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The Role of Virtual Classrooms in Reducing EFL Learning Anxiety

Case Study of: First-Year Master Students at

The Departement of Letters and English Language, University 8 Mai 45 – Guelma, Algeria

A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Language and Culture

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to

My dear father, who always believed in my potential and wanted to witness this moment, I did it, and I hope you are proud.

My beloved mother, my source of support, inspiration, and guidance. Thank you for giving me the best life and conditions for success.

My sweet friends: Rana, Bella, Khawla, Joujou, Wissal, Samar, and Bouchra for your motivation and companionship.

My siblings and cousins: Kawthar, Amina, Zakariya, Abir, Yousra, Soundous, Yassmine, and Manar, thank you for your unconditional love and encouragement.

Meryem

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful

I dedicate this work to

To my heaven on earth, 'My Mother', whose endless love, sacrifices, resilience, and encouragement have inspired me every step of the way.

To my hero, my lovely Father.

To my siblings Marwa, Seif, and his wife Soror, my nephews Adem, Firas, and Anes, my constant source of joy, whose laughter and support have brightened every step of this journey.

To my sister from another mother, my soulmate, 'Djihane', whose love and strength have carried me through every challenge.

To my beautiful angel 'Ines', and my childhood friend 'Malak', whose friendship remains a cherished treasure.

To my dear friends, Randa, Lamis, Fadia, and Razan, you all deserve the world.

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Meryem Selsabil

Abstract

Recently, virtual classrooms are among the most used ways for learning English at Algerian universities, as blended learning has become an educational medium during the COVID-19 pandemic. In English as a Foreign Language classrooms, teachers adopt diverse strategies to increase learners' interaction with the course content and address learning difficulties. However, students often avoid classroom interaction for several reasons, including their psychological state, which prevents them from performing tasks properly and engaging fully in the learning process. This phenomenon is known as EFL learning anxiety, which can negatively impact students' performance in the classroom and their academic achievement. In this regard, we hypothesize that First-Year Master's students have positive attitudes toward integrating virtual classrooms to help reduce their learning anxiety. The study uses a quantitative, descriptive research design. To this end, a questionnaire was administered to First-Year Master's students at the University 8 May 1945-Guelma, Department of Letters and English Language. The results reveal that several factors provoke anxiety in EFL classrooms, mainly fear of making mistakes and being judged by peers and teachers, lack of preparation leading to unfamiliarity with test content, low self-confidence, and concerns about how teachers manage student relationships. Additionally, students have positive attitudes toward using virtual classrooms as a learning tool that can help reduce their EFL learning anxiety. Therefore, the data support the research hypothesis. Consequently, most students prefer studying online, as it helps decrease their anxiety. Features like using a pseudonym or deactivating their video, and participating via chat instead of speaking, make students more comfortable to learn at their own pace and less likely to feel judged when making mistakes.

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FLA: Foreign Language Anxiety

FL: Foreign Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

CA: Communication Apprehension

TA: Test Anxiety

FNE: Fear of Negative Evaluation

L2: Second Language

WTC: Willingness to Communicate

LMS: Learning Management System

WBT: Web-Based Training

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

SCORM: Shareable Content Object Reference Model

TAM: Technology Acceptance Model

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is one of the major issues that EFL learners encounter during their language learning journey. Anxious learners often struggle when making presentations or participating in any activities that involve speaking; they doubt their skills and feel the entire class is judging them. They become nervous when they do not understand a lesson or when the test content seems unfamiliar. However, this anxiety may have a damaging impact on many important aspects, including self-confidence, academic performance, and learners' ability to learn the language. On this basis, overcoming anxiety is crucial for maintaining a comfortable classroom atmosphere and achieving the course objectives.

During COVID-19 pandemic, Algerian universities adopted online learning as an alternative to traditional in-person classes. As a first experience, the system lacked organization. However, many students later found it to be a comfortable and beneficial way to study. The various features of online learning encouraged English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners to engage more actively and practice their language skills, leading to noticeable improvements in their performance and better grades in online assessments (Gacem & Senouci, 2024).

The current study provides a review of EFL learning anxiety and virtual classrooms, and draws conclusions that achieve the intended aims and answer the research questions.

1. Statement of the Problem

Experiencing anxiety while participating in EFL classes can impact students' self-confidence and motivation to engage in the learning process. Traditional classroom environments often heighten this anxiety due to the fear of judgment, limited speaking skills, and several other factors. Even though teachers adopt diverse strategies to help them feel more comfortable and confident, they still feel anxious, which may have a significant

influence on their academic achievement. Online platforms, with their various features such as privacy, participation options (chat or voice), and the ability to learn at one's own pace, can help lowering EFL learning anxiety by creating a comfortable learning atmosphere. Exploring the role of virtual classrooms on the learners' psychological state is crucial for understanding how online learning environments can comfort students in EFL classes, which improves their interaction and enhances their performance.

2. Purpose of the Study

Algerian universities have been adopting the blended learning approach, in which teachers integrate diverse tools such as virtual classrooms. EFL students often experience learning anxiety, which makes the teacher apply various strategies to cope with it. In this regard, the research aims are twofold:

1. To figure out the causes behind students' EFL learning anxiety in traditional classrooms.

2. To explore students' perspectives towards the role of virtual classrooms in reducing their EFL learning anxiety.

3. Research Questions

To achieve the intended aims and clarify the ambiguities in this field of study, the research addresses the following questions:

1. What causes learning anxiety in EFL classrooms?
2. What are students' attitudes towards the role played by virtual classrooms in reducing EFL learning anxiety?

4. Research Hypothesis

This research explores students' perspectives towards the relationship between virtual classrooms and EFL learning anxiety. Thus, we hypothesize that:

H1: First-Year Master students have positive attitudes.

H0: The integration of virtual classrooms can help reduce EFL learning anxiety.

5. Research Methodology Design

This study uses a quantitative descriptive design to collect data on the investigated topic.

5.1. Choice of the Method and Data Gathering Tool

The study makes use of a students' questionnaire to gain insights into students' views on the utilization of virtual classrooms. The questionnaire was administered to First-Year Master students during the second semester at the Department of Letters and English Language, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. This research tool facilitates the collection of reliable data on First-year Master's students' attitudes.

5.2 Population and Sampling

The study incorporates First-Year Master students at the Department of Letters and English Language, University 8 May 1945, Guelma. The sample includes 65 students taken from 165 who were chosen selectively. The informants of this research were chosen depending on their prior experience with EFL learning anxiety. Thus, they represent an adequate sample.

5.3 Data Analysis

The descriptive quantitative data from the students' questionnaire were systematically analyzed and interpreted. The results were presented in both narrative

descriptions and tabulated formats. These were then combined to formulate well-supported conclusions and offer suitable recommendations.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

The current dissertation is divided into three chapters. The theoretical part includes the first two chapters, in which an overview of the two variables is provided, and the field of investigation is presented in the third chapter, in addition to a general introduction and conclusion. The first chapter, entitled *Virtual Classrooms*, deals with the distance learning concept, its history, and a review of the important theories related to distance learning as a theoretical framework, different types of online learning, and an overview of virtual classrooms in the context of EFL learning. The second chapter, entitled *EFL learning anxiety*, provides a background information about FL and EFL anxiety, definitions, theories, types, causes, and effects. Additionally, strategies for both teachers and learners to cope with students' FL anxiety in the classroom are presented. The third chapter accounts for *Exploring EFL Students' Attitudes towards the Role of Virtual Classrooms in Reducing Anxiety*. It covers the description and the administration of the students' questionnaire, as well as the analysis and interpretation of the findings. Finally, conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and future research objectives are drawn based on the study results.

CHAPTER ONE

VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS

Introduction

The rise of online learning has fundamentally reshaped the educational landscape, particularly in the context of EFL. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, many universities worldwide have embraced virtual classrooms in education. In light of this, the first chapter aims to clarify the distance learning concept, its history, and a review of the important theories. Moreover, it covers the different types of online learning, including asynchronous, synchronous, and blended models, and some examples of learning platforms, such as Moodle and video conferencing tools. Additionally, the light is shed on the concept of virtual classrooms in the context of EFL learning.

1.1 Distance Learning

In 1991, when the World Wide Web started, people were curious about distance learning. Bowles (2004) stated that distance learning remains unclear and is not yet fully understood. As a result, various researchers have offered different definitions based on their viewpoints.

The United States Distance Learning Association described distance learning as gaining knowledge and skills through information and instruction delivered remotely, using various technologies and methods of learning from a distance (Roblyer & Edwards, 2000). Williams et al. (1999) regarded Distance Learning as a way of learning where instruction occurs while learners and teachers are not in the same place or time. Moreover, distance learning can be divided by time and location, typically categorized into synchronous and asynchronous formats (Billing et al., 2001; Lewis, 2000).

Newby et al. (2000) characterized distance learning as a structured teaching program where the teacher and students are not in the same location. Knight (2004) offered a wide definition of distance learning, stating that it involves using technology to give learners

access to information and communication. This means that technology is used to simplify the learning process. Additionally, distance learning includes any type of learning and teaching that is supported by technology. According to Addah et al. (2012), distance learning primarily involves sharing information or skills through computers and the internet.

1.2 Research on Distance Learning

The first generation that attempted to promote distance education lasted from 1850 to 1960. White (2003) mentioned that interaction between teacher and learners was 'one-way'–usually by posts- with a time lag between mailing and response. In this regard, print materials were used to share information with students. The courses aimed to teach specific skills like proper writing and fluent speaking. Additionally, mail was the only method for sending assignments and lessons to the learners.

The second generation of distance education was marked by the use of broadcast technologies like radio and television. These technologies improved greatly and expanded distance education (Evans & Nation, 2007). This generation lasted from 1960 to 1985.

White (2003) stated that the third generation of distance education relies on information and communications technology, which has enabled interactive distance language learning. This is when teachers began using computers to provide courses. Often, they used CD-ROMs to share information or lessons in electronic form. Rosenberg (2001) and Schank (2002) suggested that distance learning faced challenges due to small hard drive capacities, slow computer performance, poor graphics, and a lack of focus on effective learning methods. The drawbacks of CD-ROMs were evident, and the rise of the Internet provided a valuable resource that opened up new possibilities for using computer technology. The internet introduced Web-Based Training (WBT), which also allowed for more flexible course editing options. Gates (1997) states that information technology will allow for

personalized learning. Workers can stay current with new methods in their industry. Anyone can access top courses from the best instructors, no matter where they are. The latest generation has raised researchers' interest in distance education, particularly with the rise of the internet.

Several studies have been conducted to explore the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning, providing valuable insights into its effectiveness and potential impact on students' outcomes. A study was carried out in higher medical education by Lobach et al. (2022) from Poltava State Medical University in Ukraine. The goal was to evaluate how effective distance learning was, especially during quarantine, and to gather opinions from both students and teachers. The research involved various methods, including qualitative and quantitative approaches, such as analytical reviews, organizing scientific methods, student surveys, and tests. A total of 532 students participated in the survey, which included 326 medical students and 206 dentistry students, during the 2020–2021 academic year. The research showed that distance learning provides flexibility but comes with some downsides, like too much screen time, poor internet connections, and fewer practical activities. Many students felt that traditional learning is more effective because it offers hands-on experience, structured lessons, and better communication with instructors.

Zormanová (2018) conducted a study at the University of Humanities and Economics (AHE) in Poland. This study focused on the benefits and drawbacks of distance learning from the viewpoint of adult learners. This research took place from 2016 to 2018 and involved semi-structured interviews with 15 students pursuing a Master's degree in Pedagogy. The results showed that distance learning offers flexibility, cost-effective, and fits well for working adults. However, it can also cause social isolation and demand strong self-discipline. The study concluded that while distance learning is advantageous, it is most effective when paired with interactive features to lessen isolation and boost engagement.

Another research was conducted by Korolkov et al. (2020) at several institutions in Russia, including Moscow State Regional University and Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics, and Law. It focused on the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning from the viewpoints of students and teachers in the Physical Culture faculty. Researchers conducted a remote survey with 58 second-year students and reviewed publications from 2019-2020. Results showed that 72% of students valued the time and cost efficiency of online learning, but they missed social interaction and encountered technical issues. Teachers pointed out that distance learning fell short in providing practical training and personal engagement, making it less effective as a sole teaching method, although it could benefit theoretical studies.

1.3 Theories of Distance Learning

In the following, a review of the important theories related to distance learning is provided.

1.3.1 Moore's Theory of Transactional Distance

Moore (1997) stated that the theory of transactional distance was the initial theory created when distance education was characterized as an educational transaction back in 1972. According to this theory, distance education is not just about being in different locations from teachers and students. Instead, it is a teaching idea that focuses on the connections between teachers and learners when they are apart, whether that is due to physical distance or time differences (Moore, 1997). Moore (1983) pointed out that there is a gap between learners and teachers that goes beyond just being physical; it also involves educational and psychological aspects. This gap affects the relationship between these two key players in education. He refers to this as transactional distance, which involves the

interactions between the environment, the people involved, and their behaviors in a given situation.

Moore (1997) suggested that when it comes to distance learning, the relationship between teachers and students should consider three important aspects: dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. Dialogue is not just about having a conversation; it includes all types of interactions that happen between them, In the framework of well-established educational objectives, the collaboration and comprehension of the educator play a crucial role, ultimately leading to the resolution of the challenges faced by the learners (Giossos et al., 2009). Moore (1997) pointed out that what really matters is not how often dialogue happens, but rather the quality of that dialogue and how well it helps solve the learning issues that distance learners might face.

One important aspect that Moore (1997) discussed is the course structure, which can be either rigid or flexible. This factor looks at how the course goals and objectives are, the teaching style being used (like whether it focuses more on the teacher or the students), how students are assessed, and how well the course can adapt to meet the unique needs of each student (Zhang, 2003). The third factor, learner autonomy, depends on the first two factors because it relates to how independent and connected learners feel while participating in the course. This autonomy is closely linked to how much control a learner feels they have over their own learning. It can be greatly influenced by the conversations that happen, how strict or adaptable the course structure is, and how much the student manages the learning process (Giossos et al., 2009).

Moore's theory suggested that there is a negative relationship among these three factors, meaning that when one factor goes up, the others tend to go down (McIsaac & Gunawardena, 1996). For instance, if a course has a rigid structure, it might reduce the

quality of discussions and the feeling of independence among learners, which can make students feel more disconnected.

1.3.2 Theory of Interaction and Communication (Börje Holmberg)

Holmberg (1985) suggested that this theory has important theoretical implications regarding how feelings of belonging and interaction influence academic success, along with the actual exchange of questions, answers, and discussions that happen in structured communication. To support his theory, Holmberg outlines seven foundational assumptions that are:

-Teaching relies on the interaction between teachers and students. In a virtual setting, this interaction happens by discussing topics linked to what has already been taught or learned. This approach helps keep students engaged by letting them explore various opinions, methods, and solutions related to the course.

-Emotional involvement in research and the personal connection between teachers and students can create a more enjoyable learning experience.

-Fun learning encourages and motivates students;

-Students' motivation plays a crucial role in their participation in decision-making, which in turn impacts the research.

-Motivated students find it easier to learn;

-Having a friendly and easy way to approach the topic made learning enjoyable, boosts motivation, and helps the learning process; and

-The effectiveness of teaching is shown by how well students grasp what has already been taught.

1.4 Types of Online Learning

Three types of online learning can be presented as follows:

1.4.1 Asynchronous Online Learning in EFL

Asynchronous online learning allows students to access stored resources on the academic platform, such as classes, videos, presentations, and activities, whenever it suits them during the day (Song & Kim, 2021). Teachers and students do not meet in person or online. The teacher provides the material online, and students can view it later (Negash & Wilcox, 2008). Students can watch recorded videos, download documents, and talk to their teachers on the academic platform at any time. This offers more flexibility in their learning, especially if they face tech or internet issues (Dada et al., 2019).

1.4.2 Synchronous Online Learning in EFL

Synchronous E-learning is when learning and teaching happen at the same time using electronic methods. Perveen (2016). In this type of learning, learning experiences happen directly and in real time. Synchronous online learning comes from three main sources: the classroom, the media, and conferences (Shahabadi & Uplane, 2015). A synchronous class is a student-focused setting that involves starting a video conference with a camera, where both the teacher and students are present together. The instructor provides guidance at the outset and subsequently captures the full attention of the students, who then engage in responses according to the assigned activities (Amiti, 2020).

1.4.3 Blended Learning in EFL

According to Garrison and Kanuka (2004), blended learning involves the deliberate combination of traditional in-person classroom instruction with online educational experiences. It explains a way of teaching that mixes in-person and online methods. An

instructor or tutor interacts with students either in person or through technology, while providing a variety of learning materials and activities for students to use (Nichols, 2003). A significant portion of the course material is provided online, often incorporating online discussions, and generally features fewer in-person meetings (Allen & Seaman, 2010).

1.5 Online Learning Platforms

1.5.1 Learning Management Systems (LMS): Moodle

The word Moodle stands for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. It is also called a Learning Management System (LMS) or a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). It was designed by Martin Dougiamas, in the first version was released in August 2002 (Benta et al., 2014). Moodle is an open-source e-learning platform primarily designed to create personalized learning environments by offering tools that facilitate both blended and online education (Deepak KC, 2017). This online learning platform enables teachers to control and manage all aspects of course content and delivery through a single integrated system (Brooks-Young, 2008). Moodle is a software tool that allows teachers to create online courses, evaluate assignments, and give online feedback (Suppasetseree & Dennis, 2010). It establishes a cooperative and digital education setting in which learning occurs through online platforms (Oproiu,2015). Through the utilization of this e-learning platform, students have the opportunity to engage with both their instructors and peers regarding the courses and activities provided. Additionally, they can collaborate on various assignments. According to Bouguebs (2019), Moodle enables students to learn at their own speed, which enhances their motivation to engage in the learning process.

1.5.1.1 Activities and Modules of the MOODLE Platform

According to Costa (2012), the Moodle Platform makes it easy to set up a course website that only enrolled students can access. It allows users who are far apart to share

information easily. It has flexible features like creating student assessments (quizzes, online tests, and surveys) and helps manage their activities with their schedules. Plus, it offers a variety of extra tools to improve both teaching and learning. These activities and modules are shown in Figure 1.

Activity	Module	Description
Creation	Database	Allows to build, display and search a bank of record entries about any topic; allows to share a collection of data.
Organization	Lessons	Represent a set of ordered topics summarizing the instructional materials and allow the access to them through the respective link.
Delivery	Assignments	Allow teachers to collect work from students; evaluate the student's work and provide feedback (including grades) in a private mode; allow students to upload assignment files.
	Workshops	Represent a peer assessment activity with many options.
Communication	Chats	Allow students to submit their work via an online text tool and attachments; allow synchronous conversation.
	Forums	Represent a communication tool where students and teachers can exchange ideas by posting comments.
News	News	Represent a special forum for general announcements; allow teachers to add posts and to send emails.
Collaboration	Glossary	Allows creating and maintaining a list of definitions.
	Groups	Represent a mechanism for collaborative activities that can be restricted to entities made by the teacher.
	Wikis	Allow users to edit collaborative web pages; provide space for collaborative work.
Assessment	Choice	Allows teachers to ask questions and specify multiple choice answers; represents a useful mechanism to stimulate and assess student input on a topic.
	Quiz	Allows teachers to design and build quizzes with a variety of questions (multiple choice, true/false, short answer, etc.).
	Survey	Allows teachers to gather feedback from students using prepackaged questionnaires.
	Feedback	Allows teachers to create surveys to collect feedback.
Reusability*	SCORM	Represent specifications that enable interoperability, accessibility and reusability of the instructional content.
	External tools	Represent tools that enable SCORM packages to be included in the course; allow interaction with compliant learning resources and activities on other web sites; provide access to new activities, types or materials.

Figure 1.1 *Activities and Modules on MOODLE*

(Adapted from: Costa et al., 2012)

This figure shows that the Moodle Platform has a variety of Modules, including Database, Lessons, Assignments, Workshops, Chats, Forums, News, Glossary, Wikis, Choice, Quiz, Survey, Feedback, SCORM (Sharable Content Object Reference Model), and External tools. Furthermore, there are additional activities categorized into six distinct sections: Creation, Organization, Delivery, Communication, Collaboration, and Assessment.

1.5.2 Video Conferencing Platforms

Video conferencing is considered an advanced learning technological tool in distance education, as it facilitates significant interaction and motivation while enhancing collaborative efforts (Wheeler, 2005). Ritzel (2010) described videoconferencing as an interactive tool that combines audio, video, computing, and communication technologies. This allows individuals in various locations to engage in real-time, face-to-face collaboration and share different types of information, such as data, documents, audio, and images. The use of video conferencing platforms such as Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Zoom has significantly increased, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. People have begun adopting video conferencing platforms as an alternative to in-person meetings in educational institutions, businesses, and social events, opting for virtual interactions instead (Kagan et al.2020). A research entitled "Students' Attitudes Towards the Effect of Using Zoom Lecturing Application to Enhance EFL Learning During Covid-19 Lockdown: A Case Study of IRISS Private School in Tizi-Ouzou" was carried out by Meziane (2020/2021). This study used a mixed-methods approach, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data. A survey was given to 45 EFL students, and structured online interviews were held with four teachers. The goal was to explore students' views on using Zoom to improve EFL learning during the COVID-19 lockdown and to understand teachers' opinions on its effectiveness. Results

showed that students viewed Zoom positively, seeing it as a helpful and motivating tool for EFL learning. Teachers also considered it an effective means for communication and teaching. However, some issues were identified, including technical problems and less interaction compared to in-person classes.

Additionally, another significant platform is Microsoft Teams, according to the description in the cover of Microsoft Team website (2021), Microsoft Teams is an application that connects students and teachers through virtual face-to-face interactions and activities, it also allows for remote lunches to keep classrooms engaged and enjoyable, the service is free for students and teachers who have a valid school email address. Keerio et al. (2022) from Quaid-e-Awam University of Engineering, Science and Technology (QUEST) in Pakistan conducted a study to assess how students view Microsoft Teams for online learning. They used the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and surveyed 416 undergraduate and postgraduate students to evaluate the platform's perceived usefulness and ease of use. The results showed that students found Microsoft Teams beneficial for learning, enhancing task quality, and improving their ICT skills. However, they preferred a hybrid learning model over online classes only. While many students considered the platform user-friendly and effective for their studies, some encountered issues with its rigidity, design, and internet connectivity. In conclusion, the study indicated that Microsoft Teams platform has a positive effect on education but needs further enhancements for better integration into academic environments.

Moreover, Google Meet is a video communication service that Google officially launched in March 2017. This service replaces Google Hangouts and incorporates Google Chat; it has been utilized as a tool for teaching and learning the English language (Mannong, 2020). Google Meet helps tutors conduct classes in online learning environments; as a result, it has become the most effective and preferred alternative to conventional classrooms

(Altmann, 2015). The research titled 'Revolutionizing Remote Learning: A Case Study of Google Meet at an Online University' was conducted by Khalili et al. (2024) from different institutions, including Badakhshan University and Kabul University. The study used a quantitative approach, gathering data through structured questionnaires from 120 female students in four faculties: Medical, Economics, Computer Science, and Education. The goal was to evaluate how effective Google Meet is for remote learning, focusing on student engagement, academic performance, and overall satisfaction, while also identifying challenges. Results showed that Google Meet significantly improved student participation and engagement, which positively influenced academic performance. However, challenges like technical issues and varying user skills impacted the overall experience, highlighting the need for better technical support and training.

1.6 Virtual Classroom in EFL Settings

A virtual classroom is a web-based learning environment that teachers and students can access through mobile devices or personal computers (Montoute, 2013). Margaret (2016) defined virtual classrooms as an online learning environment that is unconstrained, accessible, customizable, adaptive, and useful. According to Turoff (2007), A virtual classroom is an online space where you can join live training sessions without the need to travel. Similar to a regular classroom, you can listen to lectures, engage in activities, ask questions, and receive feedback, all from your computer or any place with a phone and internet. It eliminates the trouble, cost, and time of going to a physical training site. Helic (2002) described Virtual classrooms as specialized settings created for group learning. These settings, which can be either synchronous or asynchronous, give teachers and students the resources and assistance they need to successfully use extremely complex and flexible learning techniques.

In addition, Abdel Dayem and Nassar (2012) defined it as an online technology that produces a learning environment that is comparable to a conventional classroom setting, where the instructor can provide lessons using writing, sound, images, and video clips. The use of virtual classes has significantly influenced the teaching and learning of EFL, changing the environments in which learning occurs from limited to more flexible settings (Liu, Shih & Tsai, 2010).

A research entitled 'Virtual Classrooms Engagement Among Jordanian EFL Students During the COVID-19 Pandemic' was carried out by Al-Khresheh (2023) from Northern Border University in Saudi Arabia. It used a quantitative descriptive approach with a questionnaire on student course engagement, which was given to 602 Jordanian EFL university students. The goal was to assess how engaged these students were in virtual classrooms, their satisfaction with online learning, and how gender and university level affected their engagement. Results showed that students had a moderate level of overall engagement, with high engagement in performance-related areas but only moderate engagement in skills, emotional aspects, and participation. While some students were happy with virtual learning, many reported dissatisfaction due to issues like a lack of interaction, technical problems, and motivation challenges.

Another research entitled 'Experiencing Virtual Online Classes during the Pandemic: Foregrounding Iranian EFL Teachers' and Learners' Voices' was conducted by Safdari (2022) from Islamic Azad University in Chalous, Iran. It utilized a mixed-methods approach, which included both quantitative surveys and qualitative semi-structured interviews. A self-report questionnaire was given to 80 EFL learners and 30 teachers, followed by interviews with 18 learners and 12 teachers. The goal was to explore how Iranian EFL teachers and learners viewed virtual online classes and to identify any similarities or differences in their opinions. The results showed that both groups generally viewed virtual learning positively,

with teachers focusing on interactive classrooms and students stressing the importance of communication and engagement. However, they also faced challenges like technical problems and difficulties in adapting, highlighting the need for better online teaching methods.

The study 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Using e-Learning in University Education: Analyzing Students' Perspectives' was conducted by Al Rawashdeh et al. (2021). It aimed to identify the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning in university education in the United Arab Emirates. The methodology involved a descriptive study design with a closed-ended questionnaire given to randomly chosen students from Ajman University during the 2018/2019 academic year. The results showed that e-learning offered advantages such as making scientific content more engaging and enhancing interaction among students as well as between students and teachers. However, it also found disadvantages, such as greater social isolation and challenges for parents in overseeing their children's online activities.

1.7 Evolution of Virtual Classrooms in Algeria

Algeria is one of the 204 nations that COVID-19 has infected (World Health Organization, June 2020). The Ministry of Health, Population, and Hospital Reform announced the first case of the COVID-19 outbreak in Algeria on February 25, 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the educational teaching-learning system in Algeria. Higher authorities in the nation decided to close all the private and public schools and universities. At that point, the students' future was in danger, so they needed to find a way to deal with the situation. They tried to develop new teaching and learning methods using virtual classrooms.

1.7.1 Virtual Classrooms in Algeria Before COVID-19 Pandemic

Before the emergence of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the use of virtual classrooms was still in its early stages of development. Only a few universities were experimenting with blended learning models; the majority of educational institutions still mostly use traditional face-to-face teaching methods. El Kechebur (2017) highlighted that e-learning projects in Algeria were mostly small and isolated efforts, consequently, numerous efforts were initiated by individual professors without the support of a well-structured national plan to introduce e-learning in universities, as a result, the entire educational system lacked a cohesive plan that would have directed the development and implementation of e-learning. There were major barriers that prevented colleges and universities from making efficient use of online learning resources; among these obstacles were the limited essential tools, like computers, internet connectivity, and teacher training (Djoudi, 2018).

1.7.2 Virtual Classrooms During Covid-19 in Algeria

The COVID-19 pandemic was a great incentive to adopt E-learning in Algeria. In order to maintain educational continuity, there was an urgent need to switch to online learning when educational institutions closed in early 2020. According to Guessar (2020) The Algerian Ministry of Higher Education has quickly worked to implement online distance learning to maintain teaching and learning during the quarantine and safeguard the academic year, as a result, university instructors in Algeria, similar to their counterparts in other nations, started creating and sharing lessons, activities, and assignments through various platforms and tools. These include Zoom, Messenger groups, WhatsApp, Google Meet, Facebook, webinars, emails, e-learning platforms, and others, to facilitate communication with their students and among the students themselves.

1.7.3 Virtual classrooms Post Covid-19 in Algeria

In the post-COVID era, e-learning has become a key part of education in Algeria. Boudia and Bengueddach (2023) highlighted how the pandemic has affected e-learning in Algeria over the long term, the findings show that although there has been notable advancement in incorporating e-learning into education, issues like poor infrastructure and reluctance to adapt remain, the study emphasized the need for government backing and investment in information and communication technology (ICT) to maintain the progress achieved during the pandemic. Another study by Abdaoui and El Aggoune (2024) looked at how well online learning works using Google Meet for Moodle in universities in Algeria. The results showed that although the new learning models were accepted positively, teachers need continuous training to improve their digital skills and adjust to new teaching approaches.

Conclusion

Online learning is now more important than ever in education. It provides great flexibility and easy access to learning. It removes location limits, enabling people to learn from anywhere and at any time. This chapter explored how distance learning has changed over time, especially for EFL learning. It traced its beginnings with printed materials to today's interactive online platforms. Key learning theories, various types of online learning, and different platforms enlightened perspectives on the application of these tools in education.

CHAPTER TWO

EFL LEARNING ANXIETY

Chapter Two: EFL Learning Anxiety

Introduction

Language learning is an intricate process that involves not only cognitive but also emotional and psychological skills, and one of the psychological factors that may highly influence this process is Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). This chapter aims to investigate EFL anxiety by providing an insightful background on FLA. From defining anxiety in general and FLA in particular to introducing theories and frameworks. And focusing on studies related to FLA and EFL. It also deals with its types, dimensions, factors, and the effects on FL learners' language learning process. Concluding with strategies for both teachers and learners to cope with this anxiety and achieve a successful FL learning outcome. The chapter provides an examination that can be reflected on EFL anxiety, and will aid teachers and learners in establishing a productive language learning environment.

2.1 Language Anxiety

Anxiety is a significant psychological barrier in language learning. There is more than a single definition of anxiety since it differs according to the context of the studies. Merriam Webster Dictionary defined anxiety as an excessive apprehension with physiological manifestations such as muscle tension, perspiration, and increased heart rates, accompanied by stress concerning whether the perceived threat truly exists, its nature, and a lack of confidence regarding one's ability to cope with it. Similarly, Scovel (1978) claimed that anxiety is an emotionally complex composite that involves the senses of discomfort, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, and concern. Spielberger (1972) defined anxiety as the emotional response or behavioral pattern shown by the individual interpreting a given situation as personally dangerous or threatening, whether or not this danger is objectively present. Anxiety is generally an unfavorable feeling that people go through when they feel

uncomfortable in particular situations, which may highly affect their behavior and performance.

FLA is a term related to the context of learning a second or FL, defined by Horwitz et al. (1986) as a type of anxiety that comes due to the distinctive characteristics of learning a language. It is how the individual perceives himself, thinks about his capabilities, and feels and behaves in the learning environment. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), anxiety is a negative emotional reaction an individual gives off towards experiences related to a language class. It will be firmly associated with the language class environment through gradual exposure over time, differentiating it from all other situational contexts.

2.2 Types of Anxiety

Various types of anxiety help in getting a deep understanding of this disorder, as the cases differ from person to person and situation to situation. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) mentioned three main types of anxiety: state, trait, and situational anxiety.

2.2.1 Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety is generally regarded as a permanent aspect of personality, defined as the tendency of an individual to be anxious in any given situation (Spielberger,1983). He asserted that individuals with high trait anxiety often experience anxiety in a variety of contexts, which reflects a relatively consistent pattern of anxious responses. And they are prone to fear in very non-threatening situations because they perceive them as more threatening. Similarly, Goldberg (1993) declared that trait anxiety is not a temporary feeling, but a long-term tendency to feel anxious towards various situations.

2.2.2 State Anxiety

Unlike trait anxiety, state anxiety appears under specific circumstances. McIntyre (1999) described this type of anxiety as a "moment-to-moment experience of anxiety" (p. 28). It is concerned with temporary nervousness brought on by certain situations. Spielberger (1983) defined state anxiety as an emotion of momentary duration and only related to specific environments and situations. Which means this type of anxiety can only be experienced temporarily in particular conditions that the individual considers as a threat, and will instantly feel better afterwards.

2.2.3 Situational Anxiety

Situational anxiety is defined by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) as being related to well-defined situations like tests or public speaking; thus, this form of anxiety becomes evident and more prominent in specific contexts. They also described it as anxiety that occurs consistently in particular situations (p.90). In this regard, anxiety becomes situational when it is simulated in a certain situation regularly, such as when a student feels anxious every time he has to speak in front of peers. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA is considered stress associated with a specific context; as they mentioned, "Foreign language classroom anxiety is a typical situation-specific anxiety" (p. 127). Then, it should be studied and measured accordingly.

2.3 Theories and Frameworks

2.3.1 Horwitz, Horwitz, and Copes Theory of FLA

As previously mentioned, Horwitz et al. (1986) described FLA as a multi-dimensional construct characterized by self-image, beliefs about one's abilities, and the range of emotions experienced during language learning. They indicated in their theory that anxiety is not just a general feeling of stress or shyness, but situation-specific; the anxiety

that FL learners experience is related to several factors concerning language learning. Scovel (1978) stated that some early researchers were unable to identify the relationship between anxiety and performance earlier (whether anxiety is beneficial, harmful, or even has no effect), and they were treating and measuring different types of anxiety under a single label. He attributed the variation of the findings to the unclear definition of anxiety and the insufficiently developed instruments to assess it.

In response to these contradictions, Scovel (1978) differentiated between facilitating and debilitating anxiety to clarify the ambiguities in the previous findings. When anxiety is manageable and serves the learner's benefit, it is called facilitating anxiety; unlike debilitating anxiety, which comes about when anxiety is excessive, so that it obstructs the learner's performance.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) is defined by Al-Saraj (2014) in her paper as an anxiety-measuring instrument developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) based on students' lived experiences while studying foreign languages. A questionnaire of 33 items on a 5-point Likert scale that students completed on their own revealed various dimensions of anxiety: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation.

2.3.2 The Affective Filter Hypothesis

The Affective Filter Hypothesis is a concept introduced by Krashen (1982) as one of the five major constructs of his monitor model: The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis. Krashen (1982) stated that there are three main affective variables associated with the advancement in L2 acquisition: motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety. He claimed that they construct a filter that either blocks or facilitates the language learning

process, and the input must go through it before being processed by the brain. If the filter is high (high anxiety, low self-confidence, and low motivation), the input would not be comprehensible enough. Thus, inability to acquire the information. And if the filter is low (low anxiety, high self-confidence, and high motivation), the brain will easily process the input.

Chen (2020) affirmed that cases where learners experience negative emotions during language acquisition might adversely affect the processing of comprehensible input. On the contrary, positive attitudes maintained throughout the learning process will tend to weaken the filter effect.

2.4 Anxiety and Foreign Languages

Numerous researchers have studied and analyzed anxiety in the context of language learning, as it prevents people from accurately learning a FL. Yorulmaz and Arabacıoğlu (2023) examined Turkish high school students' anxiety while learning German as an FL. (FLCAS), the anxiety measuring survey developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) served as a data collection tool given to 385 students to explore their general anxiety level and the differences based on gender, grade, their English level, and their parents' educational background. The outcomes declared that students in their first year learning the language are more anxious, students who are good in English have less stress towards learning German, and factors like gender and parents' education did not control the anxiety level. A study on Chinese international learners provided an insight into their anxiety when learning French as an L3. In this study, 243 students answered a questionnaire, and three of them were interviewed. The findings show that students with good English proficiency are less nervous, high levels of anxiety diminish students ' self-confidence, oral practices, and the fear of judgment are their main causes of anxiety.

2.5 Anxiety and EFL Learning

English is becoming a global language, and a bunch of studies have been conducted on EFL students across the world to examine their anxiety while learning this language. Şener (2015) conducted a study on Turkish students studying English at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University to determine their levels of anxiety, the relationship between speaking anxiety and achievement, and whether or not anxiety levels differ based on gender and age. In this research, 77 students were involved, and the main results revealed that the study came up with is that female students had higher anxiety than males, and younger students suffered the most from listening anxiety. Students with speaking anxiety obtained lower grades due to their inability to express themselves. Similarly, Lababidi (2016) investigated the anxiety level of Saudi students when learning English. She used two data collections: a survey and interviews. She concluded that the major reason for students' anxiety is speaking in class and the potential of making mistakes, followed by other worries like difficulties in receiving the input provided by the teacher and being judged by their peers.

To discover how students can get along with FLA, Konodo and Ying-Ling (2004) focused their research on the case of Japanese EFL students. From 2 universities, students answered surveys and ranked the strategies into groups according to their similarities. The research summed up a few main strategies, such as preparation before class, positive thinking, remaining relaxed, and hearing similar experiences with anxiety from peers to realize that it is normal to make mistakes when learning L2.

2.6 Dimensions of FL Anxiety

Based on theoretical foundations and clinical observations, three components of anxiety were recognized by Horwitz et al. (1986), who labeled them as performance-related

anxieties: communication apprehension (CA), test anxiety (TA), and fear of negative evaluation (FNE).

2.6.1 Communication Apprehension (CA)

Horwitz et al. (1986) presented communication apprehension as an emotional state where a person is inhibited from participating in discussions as a result of many possible factors related to his personality or capacities. They explained that the condition may manifest in terms of speaking in groups, fear of the stage, or other factors related to communication. Noor et al. (2015) claimed that communication apprehension may be derived from a lack of communicative competencies or vocabulary and sentence structure challenges, which can limit the learners' abilities to understand and produce verbal information.

2.6.2 Test Anxiety (TA)

Test anxiety is defined by Duesk (1980) as a state of distress characterized by bodily and behavioral responses that individuals experience during formal assessments or other evaluative contexts. Also introduced by Horwitz et al. (1986) as performance-related anxiety resulting from fear of failure. During tests, the human body automatically releases an emotional response characterized by fear and nervousness, as people usually fear failing. Horwitz et al. (1986) think that students who suffer from test anxiety often exert unreasonable expectations upon themselves, so they see any other option than perfection as a failure.

Sarason (1960) and Wine (1971) claimed that highly test-anxious individuals were self-preoccupied with doubt and worry about their performance, and showed more self-dissatisfaction than their low-test-anxious counterparts. They highly focus on themselves

during tests, which negatively affects their performance and drives their attention away from what needs to be done.

2.6.3 Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE)

Horwitz et al. (1986) defined the fear of negative evaluation as the apprehension individuals have concerning the judgment of others; it involves being concerned about possible criticism, avoiding situations where evaluation can take place, and the negative expectations that others hold for them. Ismail et al. (2022) viewed that learners tend to think that their peers are better at speaking the target FL, and thus they fear being judged if they try speaking. This attitude causes unwillingness to actively participate in group undertakings, as it may be embarrassing to share answers.

2.7 Factors of FLA

Many researches indicated that there are many factors may contribute in arousing students' FLA, Young (1991) discriminated six probable sources of FLA: (a) personal and interpersonal anxieties; (b) learner perceptions about language learning; (c) teacher perceptions about language learning; (d) teacher-learner instructions; (e) classroom procedures; and (f) language testing.

2.7.1 Personal and Interpersonal Anxieties

Young (1991) indicated that two significant sources are responsible for learner anxieties: low self-esteem and competitiveness. Price (1991) in her study noted that several participants viewed their language ability as not quite matching that of their classmates and expressed feelings of inadequacy, believing they were underperforming and that their peers looked down on them. They also felt they should have performed better and thought that with just a bit more effort, they could have succeeded in the task. In this context, students lack confidence and doubt themselves for not doing well, thinking their colleagues are better,

and feeling judged, which illustrates how low self-esteem can provoke anxiety and hinder successful language learning.

Baily (1983) argues that the drive to be competitively oriented may potentially arouse feelings of anxiety among language learners, particularly when people start making comparisons with their peers or with a better version of themselves. This means that since learners are always aspiring to be better and successful, their anxiety is stimulated when they put themselves in a situation of competition, whether with other learners or with higher expectations about themselves.

2.7.2 Learners' Perceptions about Language Learning

The way learners perceive language learning may influence their level of anxiety. Young (1991) claimed that one of the main factors that trigger anxiety is learners' backgrounds and attitudes toward language learning. Both Horwitz (1988) and Gynan (1989) found that learners care about pronunciation the most. Gynan (1989) added that learners are setting pronunciation as the top competence, followed by other competences like vocabulary and grammar, while Horwitz's (1988) study reported that they are concerned about speaking accurately with a flawless accent; they think that they can achieve a perfect accent in two years. However, most of these expectations are not on point; beginners can't sound native immediately, and mastering the ideal accent takes a longer time; these false expectations can cause disappointment and frustration among language learners, which in turn increases anxiety (Young, 1991).

2.7.3 Teachers' Perceptions about Language Learning

When the teacher is incapable of maintaining an appropriate relationship with his students or managing his course, he can be a great contributor to their anxiety. Young (1991) noted that some language teachers think their role is to correct student mistakes rather than

guide them and help them learn from these faults; others believe that students should not be allowed to work together because group work creates distractions, excessive noise, or difficulty in classroom management.

They also think they should maintain control over discussions and lead in teaching activities instead of promoting student-centered learning. Besides, Brandle (1987) declared that it is common for them to seek to keep their relationship with their students as limited as possible to preserve their authority, away from the casualty and friendships. All these false strategies that educators think are effective may prevent learners from learning L2 properly. Instead, breaking the awkwardness, developing good relationships with them, and understanding their needs will foster their confidence and motivation to learn.

2.7.4 Teacher-Learner Instructions

Making and correcting errors are crucial challenges for learners in the classroom. Young (1991, p.429) showed that learners are cautious about making mistakes, they dislike seeming stupid or incompetent around their classmates, and the over-correction of their mistakes can obscure their L2 acquisition. Herron (1981) stated that such a practice serves to hinder the learning of a FL. Excessive correction of student papers can lead to feelings of intimidation and embarrassment. There is a need to correct answers and provide guidance for better learning. Yet, some instructors adopt rigid and humiliating styles in their ways of correction, which makes the learners nervous about their mistakes.

2.7.5 Classroom Procedures

When it comes to classroom procedures, anxiety is highly focused on speaking using L2 in front of the whole class (Young, 1991). In a study conducted by Koch & Terrell (1991), they reported that more than fifty percent of the subjects in their research had an increased amount of anxiety while presenting oral reports or skits in front of their peers, or taking oral

quizzes and being called on unexpectedly to speak in the target language, these findings emphasize how challenging oral performances can be to L2 learners, while they are expected to be more relaxed when they do not have to perform such tasks. Yan and Horwitz (2008) suggested that students of similar proficiency levels be grouped and receive appropriate resources for their specific language competence level. Speaking is easier among students who have the same level; such groups would help them feel less anxious, so they can focus on their performance.

2.7.6 Language testing

L2 learners can also feel anxious about language tests, and the level of anxiety varies depending on the type of test, as some research indicates. Learners often experience frustration and sadness when the exam questions do not align with their expectations. The pressure of time and performance during the exam can contribute to anxiety, which is sometimes linked to the ambiguity and unfamiliarity of the test, leading learners to worry about how they will be assessed. As a result, they often reflect on their feelings towards their teacher and peers when they receive negative evaluations (Young, 1991).

2.8 Algerian students' EFL Anxiety

Many studies shed light on Algerian EFL students' anxiety, given that learning English has been disseminated only in recent decades in Algeria. A research study discussed and analyzed the causes of FLA among Algerian EFL conducted at the University of Bejaia by Idri (2014). The participants were 100 first-year English students studying in the LMD system; they were under observation and answered questions about their worries, emotions, and experiences. The study reported that students are concerned about receiving bad grades, being judged, and having low confidence. They suffer from difficulties in speaking and understanding. Berbar and Fodil (2017), in their study, intended to measure EFL students'

anxiety in oral tests. The study involved 124 second-year University students. They were given a questionnaire in three distinct phases: pre-test, during, and post-test. Researchers found similar results to the previous study; among the main factors of anxiety that this study claimed are speaking in front of other people and being judged, forgetting previous acquisitions, and fear of negative assessment.

AL-Qadri et al. (2023) investigated anxiety among multilingual students in Algeria. A questionnaire of 23 questions was given to 471 students between the ages of 19 and 24. The key findings of this study were that communication is the primary cause of students' anxiety, skillful students are less anxious, and Amazigh students are less anxious than Arabs, as they have more experience with multilingualism because of their mother tongue, Tamazight. The study highlights that the more languages you get exposed to, the less nervous you become when learning a new language.

2.9 FLA and Online Learning

Language learning took a significant place in online classrooms during COVID-19 pandemic. Although traditional classrooms are back nowadays, some FL learners think that distance learning has helped decrease their FLA. Pichette (2009) conducted a study on L2 students to see if they are less anxious in online classes compared to traditional ones. The study reported that learners' anxiety level in virtual classrooms is not better. However, beginner students have the same anxiety level as the advanced ones in online classes, and that is the interesting part of the study since beginner learners are usually more nervous. Even though the difference is not considerable, it shows that virtual classrooms are slowly making a change.

Alla et al. (2020) measured Ukrainian students' FLA at Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University, comparing traditional and online classrooms at

the time when the COVID-19 pandemic started to spread. 38 first and second-year students completed the FLCAS, and the results showed a balance between the increase and decrease of anxiety in online classrooms depending on the context. Although students were more anxious about speaking online and negative evaluation, they felt much comfortable taking online rather than face-to-face tests. They also were not as worried about making mistakes since online learning grants full autonomy and reduces the extent of teacher and peer pressures. Therefore, the study emphasized the role of online learning in lowering test anxiety and the fear of making mistakes.

Research was conducted by Bel'Kiry (2022) in Tunisia to analyze EFL students' anxiety in online settings. The researcher gathered 50 participants from different Tunisian universities and institutes. He used an online questionnaire inspired by the FLCAS to help them get accurate findings about different levels of anxiety. The research concluded that the majority of students had low to moderate anxiety, and the rest (⅓) were highly nervous, and this variation between anxiety levels was not based on gender but on academic levels. Doctoral students were the least anxious, unlike undergraduate and graduate students, who were severely anxious.

Another comparison study between Chilean students' anxiety levels in traditional and online environments was led by Véliz-Campos et al. (2023) in a university in Santiago, Chile. The researchers adopted different data collection tools, including a survey, an oral presentation test, and an interview, to get a deeper insight into how students feel and perform in both settings. The outcomes were in online learning's favor; online class students are less anxious than those in traditional classes. They had more confidence speaking behind the screen than face-to-face with the whole class, which in turn highlighted the difference in their oral performance. In addition to the technology provided when learning online, like Google Translate or notes that made oral performance easier for them. Most students tended

to study online; however, some of them preferred face-to-face interaction, stating that facial expressions and body language are crucial for a better understanding. Online learning is an area that warrants intensive exploration in the field of language anxiety, as it may hold promise as a future solution for reducing anxiety among foreign language (FL) learners and, consequently, enhancing acquisition and performance.

2.10 The Effects of Anxiety on FL Learners

Horwitz et al. (1986) mentioned that there are no specific effects of anxiety on language learning. However, teachers and counselors have witnessed the learners' struggles on many sides. MacIntyre (1998, 1999) categorized the possible effects of language anxiety into at least five aspects: academically, socially, cognitively, communicatively, and personally. And sometimes it has a positive effect, 'Facilitating Anxiety' (Scovel, 1978).

2.10.1 Academic Achievement

Concerning the academic context, MacIntyre (1999) stated that high language anxiety levels are always accompanied by low educational achievement, Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) noted that anxiety is the foremost contributor to an individual's success or failure in language learning and it can appear in several contexts, including oral tests; learners with anxiety are likely to perform poorly when they speak using L2, vocabulary; learners suffering from anxiety will face difficulty in lexical recalling due to the pressure they feel, and instructor ratings of achievement; when students are under stress, it is a challenge for them to maintain good performance even if they have enough input, which may cause in getting lower grades.

2.10.2 Social Interactions

Anxiety can create a significant gap in social interactions among L2 learners. MacIntyre (1995) asserted that students with high language anxiety tend to avoid or shy away from interpersonal communication more than others; they miss the opportunity to talk to various people in society or native speakers from other countries, which limits their social interactions and makes language learning challenging. Horwitz et al. (1986) reported that clinical experience with FL students in university classes and at the Learning Skills Center (LSC) at Texas University concluded that some anxious students might attempt programmed drills or prepare a speech and perform well; however, this same group may struggle with spontaneous speech, such as in role-playing. One student explained how, at night, she reflected on everything she wished she could have said during classroom discussions. Therefore, students under stress are unable to speak spontaneously when interacting with others; they cannot instantly structure sentences and recall vocabulary even if they have a lot to say. This influences their performance and hinders them from communicating with others using a FL.

2.10.3 The Cognitive System

When anxiety affects the cognitive processing system, it controls the amount of input the learner acquires and how it is acquired. Studies done by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991, 1994a, 1994b) and other researchers reported that anxiety consumes cognitive resources and hampers the learning process. The human brain's attention capacity is limited. When students are anxious, their preoccupied mind diverts attention from negative thoughts like how bad their performance is or how they compare themselves with their classmates (cited in Sellers, 2000). According to Tobias's Model (1979, 1980, 1986, cited in MacIntyre, 1999), the cognitive impact of anxiety can be viewed in three separate phases: input, processing, and

output. In the first phase, the anxious learner is focusing on his worries and negative thoughts, driving his attention away from the input that must be perceived, so he may miss the information or not fully acquire it. Here, anxiety inhibits the cognitive information processing system. The processing phase is where the learner organizes and interprets the information. When the working memory is occupied with anxiety, it would not leave enough energy to process the information, so the input would not be fully comprehensible. The output phase is the step of using and applying the knowledge; anxious students are unable to recall and produce their inquiries; they may forget or misapply what was previously learned because of the stress they experience.

2.10.4 Communication Output

Horwitz et al. (1986) claimed that speaking is the most affected skill by anxiety, as it requires quick reflexes and instant sentence formulation. Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) added that nervous learners tend to produce unclear speech with hesitant responses, incomplete sentences, and repeated words. Which in turn reduces willingness to communicate. MacIntyre et al. (1998) developed a model that identifies the relationship between FLA and Willingness to Communicate (WTC), explaining how several variables can affect learners' tendency and ability to speak. From deeper and long-term traits like cultural and social backgrounds that form self-perceptions and attitudes about L2, to create motivation, desire, and intentions to communicate with people or a specific person, which lead to actual communication. According to MacIntyre (2007, 1991, 1998,1999) and Horwitz et al. (1986), FLA influences many aspects in this process, including motivation, self-confidence, intentions to communicate, and the act of communication itself.

2.10.5 The Individual's Personality

Zheng (2008) said that sometimes, language anxiety can be unbelievably damaging to the learners' personality; MacIntyre (1999) claimed that FLA harms learners' self-confidence and neglects their worth, and makes them form negative perceptions about language learning. Clément et al. (1980) affirmed that people who lack confidence have a lower tendency to learn a new language, which highlights the importance of learners believing in themselves and their capacities.

2.10.6 Anxiety as a Positive Influencer (Facilitating Anxiety)

Anxiety can manifest in two distinct forms that significantly impact FL learners: debilitating anxiety, which inhibits students from acquiring the language, and facilitating anxiety, which acts as a motivator for better performance. It is defined by (Alpert & Haber, 1960) as a supportive kind of anxiety that encourages learners to overcome difficulties and perform well under academic pressure. Scovel (1978) asserted that facilitating anxiety fosters effort and engagement in L2 learning; he noted that it doesn't always have a negative impact; a reasonable level of anxiety can promote better language acquisition.

2.11 Strategies for Lowering FLA

Both teachers and learners need to adopt strategies that contribute to diminishing anxiety and enhancing the language course quality, thus enabling L2 learners to receive the maximum input provided in the classroom.

2.11.1 Teacher Strategies

Teachers are one of the key factors that manipulate learners' anxiety levels. Sometimes, you may adore your language class or dislike attending just because of your teacher; then, teachers have a big part in the responsibility of achieving successful language

learning. A good teacher must first consider his classroom environment. Khusnia (2017) in her study provided some classroom strategies for teachers from her interviews with some participants, to help them support their learners, such as fostering their connection by making them sit in a semicircle or oval, and making learning vital by establishing personal relationships with the learners. If they feel that the teacher is less strict with them, they will be less stressed. Also, teachers should avoid calling the learners all of a sudden, as they hate that moment when all eyes are on them.

Another important point that must be highlighted is error correction; as mentioned before, learners do not like the overcorrecting of their mistakes or teachers being harsh while correcting. Teachers should commit to particular correction techniques to avoid causing anxiety to their learners. Keramida and Tsiplakides (2009) recommended replacing direct ways of correction with indirect ones; they stressed that instead of correcting learners immediately when speaking, teachers can normalize making mistakes to motivate them to use L2 without hesitation. Moreover, teachers adopting scaffolding will increase learners' self-reliance and raise their awareness about their mistakes. It includes giving enough guidance about a certain task and giving them hints to help them correct their mistakes.

Assessment is a significant source of anxiety that must be targeted; the classic ways of evaluation can be immensely stressful for L2 learners. Keramida and Tsiplakides (2009) proposed the project works as an alternative to the ordinary assessment, as it makes learners feel more integrated and motivated and distracts them from thinking they are assessed all the time. If learners enjoy the assessment, they will feel less nervous, which motivates them to work harder.

2.11.2 Learner Strategies

Learners should also step ahead to overcome their anxiety when learning L2. There are some strategies to help them cope with FLA. Akkakoson (2016) conducted a study on Thai students to analyze their strategies to endure anxiety while learning EFL. This study reported that among the best ways to reduce FLA is to use the language in a social context; learners should practice speaking the language by speaking to different people like classmates, tourists, or people on social media, initiating conversations with friends and family, and trying to copy the native accent. In addition, joining classroom activities will make it more enjoyable to learn the language, which in turn lowers their stress.

It is known that preparing the lesson and getting familiar with its content will significantly lower anxiety and allow students to interact and enjoy their class instead of feeling nervous about something new. Uyun and Warna (2024) confirmed this in their research, asserting that Indonesian university students achieved good results in reducing anxiety in English classes by previously revising their lessons. Forming a background about the material before your next class will make you more engaged, and language learning will seem easier.

Conclusion

The chapter presented an inclusive background of the theoretical frameworks and the key concepts of FLA and EFL. The literature review demonstrates that language anxiety is encountered in many other countries with different languages besides EFL in Algeria. And the examined types and dimensions of FLA based on the theoretical foundations highlighted few of the possible causes and cases of students' anxiety in FL classrooms. The chapter also emphasized other factors and the impact of anxiety on significant aspects of their lives and academic achievement. In an attempt to find solutions for reducing this anxiety, classroom

strategies for both teachers and students can be adopted to help not only overcome but also lower anxiety levels among FL learners as much as possible. Consequently, this chapter aimed to form a theoretical framework serves as the foundation that will guide the analysis and interpretations of the research findings in the practical part.

CHAPTER THREE

EXPLORING EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ROLE OF VIRTUAL CLASSROOMS IN REDUCING EFL LEARNING ANXIETY

Introduction

This chapter presents the practical part of the study that aims to explore the underlying causes of anxiety in EFL classrooms and to figure out students' perspectives about the usefulness of online classrooms in reducing anxiety. The chapter provides a detailed description of the adopted research design and how the study was conducted. To test the research hypothesis, a questionnaire was administered to First-Year Master students at the Department of Letters and English Language, University 8 May 1945, Guelma. This allows for an in-depth view into their perceptions and experiences regarding EFL anxiety about online learning. Conclusions were drawn based on the results of the collected data, which were analyzed and interpreted in correlation with the research aims and the theoretical framework.

3.1. Methodological Approach

Exploring students' perspectives about how virtual classrooms can help reduce anxiety in EFL learning requires a quantitative approach that involves a students' questionnaire. Moreover, this method allows gathering reliable data, provides detailed insights, and broadens the understanding of the key factors related to the issue being studied.

Jonker and Penink (2010) characterized the quantitative approach as "purely scientific, justifiable, precise, and based on facts often reflected in exact figures" (p.38). This means that quantitative research emphasizes objective measurement and numerical data analysis. It is considered scientific because it employs a structured and systematic method for gathering and analyzing data. The term justifiable suggests that the findings can be supported with evidence and reproduced by others. Precise means that the data is clearly defined and measured to minimize ambiguity. Lastly, being based on facts represented by exact figures signifies that the research depends on measurable data, like statistics,

percentages, or numerical trends, rather than personal views or interpretations. Therefore, the study employs a questionnaire as its research method to collect a significant amount of numerical data, leading to more reliable results. This research describes the population, sample, and characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation which makes it descriptive in nature (Manjunatha, 2019).

3.2. Description of Students' Questionnaire

Brown (2001) defined questionnaires as written tools that provide respondents with a set of questions, to which they respond by composing their answers or choosing from a list of provided options (cited in Dorney, 2003).

Additionally, Young (2015) posited that questionnaires attract novice researchers, including students engaged in dissertation projects, for several reasons: they are easy to design, can be conveniently distributed online, and facilitate the straightforward collection of data through direct interaction, email, or web platforms. Furthermore, the data obtained from questionnaires can be processed and analyzed easily. In contrast to spoken data, which necessitates recording and transcription before analysis.

The questionnaire is composed of 27 questions, divided into four sections and organized from the most general to the most specific. The questionnaire included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. There are four main sections. The first section is entitled Demographics, which is composed of 6 questions (Q1 to Q6). It gathers general information about the respondents, such as their age, their gender, their level, and how long they have been studying English. The second section includes 6 questions (Q7 to Q12), which cover EFL learning anxiety, its causes, effects, and strategies applied by teachers to cope with it. The third section (Q14 to Q20) is about students' experiences, preferences, and perceptions regarding virtual or online learning environments. Finally, the fourth section (Q20 to Q26)

focuses on understanding how online learning environments can impact students' emotional experiences and anxiety levels, especially concerning learning EFL.

3.2.1. Aims of the Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire is designed to collect the required data to analyze and interpret the findings that will answer the questions and reach the aim of the study:

1) To identify the causes behind students' anxiety in EFL classrooms.

2) To explore students' attitudes towards the contribution of virtual classrooms in reducing their EFL learning anxiety.

3.2.2 Students' Questionnaire Administration

The questionnaire was administered to First-Year Master students during the second semester at the Department of Letters and English Language, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. The questionnaire was distributed selectively to the participants during regular sessions, under the supervision of teachers. The data were gathered anonymously to ensure that the respondents would provide honest and accurate answers.

3.2.3 Population and Sampling

The purpose of selecting First-Year Master students as the population for this study was based on the fact that they have participated in virtual classrooms in the past years and have valuable experiences with online learning settings. Additionally, we approached them individually and asked whether they experience anxiety when learning English. Only those who confirmed having such anxiety answered the questionnaire. According to (Memon et al., 2025), quantitative research can be done selectively by choosing the sample that fits the

research requirements and possesses certain criteria. In this regard, the selective sample consists of 65 subjects out of 165 students.

3.2.4 Findings

The sections offer a comprehensive overview of the questionnaire findings. The data gathered from the students' responses are reported, analyzed, and presented in texts and tabulations.

a. Section one: Demographics

Question 1: What is your gender?

a. Male ☐

b. Female ☐

Table 3.1

Students' Gender.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Male	23	35.39
b. Female	42	64.61
Total	65	100

Table 3.1 shows that among the 65 Master One students who responded, 42 were female and 23 were male, indicating a higher number of anxious female learners in the sample. The data highlights a notable difference between genders. Among anxious learners, 64.61% of females reported having anxiety, while only 35.39% of males did. This implies that more anxious learners are female gender.

Question 2: How old are you?

The sample age ranges between 21 to 25 years old. This implied that the sample is composed of young learners who can adapt to technology use and functions as a way to reduce their EFL learning anxiety.

Question 3: How long have you been studying English?

Table 3.2

Students' Years of Studying English

Years	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. 11 years	33	50.77
b. More than 11 years	32	49.23
Total	65	100

The data from Table 3.2 shows that 50.77% of respondents who answered the questionnaire were learning English for 11 years; however, 49.23% claimed that they have been studying it for more than 11 years. This demonstrates that all students have a relevant experience in studying English.

Question 4: What is your English level?

a. Beginner ☐

b. Intermediate ☐

c. Advanced ☐

Table 3.3

Student's Level of English Language

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Beginner	0	0%
b. Intermediate	43	66.16
c. Advanced	22	33.84%
Total	65	100

The results in Table 3.3 show that the majority of respondents, 66.16% reported having an intermediate level of English language. Meanwhile, 33.84% claimed that their English level is advanced, and there are 0% beginners. Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents are satisfied with their level of English and feel confident in their English language skills.

Question 5: Do you speak other foreign languages?

a.   Yes   ☐

b.   No   ☐

Table3.4

Students' Foreign Language Proficiency

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	45	69.23%
b. No	20	30.77%
Total	65	100%

According to Table 3.4, the majority of the respondents, 69.23% claimed that they speak at least one other foreign language, while only 30.77% do not; this may refer to those who do not speak another FL fluently. This suggests that the majority of participants are multilingual. According to the previous studies, many researchers argued that multilingual individuals tend to be less anxious when learning new languages. This implies that a large number of the sample have prior experience in learning a FL, which may help in lowering their EFL learning anxiety.

Question 6: If yes, describe your learning experience**.**

Based on the previous question, 69.23% of students provided answers to this item, and their responses are summarized as follows:

- Learning another language was good.

- The experience was very good.

- It was exciting to learn a different language.

- It was not good for me.

- It felt normal, nothing special.

- It was so difficult to learn another language.

- The experience was horrible.

- It was enjoyable to learn a new language.

- Learning languages is fun.

Depending on the students' answers, we can say that the majority of them described their experiences using words such as: good, exciting, enjoyable, fun, etc. This showed that many viewed FL learning as a fulfilling and engaging journey. These answers suggest that for the majority, acquiring a new language brought about positive feelings and a sense of achievement. However, a smaller group shared neutral or negative feelings. Some viewed

the experience as ordinary and showed little interest, while others considered it unpleasant, challenging, or even terrible.

b. Section Two: EFL Learning Anxiety

Question 7: Among the modules you are studying, what learning content makes you anxious? (Select one or more)

a. Linguistics ☐

b. Literature ☐

c. Civilization ☐

d. Evaluation and Testing ☐

e. Advanced Reading ☐

f. Discourse Analysis ☐

g. Communication Practices ☐

h. Ethics and Deontology ☐

i. Research Methodology ☐

Table 3.5

The Learning Contents that Make Students Anxious.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Linguistics	19	29.23
b. Literature	31	47.69
c. Civilization	21	32.31
d. Testing and Evaluation	18	27.69
e. Advanced Reading	10	15.38
f. Discourse Analysis	17	26.15
g. Communication Practices	3	4.61
h. Ethics and deontology	10	15.38
i. Research Methodology	5	7.69

The Table shows the modules that participants are more anxious about. The majority of them feel anxious when attending a Literature course 47.69%. The second most mentioned subject by students is Civilization 32.31%, and Linguistics as the third one, 29.23%. Their anxiety levels are somewhat serious in other secondary subjects, such as Testing and Evaluation 27.69% and Discourse Analysis 26.15%, followed by the other modules that seem to be less anxiety-provoking, like Advanced Reading 15.38%, Ethics and Deontology 15.38%, Research Methodology 7.69%, and communication practices 4.61%. The results contended that students are more anxious about learning particular subjects over others, maybe because of the theoretical nature of the module.

Question 8: State the learning problems that make you anxious in the classroom?

According to the question, respondents provided a variety of classroom problems that make them anxious from their perspective. These are presented as follows:

- The content of the module (complicated).

- Limited vocabulary and speaking skills.

- Long and unexciting lessons.

- When forced by the teacher to participate.

- Shyness.

- Activities that involve speaking.

- The teacher's method (Lesson presentation, behaviour, and relationship with students).

- Teachers' reaction when students make mistakes.

- The distant relationship that the teacher maintains with his students.

- The fear of suddenly being selected to answer.

- The fear of being judged.

- Lack of self-confidence.

Question 9: What makes you anxious in EFL classroom? (Select one or more)

a. I always feel that my classmates speak English better than I do	
b. It is stressful when the teacher might suddenly call my name	
c. I feel disturbed when I am asked an unexpected question in English	
d. I fear that my peers will make fun of me when I speak English in class	
e. I get nervous when the test does not match my expectations	
f. I feel frustrated when the teacher corrects my mistakes many times	
g. I feel anxious when I want to get better grades than my peers	
h. I keep thinking that I should have a perfect accent	
i. I become nervous in many other situations besides EFL learning (environmental, psychological, social…)	
j. I feel anxious only when I have to speak in class or when I encounter difficulties	
k. I consistently feel anxious when performing a particular activity (eg, reading, speaking)	
l. I always hesitate when it comes to participation	

Table 3.6

Reasons for Students Learning Anxiety in EFL Classrooms.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
A	6	9,23
B	22	33,85
C	15	23,08
D	1	1,54
E	30	46,15
F	8	12,31
G	4	6,15
H	19	29,23
I	7	10,77
J	13	20
K	8	12,31
L	23	35,38

This item presents the various reasons that may contribute to learners' anxiety in EFL classrooms. As it is shown, a large number of participants, 46.15% get anxious when the test is unfamiliar to them and different from what they have prepared for. Others, 35.38% claimed that participation is also a notable factor that concerns students; about 33.85% of the participants feel stressed when they may be called suddenly by the teacher to speak or to answer questions. Also, many students worry about their accent; 29.23% of them thought that they should speak fluently and have a perfect accent. 23.08% of the students feel distressed when it comes to speaking spontaneously using English, which means that they cannot instantly construct correct sentences, maybe due to their limited speaking skills.

Some students 20% reported that they feel anxious only when they face difficulties, while other students 12.31% get anxious whenever they have to perform a particular activity or face a specific problem, and others 10.77% believe that they tend to be anxious in other different situations, even if they are not related to English learning. A few of the participants 12.31%, feel stressed when the teacher overcorrects their mistakes, and they think their peers are better at speaking English than them 9.23%, they also get anxious when they think that their peers may judge their way of speaking English 1,54%. The results reveal that students may experience anxiety due to several subtle reasons, which influence their learning outcomes.

Question 10: Considering your experience with EFL anxiety, how did this kind of anxiety affect your academic achievement?

a. Poor performance ☐

b. Acquisition difficulties ☐

c. Lack of self-confidence ☐

d. Inability to speak spontaneously ☐

e. A motive to work hard

Table 3.7

The Effect of Anxiety on EFL Students.

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Poor performance	10	15.38
b. Acquisition difficulties	11	16.92
c. Lack of self-confidence	8	12.31
d. Inability to speak spontaneously	30	46.15
e. A Motive to work hard	6	9.24
Total	65	100

The Table exhibits the effects of anxiety on EFL students. The majority of informants, 46.15% declared that anxiety prevents them from speaking effortlessly, while others 16.92% cannot acquire enough input when they are under stress. 15.38% of them perform less than expected when they are anxious, and 12.31% of students thought that they are lacking self-confidence because of anxiety. Finally, a few of them 9.24% are positively affected by anxiety; it works as a stimulator for them to make more efforts. Therefore, the data conclude that anxiety affects students' performance both positively and negatively, whether it makes it challenging for them to learn English properly or it pushes them to give their best.

Question 11: Do you think teachers have anything to do with students' anxiety in class?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Table 3.8

Teachers' Role in either Contributing to or Reducing Students' Anxiety in the Classroom.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	61	93.85
b. No	4	6.15
Total	65	100

This item seeks to reveal whether or not teachers can also affect students' learning anxiety in the classroom. On one hand, the findings emphasize that the majority of them 93.85% believe that the teacher is one of the key factors that manipulate their feeling of anxiety. On the other hand, a small number of respondents 6.15% think that the teacher has no responsibility for what the students feel in the classroom, and their feelings of stress is probably due to other factors. According to the revealed data, teachers may have control over their students' feelings, and this can be linked to the strategies and the methods they adopt when teaching.

Question 12: How can teachers help students to be interactive and confident in English classes? (Select one or more)

a. Maintaining a good relationship with students ☐

b. The teacher guides students through the learning process rather than correcting mistakes. ☐

c. Sitting in a semicircle with your peers to feel more connected ☐

d. Making the project work instead of ordinary quizzes ☐

e. Avoid interrogating students and make them at ease to answer. ☐

f. Others

Table 3.9

Teacher Strategies to Help Students Cope with Anxiety.

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
A	21	32.31
B	13	20
C	6	9.23
D	11	16.92
E	16	24.61

This sample showcases some significant classroom strategies that teachers must adopt to maintain a comfortable environment for EFL learning. Most students 32.31% consider that developing a good and friendly relationship with the teacher helps them feel better and more interactive in the classroom; meanwhile, a number of them, 24.61% feel that participation should not be mandatory. Students are more likely to engage voluntarily and not under pressure. 20% of informants affirm that the teacher's guidance is more important than correcting their mistakes, targeting their errors in a tolerant way will decrease the feeling of unworthiness. Also, replacing the traditional assessment methods is crucial for those who are test-anxious. 16.92 % opted for incorporating project works as an alternative to ordinary quizzes, and a small portion of informants 9.23% think that sitting closer to each other in the classroom will foster connection between peers and diminish the stress. Here, the results indicated how important the teacher's role is in comforting his students for a better learning environment.

Informants who opted for "others" were asked to add more details from their perspective. The responses are summarized as follows:

- Including some entertaining activities will help in reducing anxiety.

- Teachers intimidate students and give a lot of negative comments, especially to those who seem less self-confident.

- Giving positive feedback or reinforcement to make students feel better about themselves.

- Teachers make students feel unworthy when they make mistakes.

- Teachers should give more speaking opportunities for anxious students to help them decrease anxiety.

- Teachers never consider students' preferences.

- Teachers should stop overcorrecting and interrupting students during presentations.

c. Section Three: Online Learning

Question 13: Have you ever participated in virtual learning classrooms?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Table 3.10

Students' Participation in Virtual Learning Classrooms

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	100
No	0	0
Total	65	100

It is shown that all students (100%) responded 'Yes' to the question. This indicates that every participant in the study has had experience with online learning environments.

The absence of any 'No' responses confirms that virtual learning has been a common and shared experience among them.

Question 14: How often did you usually attend virtual classrooms in the past few years?

a. Daily ☐

b. Weekly ☐

c. Monthly ☐

d. Rarely ☐

Table3.11

Student Engagement through Virtual Classroom Attendance over Recent Years

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Daily	0	0
Weekly	35	53.84
Monthly	25	38.46
Rarely	5	7.7
Total	65	100

According to the results in Table 3.11, most students, 53.84%, stated that they participated in virtual classrooms weekly. Additionally, 38.5% claimed that they attended monthly. According to them, virtual learning was a regular but not daily part of their academic routine. Notably, none of the students 0% indicated that they attended virtual classrooms daily, suggesting that full-time online learning was likely not standard in their academic programs. A small number of informants, 7.7% mentioned that they rarely participated in virtual classes. Overall, the data suggests that while virtual learning was a

consistent part of students' academic experiences, it was not heavily intensive on a daily basis, but it was good enough to fulfill the learning goals.

Question 15: What platform do you use the most for virtual classes?

a. Zoom		b. Dropbox		
c. Google Meet		d. Moodle		
e. Google Clasroom		f. Others	....	

Table 3.12

Students' Platforms for Virtual Learning

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Zoom	4	6.16
b. Dropbox	0	0
c. Google Meet	28	43.07
d. Moodle	15	23.07
e. Google Classroom	18	27.7
f. Others	0	0
Total	65	100

As it is displayed in Table 3.12, Google Meet emerged as the most widely used platform, with 43.07% of students reporting it as their primary tool for virtual classes. Google Classroom was the second most selected platform, and 27.7% indicated it as their most-used tool. Moodle was chosen by 23.07% of respondents, which shows that it remains important and emphasizes its effectiveness in handling content-rich courses and keeping academic records. Zoom was used by only 6.16%, which is relatively low compared to its

global popularity. This might be because of limited support from the universities or a lack of familiarity. Dropbox had no responses, 0%, probably because it is not a virtual classroom; Dropbox mainly serves as a file storage and sharing service, not a platform for live or interactive classes. 'Others' option received 0 responses, confirming that the platforms mentioned are the most used tools by students.

Question 16: Which type(s) of online teaching and learning do your teacher(s) use?

a. Synchronous learning (face-to-face learning)	
b. Asynchronous learning (distance learning)	
c. Blended learning (mixing both onsite and online learning)	

Table3.13

Online Teaching Methods Used by Teachers

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Synchronous learning	6	9.23
b. Asynchronous learning	10	15.39
c. Blended learning	49	75.38
Total	65	100

The results shown in Table 3.13 reveal that blended learning is the most used method, 75.38% confirmed that their teachers use a mix of synchronous and asynchronous techniques. This suggests that many teachers strive to find a balance between flexibility and interactive participation, likely to cater to various learning preferences and schedules.

Asynchronous Learning ranks second, chosen by 15.39% of students. This approach provides flexibility and is commonly utilized when students and teachers are in different time zones or when learners like to work at their own speed. Synchronous Learning is the least frequently mentioned, with only 9.23% indicating its use. This lower rate might be attributed to the difficulties in organizing live sessions, particularly in large or varied classes. The clear preference for blended learning indicates that teachers are attempting to create dynamic, accessible, and effective online learning experiences by combining the advantages of both live and self-paced formats.

Question 17: Which learning modality do you prefer?

a. Synchronous learning ☐

b. Asynchronous learning ☐

c. Blended Learning ☐

Table3.14

Students' Preferences for Online Learning Modalities

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Synchronous learning	5	7.7
b. Asynchronous learning	39	60
c. Blended Learning	21	32.30
Total	65	100

The obtained data presented in Table 3.14 reveal that Asynchronous Learning is the top choice among students, 60% selected this option. This shows that most students appreciate the flexibility and self-directed pace that asynchronous learning offers. 32.30%

opted for Blended Learning, which highlights that many students value a mix of structure and flexibility, benefiting from both live interaction and self-directed learning. Synchronous learning is chosen by 7.7% of participants. This low preference might stem from rigid schedules and a lack of flexibility, making it difficult for students who have different availability or are in different time zones. The compiled results show that students prefer flexible learning environments, although some value the mix of blended learning, a significant majority enjoy the freedom and independence provided by asynchronous learning.

Question 18: Whatever your answer, please justify

Following question 18, students were asked to justify their answers; their justifications were summarized as follows:

- Asynchronous learning is good for introverted people who feel anxious to speak in front of others, a helpful method for those who are busy and have responsibilities, time-saving, and it reduces costs like transportation

- Blended learning helps in reducing stress, and it gives variety in learning methods, also giving students a balance between flexibility and interaction

- Synchronous learning is the best way to deliver information effectively, and it makes students feel more connected with the teacher

Students' justifications indicate that asynchronous learning is appreciated for its flexibility, comfort, and its ability to reduce anxiety in social situations. On the other hand, synchronous learning is valued for its ability to effectively convey information and foster a stronger connection between students and their teachers. Blended learning is favored for combining the benefits of the two different approaches; it helps lower stress, provides variety, and encourages flexibility and interaction.

Question 19: What do you most prefer about learning online? (select one or more)

a. Students have flexible schedules and deadlines for assignment submission	
b. It saves costs related to commuting, accommodation, and materials.	
c. Students have access to lessons, recorded lectures, and digital libraries	
d. Beneficial for those who have jobs and responsibilities.	
e.It allows students to revisit recorded lectures and materials as needed.	
f. Students can use chat for participation instead of speaking	
g. The use of audiovisual materials (videos, pictures, vocal records, video conferencing…) for a more enjoyable experience	

Table3.15

Students' Preferences in Online Learning

Options	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
A	21	32.30
B	12	18.46
C	27	41.53
D	26	40
E	23	35.38
F	20	30.8
G	19	29.23

Table 3.15 shows that students expressed a strong preference for flexibility, accessibility, and self-paced learning. The top preference highlighted by 41.53% of students was the availability of lessons, recorded lectures, and digital libraries, showing that easy access to learning materials is highly valued. Following closely, 40% noted that online learning is particularly advantageous for those balancing jobs or personal commitments, underscoring the convenience of managing education alongside other responsibilities. Additionally, 35.38% liked accessing recorded lectures and materials, which emphasized the importance of self-paced review for better understanding. Moreover, 32.30% appreciated the flexibility in schedules and assignment deadlines, pointing out how online learning helps them manage their time more efficiently. The ability to engage through chat rather than speaking was also favored by 30,8% of students, indicating that online platforms create a more inclusive space for those who may feel shy or prefer written communication. 29.23% valued the use of audiovisual materials, like videos and video conferencing, which enhanced their learning experience. Finally, only 18.46% highlighted cost savings on commuting, accommodation, and materials; this still reflects a practical benefit of online learning for some in the class. These results revealed that students greatly benefit from the freedom and accessibility offered by online learning. Aspects such as flexible scheduling, diverse content formats, and inclusive participation are crucial in improving their educational experience.

d. Section Four: The Role of Online Learning in Reducing EFL Anxiety.

Question 20: How do you describe your experience with online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic concerning EFL anxiety?

a. Very uncomfortable ☐

b. Uncomfortable ☐

c. Comfortable ☐

d. Very comfortable ☐

Table 3.16

Students' Attitudes towards Studying Online.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Very Uncomfortable	7	10.77
b. Uncomfortable	15	23.08
c. Comfortable	26	40
d. Very Comfortable	17	26.15
Total	65	100

The sample presented students' attitudes towards studying online, relying on their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of participants, 40% felt comfortable while studying online, and 26.15% were very comfortable and preferred studying this way. In contrast, 23.08% of the students were uncomfortable taking their courses online, and a small number, 10.77% felt very uncomfortable and totally could not handle studying online. The results revealed that most students were comfortable and inclined toward online learning.

Question 21: Whatever your answer, please justify.

Respondents provided various answers to this item that reflect the level of comfort when learning online. These are their main answers:

- I faced less pressure and stress in online classes.

- Studying from home is so comfortable.

- We could study peacefully away from classroom noises.

- I interact better when I study online.

- Online learning is beneficial for introverts.

- We could freely talk without feeling nervous.

Question 22: What makes you less anxious when learning online? (Select one or more)

a. Participation is easier in online classes	
b. Taking tests online is at our own pace	
c. Feeling less judged in online classes	
d. Performing better in online presentations	
e. Speaking behind the screen, and we do not have to reveal ourselves	
g.　　Making fewer mistakes while speaking in online classes	

Table 3.17

Factors for Reducing Anxiety in Online Classes.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
A	29	44.61
B	19	29.23
C	26	40
D	11	16.92
E	26	40
F	13	20

The item shows the main factors that helped students feel less anxious during their online classes. About 44.61% of the participants felt less nervous when they could easily participate, and a number of them, 40% think they become comfortable when they feel less judged. Similarly, 40% of students believed that speaking behind the screen without seeing faces or being revealed helped them decrease their anxiety. Additionally, 29.23% of respondents felt less nervous due to the flexibility of taking tests, which can be scheduled whenever it is convenient for students. Some students, 20% feel more at ease when they make fewer mistakes while speaking in online sessions, and the least portion, 16.92%

declared that a good presentation performance reduces their stress. The outcomes indicated that many factors help in decreasing students' anxiety in online sessions.

Question 23: Name challenges that caused your EFL anxiety in traditional classrooms and were solved during virtual classrooms.

EFL Students' responses are concisely organized as listed in the following:

- Students assumed that they felt anxious about presentations, but presenting in online sessions made it easier.

- Answering questions about presentations or anything else is better online than face-to-face in terms of being less expected to be judged, which motivates them more to participate.

- We make fewer mistakes while speaking in online sessions than in face-to-face sessions, because we have more time to organize our ideas.

- Classroom noises are considered one of the causes of anxiety, but online classes were calm and comfortable.

- Participation was challenging in the classroom, but they became so interactive in online sessions.

- I do not feel comfortable when the classroom is crowded; this is why I prefer studying online.

Question 24: Do you feel that online learning has helped you reduce EFL anxiety?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

Table 3.18

The Role of Online Learning in Reducing EFL Anxiety.

Option	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
a. Yes	43	66.15
b. No	22	33.85
Total	65	100

Table 3.17 emphasizes students' views regarding whether or not online learning is really beneficial for reducing students' EFL anxiety. The majority of them 66.15 % have noticed the difference after studying online, and declared that their anxiety levels are decreased compared to traditional classrooms. While 33.85% believed that online learning has nothing to do with lowering their anxiety, they probably felt the same in both settings. The findings pointed out that online learning is an effective way of learning for reducing students' EFL learning anxiety.

Question 25: If yes, how?

Respondents who said yes were asked to explain how online learning helped them reduce their EFL learning anxiety; their answers were summed up as follows:

- Online learning helped me to speak out of my own free will without feeling tied to many limits.

- I gained more confidence speaking behind the screen, which allowed me to speak better in face-to-face classes too.

- Online learning helped me reduce my anxiety by having more time to think and structure my sentences before speaking or giving answers.

- It was so helpful not to face my classmates and my teacher; I felt less anxious, and I could easily participate.

- It is embarrassing that people can see how I feel when talking or presenting, experiencing my emotions behind the screen made me feel better about myself.

- Being away from the teacher helped me to be more interactive and less worried about making mistakes.

- In online sessions, teachers were less intimidating, which is why I became less anxious.

- Studying online helped me normalize making mistakes and not having a perfect accent; my participation is what matters.

- I dared to get out of my comfort zone and started speaking more and participating.

- When I realized that my English level is getting better in online classes, I became excited to speak more and share my ideas, therefore feeling less anxious over time.

- Since participation is easier in online classes, I got better grades, which made me feel better about myself and motivated me to speak more.

Question 26: Please feel free to share any suggestions or recommendations about the topic. We asked informants to give extra ideas or suggestions related to the topic. Here is how they responded to the question:

- Blended learning is the best choice to go for, mixing both online and face-to-face learning will cover all the students' needs. Teachers should implement online learning in their teaching process and develop strategies to help learners cope with their EFL anxiety.

3.3 Students' Questionnaire Summary of Results

The present research explored the role of virtual classrooms in reducing EFL learning anxiety by gathering perspectives regarding the topic.

The first section is entitled *Demographics*, and it aims to gather general information about the participants, including their gender, age, language background, and English learning experience. The collected data of this section revealed that females make up the vast majority of participants, which indicates that more anxious learners are of female gender. They are aged between 21 and 25. Furthermore, the students have been studying English for 11 years, and others have studied for even longer than that. This implies that this generation of learners gained enough experience in online learning to provide valid perspectives on its use and effectiveness. Additionally, the majority of the participants claimed that they have an intermediate level of English language and claimed that their English level is advanced, which means that the participants are satisfied with their proficiency in English and possess confidence in their language abilities, and this permits them to provide rich knowledge about the topic under investigation. Moreover, the majority of the respondents stated that they speak at least one other FL, and most of them described their learning experience positively with words like 'good,' 'exciting,' 'enjoyable,' and 'fun,' indicating that language learning is often viewed as valuable and fulfilling. As the majority have a good experience with a FL, this may increase their self-confidence and lower their anxiety in learning English.

Section two, entitled *EFL Learning Anxiety,* sought to reveal which learning modules provoke higher levels of anxiety, explore its underlying reasons, and how this kind of anxiety can affect EFL students. Moreover, the potential coping strategies that could assist learners in reducing this anxiety are raised. The findings demonstrated that EFL students feel anxious

about learning particular modules rather than others, with the Literature course being reported as the most anxiety-inducing content. This may be linked to several reasons, including the complexity of the content, limited vocabulary and communicative skills, and the teacher's method in the classroom (lesson presentation, behavior, relationship with students, etc). Other reasons can stimulate students' anxiety; the majority of them claimed that they feel nervous when tests are not as they expected or when they are called unexpectedly to answer in the classroom. Also, many of them doubt their speaking abilities and think that it is necessary to have an ideal accent, so they become less confident. This anxiety has a strong influence on EFL students' performance, as they probably cannot learn and produce the language properly. But in few cases, this anxiety may push them to work harder and achieve better results. