficulty, the majority of respondents (77%) reported that they face no difficulty in learning English.

Regardless of what students declared, we noticed that their level of English is considerable due to the lack of practice, particularly, outside the classroom as we found that more than half of the sample (60%) do not practice their English because of that English is not commonly used by the Algerian society. Hence, the only place where they practice is the classroom, but half of them (52) find the oral expression course stressful due to the exposure to different skills in one single session, fear of making mistakes, uninteresting subjects, and others. We ended up this section with the effect of peer pressure in raising students' anxiety and the result was negative. In other words, the half (53%) of our sample reported that they suffer from peer pressure.

The third part was particularly about students' foreign language anxiety which was established in a form of scale questions. We asked students various questions concerning state of emotions when learning English. Through this section of the questionnaire we acknowledged that anxiety can have different sources such as the fear of misunderstanding the teacher which students declare most; we found that teachers need to be clearer when

speaking to avoid getting students anxious. Moreover, Acknowledging the fact that learning equals mistakes, may help students to stop being afraid of making mistakes, also students reported that they feel anxious when they are called on to speak in classroom without preparation which teachers can deal with by giving them a period of time before performing. In addition, teachers should treat students equally to not create the idea that one is superior to another which damages their self-confidence as half of the sample declared. Finally, we found that students suffer from anxiety during tests which we can relate such anxiety to the lack of practice as students declared in (Section One, Q5) and to deal with such issue, we suggest providing students with more English classes in their eagerness to have extra classes.

The last section, the last one, consisted of four questions; the first two questions about classroom activities, teachers' feedback and the last two opened questions about what makes students comfortable in language class and teachers' role in reducing students' anxiety. The first question was about which activity makes students nervous; speaking in small groups, inlarge groups or responding voluntarily. The result was 72% of our sample declared that speaking in large groups makes them nervous, so they need space to speak in group of three students no more as "speaking in small groups" option represents 3%. The second question is teachers' feedback. The results show that they like both (45% the direct and the indirect 49%) correction of their mistakes where both options show the higher percentage. The third question was how what makes students feel comfortable in language class and the answer was rich. Students gave critical answers such as a well prepared teacher, humorous and understandable teacher, speaking in pairs and others. Finally, we addressed a question about how can teachers reduce their anxiety and they answered with the following: teachers should have a personal talk with the anxious students, they should not go through many skills at once, they should not point at students to speak forcibly, and

teachers should implement the idea of that making mistakes equals learning. We can conclude that students of third year are aware of the common techniques for reducing anxiety and teachers should put that into consideration.

### **3.2. Teachers' Questionnaire**

#### **3.2.1. Description of the Data Collection Tool: Teachers' Questionnaire**

In addition to the questionnaire submitted to students, we considered that it is of high importance to include another questionnaire for teachers in order to gain more valuable information that benefits our research. Hence, the questionnaire is designed with the primary aim of investigating teachers' insights about the influence of anxiety on students' oral skill.

The semi-structured questionnaire was directed to four (4) teachers of oral expression at Mohammed Khieder University of Biskra. It is divided into two main sections composes of eleven (11) questions in total. In the first section entitled "Background Information", it includes three (3) questions concerning teachers' gender, qualification and year of experience in teaching oral expression. As for the second section of the questionnaire entitled "Students' Speaking Anxiety", it is composed of eight (8) different questions: yes/no, multiple choice and open-ended. This section aims at inspecting teachers' views on the presence of anxiety during the oral expression course, as well as to acknowledge teachers opinions about its effect on students speaking performance. Moreover, it seeks to obtain solutions from teachers on the matter of reducing students' anxiety.

