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# Speaking anxiety during English oral presentations: Investigating Saudi undergraduate EFL learners' behaviors

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**Abstract**--Students at the tertiary level must be placed in an interactive learning setting since traditional lectures are no longer the most effective method of getting students involved in active learning. One of the criteria for passing the course in the department of English and Translation at Qassim University is the performance in the oral presentation simulation. Since this performance of a presentation is not just dependent on the cognitive domain but also the affective dimension, and speaking anxiety can be detrimental to students' performance affecting their learning motivation in the long run and grades in the short term. This study, therefore, examines the level of anxiety, signs of anxiety and factors that lead to oral anxiety among Saudi EFL students. Fifty students from the department of English and Translation at Qassim University's second semester comprised the study sample. Direct observation, in-depth interviews, and surveys were used to collect data from the participants. Results show that students experience moderate levels of anxiety related to language ( $M = 3.51$ ,  $SD = 0.54$ ). Further, that students frequently display signs of anxiety, such as using the script, contrary body language, poor eye contact, rigid facial expression, unduly move hands and legs while presenting material before the peers, avoid eye contact with the teacher, stammer, wander aimlessly, or remain silent. The study's final analysis of some of the factors that contribute to oral anxiety show that students are afraid of being ridiculed, taken out of place, or humiliated for their poor grammar. The study concludes with recommendations for actions such as evaluating the university English coursebooks and improving simulation implementation with appropriate teaching resources, guidelines, and exercises. Analysis of the language anxiety among the students during the oral presentation simulation serves to support the activity's long-term use in the classroom.

**Keywords**--EFL undergraduate learners, English speaking anxiety, oral presentation, simulation.

## **Introduction**

Learning English at the tertiary level or at higher education demands more from students than just what they consider, hear, and comment on. Learning activities need to be uniquely tailored to be put to more real-world use. Students at the tertiary level must be placed in a learning scenario, such as actual engagements (Al-Ahdal & Abduh, 2021; Yulian & Yuniarti, 2018). The conventional lecture method is not a significant or effective way to support learners' participation in active learning. Higher education students need to have the opportunity to engage in authentic experiences, like simulating a learning activity such as, an oral presentation. Since they may encounter such opportunities in real-world settings, simulations of learning activities might motivate students to engage in experiential learning.

Anxiety is one of the elements that contribute to graduates' poor communication abilities. Language acquisition is negatively impacted by language anxiety. According to Brown (1994), acquiring a second language can be a difficult process, and one that can make students anxious. Speaking in public can trigger fear especially in learners (Horwitz et al., 1986) since it can be daunting for them to master the many processes that it involves such as word pronunciation, word recognition, meaning-making, and knowledge and application of grammatical rules (Fielding et al., 2007). Such anxiety needs to be remedied immediately since it can impair performance when learning a language, leading to inadequate competence (Brown, 1987).

Anxiety when speaking English as a second language (SL) or a foreign language (FL) has sparked a significant amount of interest in language research (Ali & Bin-Hady, 2019; Mak, 2011; Subaşı, 2010). Speaking has been recognized as the ability that brings the highest concern, and it is the main source of anxiety in English language classrooms (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Speaking anxiety, as defined by Balemir (2009), is the phobia of speaking a language. According to Suleimenova (2013), current concerns about foreign or second language learners' (SLL) communication skills may have led to a high degree of speaking anxiety. According to the participants in his study, learning a foreign language causes them tension, anxiety, and nervousness. Additionally, they assert that they have a "mental obstacle" to learning the language. Corresponding to this, Karatas et al. (2016) supported the notion that L2 learners should perform orally in front of their peers and participate in group discussions. Language learners will naturally be inhibited to undertake activities that involve production skills and will perceive them adversely in the language classroom. Nevertheless, speaking differs in a multitude of ways from writing in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and discourse structure. Speaking is a competence that is both participatory and productive (Carter & Nunan, 2002). It demands more advanced abilities than other language activities, hence many children struggle when asked to execute oral communication activities.

## **Different levels of speaking anxiety**

Studies on the extent of speaking anxiety related to gender, motivation, competency, and when learners begin learning English have been documented in

the related literature (Hang & Hung, 2013; Miskam & Saidalvi, 2019). Hang and Hung (2013) looked at the connection between learning anxiety and test-taking anxiety in the Taiwanese context. The purpose of the study was to explore the associations between gender, the length of time spent studying a foreign language, and the propensity to learn after school. Horwitz et al. (1986) (FLCAS) used the "Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale" with EFL learners in the University of Taiwan. The findings indicated that females experienced higher levels of anxiety. English language learners who began in kindergarten, however, experience less anxiety than those who began in secondary school. In addition, English-language learners were much less anxious in learning the language after school.

According to Karatas et al. (2016), there is a relationship between competence of learners in a foreign language and their gender, language proficiency level, English prep program, and the kind of secondary school they attended. At Istanbul Technical University, the respondents included 168 female and 320 male English preparatory learners. When the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was applied, the results were in line with those of Ztürk and Gürbüz (2010) and of Huang (2004) who discovered that female respondents were more anxious than their male counterparts. Further, the anxiety levels of learners who have undergone English preparation programs are lower than those of those who have not. Speaking anxiety among learners was unaffected by their language proficiency or the type of high school they attended. Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009) investigated the impact of language anxiety on Spanish learners at three distinct proficiency levels.

The FLCAS was administered to 134 students taking Spanish classes at a university in the United States. The findings revealed that individuals at the advanced level experienced the greatest levels of anxiety, while those at the novice level experienced the least. Additionally, their final scores were compared to examine how their performance in the program was impacted by their language anxiety. It demonstrated that advanced students are more anxious than average learners and earn higher grades. The study deduced that the participants at the advanced level are conscious of their motivation for learning a foreign language, which is to improve their productivity. As a result, they experience greater pressure and anxiety than those who are enrolled in the language course to meet the requirement of just passing the exam. However, Hismanoglu's (2013) results are contradictory to those of Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009). Hismanoglu (2013) examined the language learning anxiety of prospective English teachers in Turkey. According to the research, advanced-level students are less anxious than individual learners. Skehan (1989), too, affirmed that advanced-level students may benefit from "a greater repertoire of actions" that help them get over their language-learning fear (p. 116).

### **Different types of speaking anxiety**

Three types of anxieties have been identified by Horwitz et al. (1986), who coined the phrase "foreign language anxiety" as a distinct condition. 1) Fear of communication; 2) Concern over criticism; and 3) Test phobia. By outlining these three components, we can create the groundwork for understanding the idea of

foreign language anxiety. Anxiety over oral interaction is referred to as communication anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1991). Communication apprehension was described by McCroskey (1997) as "...a person's level of worry or anxiety linked with either actual or prospective communication with some other individual" (cited in Tadjouri, 2017, p. 78). Moreover, individual qualities like shyness, silence, or hesitation are some of the reasons why some people fear communication. According to McCroskey and Anderson (1976), communication anxiety has been shown to negatively affect students' performance in communication-based classrooms, such as those used for teaching foreign languages. As a result, communication anxiety seems to weaken language learners and can have a detrimental impact on language anxiety.

The fear of receiving a bad review, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), is the second form of anxiety. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined fear of negative evaluation as "apprehension about others' judgement, avoiding of evaluating circumstances, and the assumption that others would adversely judge oneself" (p. 128). Some students view using a second or foreign language as an instance of evaluation. They are worried about giving the wrong image of themselves in society, particularly if they are aware that they lack the linguistic skills required to generate the language (Aydin, 2001). Test anxiety, described by Horwitz et al. (1991) as "a sort of performance anxiety arising from fear of failure," is the third type of anxiety (p. 127). As far as tests are concerned, there are four identified stages: test anticipation, test planning, test administration, and test response (Covington, 1985).

Students start to assess their preparation, past knowledge, test difficulty level, and their likely performance during the test anticipation period (Balemir, 2009). When learners are certain they will fail an exam, they begin to experience anxiety (Aydin, 2001). The second phase, known as test preparation, is when students begin to study for the exam and evaluate their test-taking skills. People set unrealistic standards for themselves and believe that any grade below exceptional, even if it is sufficient for others, is unacceptable for anxious students (Namsang, 2011). The third stage of test anxiety is test-taking, during which the learners face repression and frustration as a result of their anxiety. Their unfavourable opinions about taking a test are often acknowledged in the final step (Aydin, 2001).

### **Previous research on speaking anxiety**

An early study by Horwitz et al. (1986) revealed that L2 students are commonly worried about speaking anxiety because it creates a mental barrier against learning a foreign language. Understanding how anxiety has been categorized and the best ways to alleviate these concerns are crucial to lessen speaking anxiety of the learners during the second language acquisition process. As a result, the study of Horwitz et al. (1986) provided a basis for other specialists and researchers who created the FLCAS to define the broad types of language anxiety documented in FLCAS. This well-known theoretical framework served as a guide as more researchers focused on the relationships between language anxiety and language learning in the classroom (Aida, 1994; Kitano, 2001). The causes of L2 students' language anxiety in various language situations, and some techniques

for reducing anxiety related to acquiring a new language were also the focus of some studies (Horwitz et al., 2010; Liu, 2006). According to a mixed-methods study by Woodrow, there are no meaningful relationships between English oral presentations and English oral performance (2006). In addition to arguing that speaking is the preparedness for language acquisition that is conventionally related with language anxiety, these researchers looked at connections between speaking anxiety and language-speaking characteristics.

According to King (2002), L2 learners who have speaking anxiety and view presentations as intimidating oral activities are unable to deliver a presentation effectively. Woodrow (2006) challenged this assertion. The validity of the link between English speaking anxiety and English oral presentations made in class is supported by arguments, which suggests that more study and analysis by academics is needed in this direction. Parallel research was conducted by Liu (2006), who used the varying English proficiency of Chinese EFL students to examine correlations between language anxiety and oral English activities. Liu's findings showed that because these students were exposed to English more regularly, they communicated in it with less apprehension.

From two viewpoints, Liu's research offers valuable insights: the discovery of various oral behaviours contributing to Language anxiety among EFL learners in the classroom and, how it changes as they acquire new language skills. Her later study demonstrates that EFL students experience greater anxiety before individual tasks than prior to group assignments. Instructors in EFL/ESL settings employ in-class presentations to assist L2 students in strengthening their communication abilities while simultaneously improving their command of the target language. King (2002) researched to explore the crucial function of presentations in the class along with fast mitigation techniques to support L2 learners to overcome English speaking anxiety in classroom after realizing the value of oral presentations. Even though some coping techniques have been studied by other academics, strategies to reduce English speaking anxiety or apprehensions for different objectives, for instance, stress management for oral texts and public speeches are still poorly researched. To date, only a few coping techniques have been investigated to minimize the favorable impacts of in-class presentations. Since students actively participate in their learning, peer evaluation has been utilized, for example, to enhance presentations as useful speaking activities in the classroom (Otoshi & Heffernan, 2008).

Furthermore, this approach disregards the fact that speaking in front of others is a major cause of speaking anxiety among L2 students (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). When L2 learners are judged by peers based on their proficiency in speaking a foreign language in the presence of their teachers and classmates, they may see English oral presentations as particularly threatening activities that boost intense anxiety feedbacks. The major focus of this technique still needs to be improved since it ignores the anxiety issues, personality variations, and cultural differences of L2 students, even if it advises strengthening presentations through all the student-centred teaching strategies. In conclusion, earlier studies on language anxiety have been carried out to assist L2 students in overcoming their "mental block" (Horwitz et al., 1986) and enhancing their language skills.

Students' oral competence is hampered by in-class speaking anxiety, which also disrupts the learning process.

Professionals and researchers who support additional study have carefully examined the relationships between English speaking anxiety and L2 students' linguistic proficiency in order to offer more pedagogical assistance and ideas to improve many aspects of linguistic competence. Despite various factors creating oral anxiety in L2 learners having long been studied, factors specifically causing presentation anxiety in EFL learners have not been thoroughly addressed. Additionally, it is still necessary to investigate efficient oral anxiety stress management for in-class presentations. Recognizing this gap, the current study was carried out to discuss the relationships between EFL learners' speaking anxiety and oral presentation achievement, identify the possible causes of EFL Ls' anxiety during presentations. EFL learners can improve their speaking skills and manage their English oral anxiety in presentations by using oral anxiety reduction techniques.

Through simulation, learners may make the most of their learning experiences across three dimensions, including cognitive, psychomotor, and affective competencies. The learners' ability to grasp the English language abilities can be aided by a thorough exposure to simulation during English language instruction. The goal of the oral presentation simulation was to connect theory with practical applications so that students would be well-positioned to develop transferable abilities in their careers. Furthermore, given its benefit of near-real-life experience, simulation is appropriate and pertinent to their subject of study. For many years, simulations have been used in a variety of educational settings to enable learners of English to prepare for the oral element of the ESP course (Lin, 1993). The range of simulation exercises encourages learners to engage in communication in the classroom and helps them with the assignment (Davies, 1990). Simulators include a variety of tools and other activities to make language learning more entertaining, interesting, and active (Lin, 1993). Learners who experience more interesting and authentic exercises are better equipped to develop the highly desired skill of making an oral presentation.

Only by learning cognitive factors including linguistic abilities and language elements can one gain the capacity to express and execute the English language in practice. The affective domain contributes to the presentation's effectiveness just as much as the cognitive and psychomotor domains do. In various academic levels and fields, simulation-based learning has been employed for a long time. It comes about as a result of the need to enable learners to engage in authentic activities in a contextual setting. A component of the simulation's applicability is self-assurance, that is tailored to emotional conditions like anxiety or nervousness (Liu & Huang, 2011). One of the unique factors that contribute to unfavorable results in language acquisition is anxiety (Karatas et al., 2016). The physical experience of linguistic anxiety can obstruct language learning. Anxiety might occur during an oral presentation simulation due to the collaboration and serendipity that are simulation features. To avoid this, students must participate honestly and use terminology that is suitable for the situation (Jung & Levitin, 2002).

At Qassim university, the use of simulations for oral presentations has been put into place. Simulation was first used in 2020 as part of a classroom action research project to help learners perform better when speaking. The efforts to examine the elements influencing the effectiveness of oral presentation simulations were included in the empirical methodologies. Many students who are studying English as a foreign language (EFL) experience English speaking anxiety, a psychological and emotional condition that can impede learning. Learners are not exposed to the English language enough, leaving them susceptible and untrained, which contributes to language use anxiety (Akkakoson, 2016). In the light of this, this study made an effort to examine how simulating oral presentations was applied to identify gaps in connecting students with practical tasks. The analytical aspect was quickly moved to the presentation's persuasive elements. The three key areas of learning, including affective components, must be included for learning to be successful, hence it is important to look at learners' language anxiety and nervousness.

A great deal of empirical research is based on speaking anxiety described by Horwitz et al. (1986). Marzec-Stawiarska (2015) looked at the relationship between students' backgrounds and their foreign language (FL) anxiety. He investigated the connection between linguistic anxiety in learners from a gender approach. According to the research's conclusions, participants' language phobia was categorized as moderate. Yalçın and nceçay (2014) examined how teachers may assist students to overcome their language anxiety and how to employ projects that need spontaneous speaking to do so. Anandari (2015) similarly studied the elements influencing the language output of students who had an English major in the English and Translation Department. She also emphasized using self-reflection to help learners reduce their anxiety.

Following previous research, the study was specially designed to find out how much language anxiety there is among students of English. This investigation also explored the elements that influence students' language anxiety based on real-world situations including communication anxiety and fear of receiving unfavorable feedback. The participants were asked to score 20 simulation attributes relating to the anxiety felt during the oral presentation as the first early stage in gathering data. The participants also took part in an open-ended interview to discuss the topic of their emotions and reactions in the oral presentation simulation. To make the simulation in the classroom applicable for long-term usage, it is necessary to investigate the fear of the pupils. Additionally, an oral presentation is a public speaking technique that may help pupils stand out in their careers (Sikandar, 2017).

It is expected that the findings of this study will help Toconceptualize, construct, and produce acceptable teaching-learning material and activities, and pertinent tactics to alleviate learners' anxiety in an oral presentation, as well as help assess the English for Oral Presentation coursebook at Qassim University. The following questions are attempted to be answered in this study:

- What is the level of Saudi EFL learners' anxiety while delivering oral presentation in English?

- What are the physical signs of speaking anxiety among Saudi EFL students giving an oral presentation in English?
- What factors lead to anxiety among Saudi EFL students during their oral presentation in English ?

## **Methods**

### **Research design**

The purpose of this qualitative research was to evaluate the learners' level of language anxiety when simulating oral presentations on a topic in English, and for this purpose, the study used a descriptive technique. A purposive sample was enrolled since the investigator chose the instances that were included in the sample based on her assessment of their representativeness or existence of the specific inclusion items (Marrison & Cohen, 2007). The participants came from a single English class and numbered fifty. They were given questionnaires for measuring language anxiety based upon Huang and Hwang (2013). Open-ended interviews and class observation were used to collect comprehensive data. The goal of using these additional instruments was to triangulate data.

### **Participants**

There were 50 EFL students from Qassim University's English and Translation Department purposely chosen to participate in the study. They were registered for the school year 1440 AH in the second semester. At the start of the study, we obtained their consent to discuss their experiences and they agreed. They were informed of the research's purpose and its goals by the researcher.

### **Instruments**

#### **Questionnaire**

In order to compile data from various data-collection methods in the area of the participant's attributes, data triangulation may be effective (Cohen & Marrison, 2007). The surveys were modified from Huang and Hwang (2013) and evaluated 20 of the 33 issues based on the students' attributes.

### **Observation**

The manifestation of anxiety in the classroom was investigated by direct observation. The reference list was built from (Alber-Morgan, & Riley, 2007; Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Suleimenova, 2013). Additionally, occurrences that were seen but did not match the questionnaire's results were identified. To rate the many aspects of the perceived and observed anxiety, Tally marks (50) were employed.

### **Interview**

The data for this study was gathered, manually reviewed, and coded after interviews were recorded, and precise transcriptions were prepared. As per the guidelines of Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), coding was carried out using a



deductive approach that used suggestions from the literature survey or theories from the corpus of recent research. Each student's transcription was carefully reviewed and categorized before any codes were created.

### Data analyses

The survey questions were organized on a conventional five-level Likert scale items, and the responses from the students were shown as mean scores and standard deviation. The spectrum of students' language anxiety is divided into three levels: Low English speaking anxiety level, with scores between 16 and 27; Moderate English speaking Anxiety level, with scores between 28 and 45. In addition to this; and High English speaking Anxiety, with scores ranging from 46 to 60. The average mean language anxiety scores measure revealed that the language anxiety level among the students was high if the mean score was 61.98 and a standard deviation= 10.16.

### Validity and reliability

Due to its extensive usage and testing in other research, the questionnaire is regarded as valid and trustworthy. According to Table 1, the questionnaire reliability was 0.7, which is regarded as a high reliability computation. The validity of the observation checklist was examined using inter-rater reliability. Another professor in the department was given the checklist to validate the identical student behaviors that the author was examining. 85% of the similarities were comparable.

Table 1  
Cronbach Alpha

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
20	.70

### Results

**RQ1:** What is the level of Saudi EFL learners' anxiety while delivering oral presentation in English?

Table 2 indicates that EFL students have moderate anxiety level. The average mean score and standard deviation for all the items was ( $M= 3.51$ ,  $Std=0.54$ ). These features are indicative of learners' linguistic anxiety in an oral presentation performance based on the mean scores.

Table 2  
Descriptive statistics of speaking in English anxiety scale

	Statements	M	SD
1	When I speak in English publicly, I never feel completely confident in myself.	4.13	0.51
2	When I can't comprehend the teacher's English, it makes me	3.85	0.52

	nervous.		
3	I regularly find myself thinking about things unrelated to the subject matter in English class.	2.85	0.88
4	When I have to speak in an English class without any prior preparation, I start to become anxious.	4.46	0.52
5	The repercussions of failing my English class frighten me.	3.63	0.98
6	When people get so agitated over English class is beyond comprehension.	2.88	0.32
7	I feel embarrassed to offer up solutions in my English lesson.	2.33	0.49
8	I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	3.63	0,50
9	I'm nervous even though I've prepared well for English class.	4.13	0.80
1 0	I frequently consider skipping my English class.	2.43	0.50
1 1	I'm worried that my English teacher will point out every error I make.	3.5	0.4
1 2	When I am going to be called upon in English class, I can hear my heart pounding.	4.3	0.59
1 3	I am increasingly perplexed when I study for an English test.	2.67	0.54
1 4	I frequently believe that other learners speak English more fluently than myself.	3.23	0.43
1 5	Compared to my other classes, my English class makes me feel more uncomfortable and anxious.	4.29	0.57
1 6	When the English instructor speaks, and I don't comprehend every word, I become anxious.	4.5	0.6
1 7	When I talk in English, I feel that my fellow classmates will make fun of me.	4.35	0.48
1 8	Whenever the English instructor throws me questions that I haven't thought out in before, I become anxious.	4.65	0.48
1 9	I frequently consider skipping my English class.	2.31	0.47
2 0	I always believe that the other classmates have stronger English skills than I do.	2.11	0.34
	Total	3.51	0.54

**RQ2:** What are the physical signs of speaking anxiety among Saudi EFL students giving an oral presentation in English?

Table 3 shows that the majority of learners had an average anxiety of (21.6) of all the anxiety types. This percentage is somewhat below the mid degree that is 25. Some types of anxiety are greater than the mid-level. High Language Anxiety in terms of stuttering that causes these behaviors include: rigid body language, less eye contact, rigid facial expression, and fidgeting during the presentation (34). Similarly, the second type of anxiety type appeared in shaking while they talk; it scored (32) signified by shaky legs while speaking before a group of classmates and shaking hands when striving to deliver the content. This is followed by avoiding eye contact with the lecturer which scored (31). The same score was achieved by students who stammered (31). Students were found to complain of sweating, walking aimlessly or staying quiet in which they scored (28) in each category. Others achieved below-average performance in spoken activities (27) by

exhibiting behaviors such as, reading from the script during a presentation, twitching, and below-average speaking ability in terms of correctness and fluency.

Table 3  
Physical signs indicators of anxiety among students when speaking in English

Symptoms of Anxiety	Overall Tally Score, N=50
Shaking	32
Staying Quite	28
Taking up space in the back row	21
Avoiding eye interaction with the peers or lecturer	31
The distorted or twisting movement	7
Walking aimlessly	28
Playing with one's clothes, veil, or hair, or simply touching things	25
Stammering	31
Being sweaty	29
Nausea feeling	4
Trembling knees	-
Mouth being dry	-
Blush with shyness	13
Massaging the palms	26
Perspiring/ sweating	20
Stuttering voice	16
Reluctance / Hesitancy	15
Below-average performance in spoken activities	27
Inability or lack of desire to speak up	8
Inadequate analysis	25
Twitching	28
During the presentation, adhere to the script.	34
Accelerated speed of speech	6
Speaking at a low speed	15
Total	21.

Open-ended interviews with students were used to confirm the results of questionnaires and the researcher looked for information on variables that might influence learners' linguistic anxiety as well as insights into the emotions that students experienced when giving an oral presentation.

**RQ3:** What factors lead to anxiety among Saudi EFL students during their oral presentation in English?

Most students gave the following answers when questioned about the elements that contribute to oral anxiety: "I have the fear of being ridiculed at," "I have the

anxiety of being taken out of place," "incapability to structure the phrases in English," and "cognitive disconnection".

## Discussion

The study revealed that Saudi EFL students tend to speak with a moderate degree of anxiety. On a five-point scale, they were graded ( $M=3.51$ ,  $Std=0.54$ ). This finding is incredibly important. Their degree of anxiousness prevents them from learning English or at least slows down their progress. Based on a number of studies (e.g., King, 2002; Liu, 2006; Woodrow, 2006), students who have high levels of anxiety struggle to deliver effective oral presentations. According to Woodrow (2006), L2 students who experience speaking anxiety and who view presentations as daunting oral activities will not be able to deliver a successful presentation performance. It is encouraged that instructors employ strategies to support the learners in overcoming anxiety. Liu (2006) found that when learners were exposed to English more frequently, they had less anxiety while speaking in it.

The research also looked at the many forms of anxiety that learners face while attempting to communicate in English. In line with the study, learners who follow the script exhibit inflexible body language, poor eye contact, rigid facial expression, trembling of hands and legs while presenting information before the class, avoid making eye contact with the lecturer, stutter, wander aimlessly, or remain silent. In verbal activities, several students performed below average. Numerous research have supported these conclusions (Al-Ahdal, 2020; Ansari, 2015; Suleimenova, 2013). They report students' uneasiness, apprehension, fear, and anxiousness (Ansari, 2015). It may be anticipated of students to tremble, sweat, and have heart palpitations (Ansari, 2015). Additionally, people with social anxiety who have trouble speaking in front of others avoid taking part in class activities by sitting in the back, remaining immobile, and avoiding eye contact with their fellow students and the teacher (Ansari, 2015).

As per Suleimenova (2013), anxious students frequently engage in striking behaviors such as twisting, wobbling, and caressing their hair, clothes, or veil in addition to speaking abruptly. Students who are anxious also experience nausea, dry mouth, sweating, and leaning on one leg (Boyce, Alber-Morgan, & Riley, 2007). People involved observed a variety of physical indicators that students were nervous, including flushing, rubbing and itching of the palms, perspiring or sweating, controlled voice, cautiousness, below average speaking skills, reluctance to talk or lack of excitement, little interpretation, expressionless eye contact, reading the presentation from the script while presenting it, speaking too rapidly, and speaking in very low volume (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013). Consequently, the study also explored several oral anxiety-causing factors. According to the findings, learners are afraid of being made fun of, having their grammar incorrect, or being in the wrong place. These results are in agreement with those of (Bygate, 2005; Liu, 2006; Tadjouri, 2017). Several learners were worried about using improper language, vocabulary, or pronunciation and about being criticized by their classmates (Tadjouri, 2017). Additionally, the anxiety of employing proper language, pronunciation, and vocabulary prevented the students from fully participating in class discussions (Bygate, 2005). The students also feared criticism from their instructors and classmates (Zhiping & Paramasivam,

2013). The stress of making errors and the consequent fear of being judged are the underlying causes of language anxiety (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2009). The students acknowledged that it was challenging for them to analyze their peers using the evaluation criteria and rubric, particularly when they had to employ oral English vocabulary. Minimal exposure to spoken English vocabulary might prevent students from actively participating in oral presentation peer evaluation.

Based on psychological characteristics of language acquisition, data from the questionnaires, in-person observations, and open-ended interviews were triangulated, and the results revealed that a significant percentage of language learners had high language anxiety. The interpretation could offer some hypotheses on factors that affect learners' linguistic anxiety. It can be demonstrated that the results are based on low English proficiency, minimal exposure to effective teaching strategies, and restricted exposure to English vocabulary. The educational activities and techniques employed to implement simulation had an impact on the students' language anxiety as well. The simulation may also be incorporated into other education programs, such as project-based active learning, language- and content-rich classroom objectives, and other problem-solving-based tasks.

## **Conclusion**

Learning a language is successful when both cognitive and affective aspects are present. This study showed that EFL students still experience language acquisition anxiety in higher education, particularly when they need to effectively use the language in an oral presentation. According to the results, most students who participated in oral presentation simulations showed signs of high language anxiety, including shivering, stillness, evading the lecturer's eyes, twitching, stammering, and kneading their fingers. Furthermore, they performed poorly in verbal activities, as seen by their reduced eye contact, rapid speaking rate, and sluggish speech rate. According to the results of the study's open-ended interviews, the students' communication anxiety was brought on by a concern that they would be ridiculed or made to feel out of place or that their grammatical errors would be corrected. The findings of this study point towards the need to create, produce, and include adaptive materials to reduce oral presentation anxiety related to language acquisition. In consideration of the factors that influence language anxiety in students, future researchers are urged to conduct a thorough investigation into the reasons of students' language anxiety from a cultural perspective in connection to studying (EFL). Since the research findings showed that the learners' English language anxiety was moderate, it is crucial to gather comprehensive information on how to construct the measures for reducing learners' English language anxiety in the EFL context.

As stated earlier, the goal of the current research was to identify the prevalence of English language-speaking anxiety among Saudi undergraduate students as well as the main contributing factors. The results indicated that most of these undergraduate students have a moderate level of speaking anxiety. For students with high and moderate anxiety levels, communication anxiety might be the main element that affects future learning, but for students with low anxiety levels, exam anxiety is the main cause. These detrimental elements have the power to

sabotage learners' efforts to acquire English, hinder their academic progress, and render them unable to communicate in the language. It is thought that learners' ability to speak and acquire communicative competence might be hindered by anxiety when speaking in English.

### **Implication of the Study**

The study's findings may be used as a benchmark to assess the quality of the course materials for English at Qassim University in Saudi Arabia's Department of English and Translation. Several aspects are taken into consideration to provide the enrolled students with a better oral presentation simulation. Since simulation requires a significant amount of time allocation, both its theory and practice must be well-organized. When selecting the simulation, it is also important to take the learners' degree of language skill into consideration. Peer assessment and evaluation standards have to be important elements of the educational technique employed to help students develop their critical thinking skills.

### **Recommendations**

The results of this study may be used as guidelines for teachers and students on how to further develop their speaking abilities and address the problem of speaking anxiety in the English classroom. Increased efforts are required to make sure that instructors foster a calm and encouraging learning atmosphere. Having an understanding of learners' nervousness and assisting them in resolving it, will have a significant influence on how well they study. The teacher can consider assigning more group projects to help students reduce their anxiety. Giving learners some alternatives just on test subjects and using the oral exam as training to stimulate speaking rather than a necessity for passing might make it less scary for them.

It is important to conduct more studies in this area to examine additional potential causes of speaking anxiety in the English language as well as potential solutions. More in-depth research needs to be done and students of other departments should also be observed to explore what are other reasons of anxiety during oral presentation with learners enrolled in various subjects. Teachers' perspectives should be taken into account in future studies to obtain a more wholesome picture of the English classroom.

### **Limitations of the study**

The study's limitation is that it was performed with students in the English department and not in other departments who had high levels of language anxiety, it did not, therefore, address self-reflection of the students. Gender as a factor was also not studied here and future studies need to consider it to verify the outcomes.

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