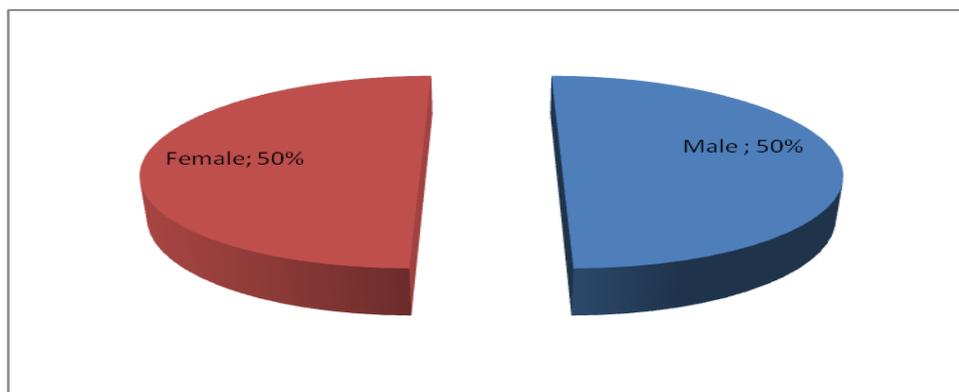
### 3.2.2. Analysis of the Results

#### Q 20: Specify your gender

Table 17: Teachers' Gender

Options	Participants	Percentage
Male	2	50%
Female	2	50%

Graph 17: Teachers' Gender



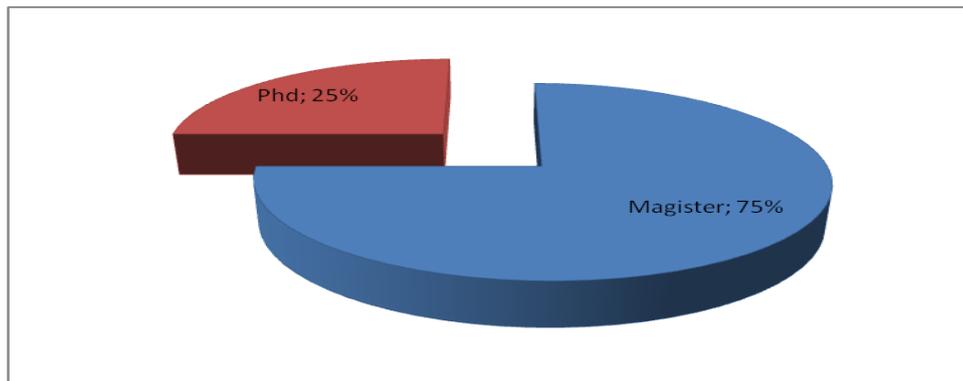
Since the sample of oral teachers who were given the questionnaire consisted of only four teachers, the analysis showed, as demonstrated in the graph 14, that it is composed of two (50%) males and two (50%) females.

#### Q 21: Degree (s) held

Table 18: Teachers' Qualification

Options	Participants	Percentage
Magister	3	75%
PhD	1	25%

**Graph 18: Teachers' Qualification**



In this question, we intended to seek information about the qualification of the teachers who answered our questionnaire. The results obtained revealed that the majority (75%) has magister degree and only one teacher (25%) has doctorate degree.

**Q 21: How many years have you been teaching the oral expression course?**

Teachers were given an open-question in which they were required to state their years of experience in teaching the oral expression course. According to the obtained responses from teachers, most of them have more than eight (8) years of experience in teaching English at the university. Thus, we can say that their quite sufficient experience in teaching EFL at the university can help us to investigate the issue of learners' speaking anxiety.

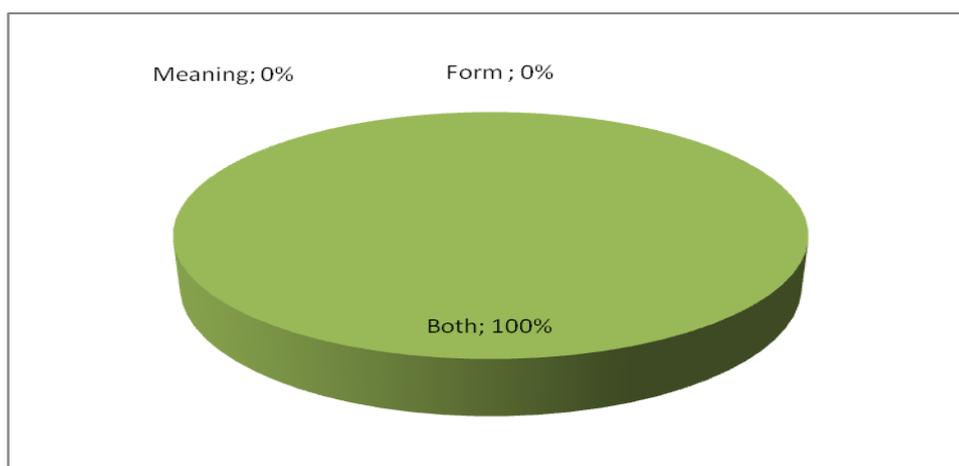
**Section Two: Students' Speaking Anxiety**

**Q 22: During the oral expression course, you focus on**

**Table 19: Teachers' Focus in Teaching the Oral Skills**

Options	Participants	Percentage
Form	0	0 %
Meaning	0	0 %
Both	4	100 %

**Graph 18:** Teachers' Focus in Teaching the Oral Skills



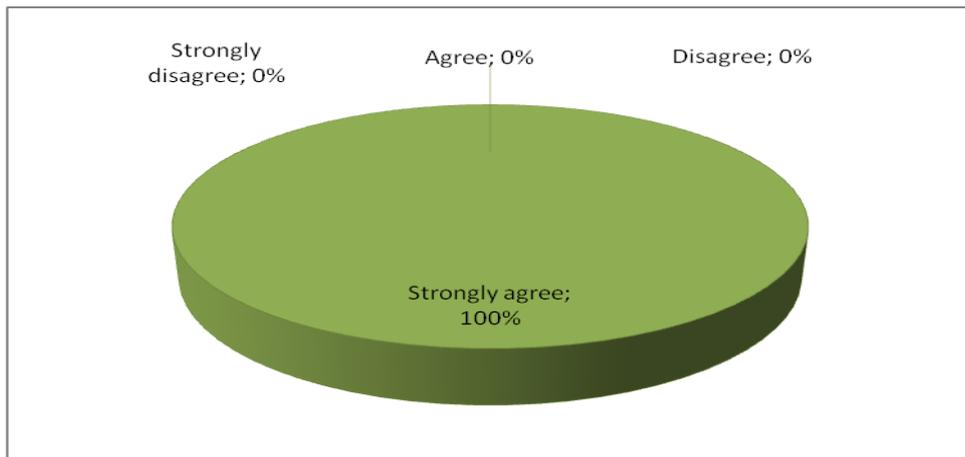
The chosen sample of teachers for this conducted research were asked to indicate the aspect which they focus on while teaching the oral skill by choosing one of the three provided options. The acquired responses showed that all teachers selected “Both” (Meaning and Form) with a total percentage of 100%. In justifying their answer, teachers argued that meaning and form represent the aspects of the speaking i.e. fluency and accuracy which are both equally important in achieving the desired communicative goal when speaking.

**Q 23: English learning anxiety affects students' speaking skill**

**Table 20:** Teachers' Viewpoint on Speaking Anxiety

Options	Participants	Percentage
Agree	0	0 %
Strongly agree	4	100 %
Disagree	0	0 %
Strongly disagree	0	0 %

**Graph 19: Teachers' Viewpoint on Speaking Anxiety**



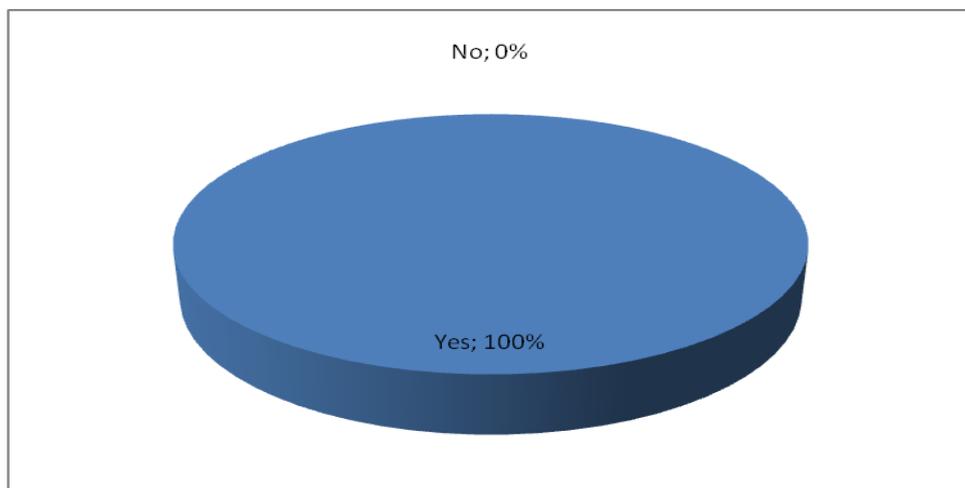
This question aims to discover whether or not the feeling of anxiety students' experience when learning has an impact on their speaking skill. Evidently, the above figure shows that the entire sample of teachers (100%) strongly agree that anxiety has a major influence.

**Q 24: Do your students experience speaking anxiety?**

**Table 21: Teachers' Affirmation on Students' Facing Anxiety**

Options	Participants	Percentage
Yes	4	100 %
No	0	0 %

**Figure 20: Teachers' Affirmation on Students' Facing Anxiety**



Since teachers agreed that anxiety affects the students speaking ability, a follow up question was included to investigate if students undergo anxiety when speaking. Again, the entire teachers 'sample (100%) affirmed that students do, in fact, experience anxiety and get nervous when attempting to speak in English.

**Q 25: So why they experience such anxiety?**

This question was addressed to teachers with the intention of examining their opinions about the reasons behind students' speaking anxiety. The teachers explained that this psychological factor is attributed to several reasons which are: the atmosphere of the classroom, students' lack of vocabulary, and fear of teachers' feedback and classmates' prejudgments. Teachers also mentioned that anxiety is due to students' fear of making mistakes, poor pronunciation and lack of self-confidence.

**Q 26: What are the common signs that you notice when students experience anxiety?**

Teachers, then, were requested to state the indicating signs of anxiety that they observe in anxious students. According to teachers' answers, they stated that among the common signs of students' anxiety is being uncomfortable inside the classroom due to fear of embarrassment. Also, teachers described that students who are anxious are usually shy and silent. In addition, lack of participation is another common sign among students experiencing anxiety in the classroom. Moreover, teachers pointed that hesitant speech is a clear indication of anxiety.

**G27: Check the following factors that cause your students' anxiety.**

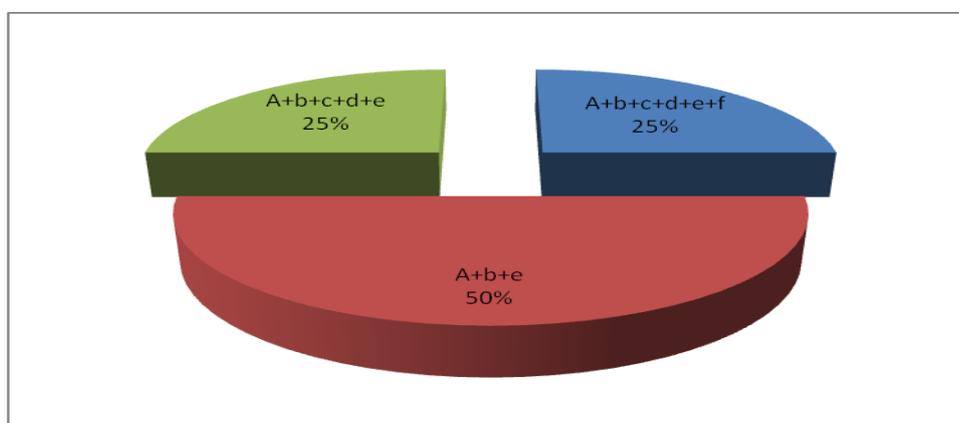
- a. Lack of self-confidence
- b. Worrying about making mistakes
- c. The evaluation of the teacher and/ or the classmates
- d. Some students speak better than others do

- e. Lack of vocabulary
- f. Nervousness and fear

**Table 22:** Students' Anxiety Factors

Options	Participants	Percentage
<b>A+b+c+d+e+f</b>	1	25%
<b>A+b+e</b>	2	50%
<b>A+b+c+d+e</b>	1	25%

**Graph 21:** Students' Anxiety Factors



Graph 22 shows the results of an important question in the questionnaire which is about the factors that causes students' anxiety. As the displayed results in the figure show, one teacher (25%) considered all the suggested factors as potential causes of students' anxiety. Another teacher (25%) selected five out of the six proposed factors. However, two teachers (50%) attributed student's anxiety to only three factors; namely, fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and lack of vocabulary.

**Q28: Could you provide us with other factors which may lead to 'Speaking Anxiety', please?**

In this question, we gave teachers the opportunity to propose other factors besides the previously suggested ones in the preceding question. They proposed the following additional factors behind student's anxiety:

- Lack of practice in oral expression
- Teachers' personality
- Inappropriate classroom activities
- Teachers' method of instruction
- Lack of motivation and interest

**Q29: According to your experience, please, state your suggestions to help reducing the students' anxiety.**

In the concluding question of our questionnaire, we invited teachers to suggest some techniques and method to apply for reducing students' anxiety in the classroom. They proposed four recommendations. Firstly, they stated that teachers should adopt a positive and encouraging behavior by supporting and cheering up students so as to make them feel more comfortable and practice speaking at ease inside the classroom. Secondly, teachers advised reducing the number of students in the oral expression classes. Thirdly, they urged to set a healthy teaching-learning atmosphere where all students are given equal opportunities for speaking, as well as for discussing their language problems in order to know how to cope with their drawbacks. Fourthly, and at last, teachers recommended that students need to be prepared by practicing with their classmates before participating in any speaking task since it helps increase their motivation and self-confidence, which in turn reduces their anxiety level.

### **3.2.3. Interpretation of the Results**

Results gathered from the analysis of teachers' questionnaire revealed that the existence of anxiety in foreign language classrooms affects EFL students' oral performance and can hinder their progress in the learning process. The results also prove that teachers are aware of the negative impact of anxiety on students' speaking skill.

Moreover, the causes of students' speaking anxiety are mostly associated to influencing factors related both to students and teachers.

On the one hand, feelings of shyness, fear of making mistakes, insufficient linguistic knowledge and lack of self-confidence on the part of students are among the major causes of anxiety. On the other hand, teachers as well can be the reason behind students' anxiety in the classroom. According to the obtained findings, it revealed that teachers' quality can be an affective factor and the reason why EFL students experience anxiety in the classroom. For instance, incompetent teachers who use unsuitable classroom activities and who lack the appropriate teaching method may lead EFL students to feel distressed because the teacher could not meet their language needs.

In contrast, effective teachers can play an important role in reducing their students' speaking anxiety. This can be done through various ways such as, encouraging students to speak by making them realize that making mistakes is part of the learning process. Also, teachers can minimize their students' anxiety level by creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere in the classroom where they give students equal chances to practice speaking, as well as to be open about their problems in order to eliminate their fear of making mistakes. Another good way to reduce students' anxiety is for teachers to develop a good relationship with students so as to raise their self-confidence and diminish any stress-related issues.

In conclusion, anxiety is one of the common psychological factors that bound the foreign language classroom and affect negatively learners' performance, especially their speaking skill. However, if teachers are aware of the reasons that contribute to students' speaking anxiety and provide the appropriate technique to enable students to cope with it, they will be able not only to decrease the level of anxiety, but also to enhance students' abilities in oral performance.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results obtained from analysis of both student and teachers' questionnaires affirm how bad the anxiety affects the EFL learners' oral performance, which in turn asserts the stated hypothesis. We can say that the obtained results from students' and teachers' questionnaires are in the direction of our hypothesis. This sheds light on the anxiety as an important factor in affecting learners' oral performance. Therefore, teachers should focus on dealing with students' anxiety by acknowledging the causes and the techniques to reduce a high level of anxiety. Concerning teachers, they should focus on improving the relationship with their students.

## **Pedagogical Implications**

To close this study that highlighted the effect of anxiety on the EFL learners' oral performance, and for the purpose of this study we tend to give some suggestions and recommendation, for the oral expression teachers in particular and for all EFL teachers in general:

- Teachers should acknowledge the impact of anxiety on their students' speaking skill, especially if students are already motivated to work on themselves.
- Teachers should establish interesting topics to discuss in the classroom.
- Teachers should be always ready and well prepared so that they will not lose themselves when explaining a lesson; consequently, they will feel anxious and can affect their students in return.
- EFL teachers are required to encourage students to speak by being appreciative; by giving compliments and advice.
- EFL teachers should acknowledge that making mistakes is a part of learning, as psychologist say: learning equals mistakes.
- Teachers should start working with humour; telling funny jokes and not all the time.
- EFL teachers should work hard in bid to improve their relationship with their students because it is the key for different strategies to be workable.

We should not neglect the part of students in dealing with their anxiety because the large percentage of students' speaking mastery is of them. We would like to give some recommendations for learners to work with according to what we went through of experiences and reading about the subject of foreign language anxiety.

- EFL learners should start to think about how to improve their relationship with their classmates because the closer they are, the less anxious they will be.
- After they create a strong relationship with each other, they should start organize social circles where they practice their English talking about casual topics as a first step, then speaking about academic subjects by the time.

## **General Conclusion**

We live in a world where the English language is the dominant language in all fields. However, being able to communicate effectively in a foreign language requires mastering its speaking skill. Unfortunately, most students in the Branch of English at Mohamed Kheidr University of Biskra still face psychological factors when speaking English such as “anxiety”. Thus, we found this latter worth researching and we aimed to investigate the effect of anxiety on the EFL students’ oral performance.

We started our research by introducing speaking and its importance among other skills, in doing so, we have a better understanding to the speaking skill such as characteristics of speaking tasks, criteria for choosing speaking tasks, types of speaking tasks, and we ended up with some psychological factors that hinder the students’ speaking skill and introducing teachers’ feedback at the end. According to the findings obtained from the analysis of students and teachers’ questionnaires submitted to third year EFL students and teachers of oral expression at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra, both affirmed that students experience anxiety within different situations and because of various reasons. Moreover, the analysis of data revealed that EFL students are aware of some strategies of avoiding having high level of anxiety when learning English having a talk with their teacher individually to speak about their problems, but what they lack is the implementation of such strategies.

All in all, both students and teachers are aware of the effect of anxiety on speaking skill. Accordingly, teachers should start to adopt any technique they know to deal with anxious learners since they are ready to learn as the obtained results show that they are interested in mastering English language, in particular, the suggestion they gave us in the questionnaire about creating a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom. Accordingly, we can say that this research has confirmed our stated hypothesis.

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Students' Questionnaire**

**Appendix 2: Teachers' Questionnaire**

**TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**ABOUT THE EFFECT OF ANXIETY ON THE STUDENTS' ORAL PEARFORMANCE**

**Dear teachers,**

These questions serve as a data collection tool for master degree in sciences of language that aims to investigate the effect of anxiety on the students' oral skill of third year. Whatever your qualifications and experiences in the field I would be very pleased if you take the time and the energy to share your experience by answering the questions below. Your answers will be of a great importance for the completion of this work. Please tick appropriate choice that represents your answer and give full answer where necessary.

*Thank for your time and your collaboration*

Email: [lifeisaplay92englishtutor@gmail.com](mailto:lifeisaplay92englishtutor@gmail.com)

**SECTION ONE : BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

**Q1:** Specify your gender.

Male  Female

**Q2:** Degree (s) held.

Magister  PhD

**Q3:** How many years have you been teaching the oral expression course ?

.....

**SECTION TWO : STUDENTS SPEAKING ANXIETY**

**Q4:** During the oral expression course, you focus on.

- a. Form
- b. Meaning
- c. Both

Please, justify.....

.....

**Q5:** English learning anxiety affects students' oral skill.

- a. Agree
- b. Strongly agree
- c. Disagree
- d. Strongly disagree

**Q6:** Do your students experience 'speaking anxiety'?

Yes  No

**Q7:** So, why they experience such anxiety?

.....

.....

.....

**Q8:** What are the common signs that you notice when students experience anxiety?

.....

.....

.....

**G9:** Check the following variables that cause your students' anxiety.

- a. Lack of self-confidence
- b. Worrying about making mistakes
- c. The evaluation of the teacher and/ or the classmates
- d. Some students speak better than others do
- e. Lack of vocabulary
- f. Nervousness and fear

**Q10:** Could you provide us with other variables which may lead to “speaking anxiety” please?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Q11:** According to your experience, please, state your suggestions to help reducing the Students’ anxiety.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

***Thank you for your time and efforts.***

**STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE**

**ABOUT THE EFFECT OF ANXIETY ON THE EFL LEARNERS' ORAL PERFORMANCE**

**Dear students**

Currently, we are conducting a Master research in sciences of language entitled: 'The Effect of Anxiety on the EFL Learners' Oral Performance'. We address this questionnaire in order to investigate the effect of anxiety on the students' oral skill. Please, read carefully each statement below and indicate your true feelings in English language classroom. Since the fulfillment of the study highly depends on your honesty in rating these items, you are kindly requested to respond accordingly and your co-operation will be greatly appreciated!

**Thank you in advance for your collaboration**

Email: lifeisaplay92englishtutor@gmail.com

**SECTION ONE : THE STUDENTS' PROFILE**

**Q1:** Specify your gender

Male  Female

**Q2:** Your age is ..... years old

**SECTION TWO : SPECIFIC QUESTIONS**

**Q1:** Have you chosen English freely?

Yes  No

Please, explain .....

.....

**Q2:** Do you think learning English is difficult?

Yes  No

Why?

.....

**Q3:** Do you speak English outside the classroom?

Yes  No

Please, state your reasons.

.....  
.....  
.....

**Q4:** Do you find the oral expression course stressful?

Yes  No

Please, justify.....

.....  
.....

**Q5:** Does peer pressure raise your anxiety?

Yes  No

How?

.....  
.....

**SECTION THREE : FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY**

**NB:** *“The feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning”* (MacIntyre & Gardner 1994, quoted in Tóth 2012)

❖ Would you tick the appropriate answer?

1. I'm frightened when I do not understand what the teacher is saying in English.

1=Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree

2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree

3. I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in language class.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree
4. It would not bother me at all to take more English classes.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree
5. I keep thinking that the other students are better at speaking than I am.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree
6. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the class.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree
7. I worry about the consequences of failing my English class.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my English class.  
1= Agree  2=disagree  3=neither agree nor disagree

#### **SECTION FOUR: STUDENTS' ANXIETY REDUCTION**

**Q1.** What makes you nervous when speaking English in the classroom ?

- a. Speaking in small groups
- b. Speaking in large groups
- c. responding voluntarily

**Q2.** When you make mistakes, do you prefer your teacher to correct your mistakes?

- a. Directly
- b. Indirectly
- c. Ignore the mistakes

**Q3.** What helps you to feel comfortable when speaking in the classroom?

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**Q4.** How can your teachers help to make you less anxious?

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## المخلص

الباحث لاحظ أن طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية سنة ثالثة في جامعة محمد خيضر-بسكرة- يتعرضون للكثير من الضغوطات النفسية أثناء الكلام, على سبيل المثال الخوف من التقييم السلبي, عدم الثقة في النفس و التوتر النفسي, هذه الأخيرة هي ما يهمننا. هذا البحث في الأساس يحقق في تأثير التوتر النفسي على ملكة الكلام لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية سنة ثالثة. هذا الموضوع الذي عالجه حساس بسبب طبيعته المجردة. وفقا لذلك إتبعنا في دراستنا للموضوع المنهج الوصفي حيث قمنا بتوزيع إستمارات لأربعة أساتذة التعبير الشفوي و مائة طالب سنة ثالثة نظام LMD قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة بسكرة. النتائج المتحصل عليها توضح أن الطلبة يتعرضون للتوتر النفسي فقط بسبب فكرة أنهم سيتكلمون في حصة التعبير الشفوي و ما بالك أثناء التكلم الفعلي داخل القسم. أداة البحث المستعملة ساعدت كثيرا في جمع الكثير من المعلومات المفيدة المتعلقة بأسباب التوتر النفسي لدى طلبة السنة الثالثة أثناء الكلام و تطرقنا لمختلف الحلول الممكنة و الاقتراحات. من خلال البحث, الباحث توصل إلى أن طلبة السنة الثالثة واعون بتأثير عامل التوتر النفسي على مهارة الكلام قبل, أثناء و بعد أي تمرين للتعبير الشفوي, لذلك نستطيع التأكيد على صحة فرضيتنا أننا لو أن طلبة السنة الثالثة واعون بتأثير التوتر النفسي لكان أسهل العمل على تقليل من درجة التوتر النفسي لديهم. خصصنا ثلاث فصول حيث كان الفصلين الأولين متعلقين بتعريف المتغيران مهارة لكلام و التوتر النفسي في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية, بينما كان الفصل الأخير متعلقا بتحليل و ترجمة النتائج المتحصل عليها. و كاستنتاج أخير وجدنا أن على أساتذة قياس التعبير الشفوي أخذ عامل التوتر النفسي بعين الاعتبار أي خلق درجة معينة من التوتر النفسي يمكن أن يكون ناجعا في تحسين ملكة الكلام لدى طلبة السنة الثالثة وأيضا على الأساتذة العمل أكثر على تحسين علاقتهم بطلبتهم لأنها القاعدة الصلبة لتطبيق مختلف تقنيات التعليم.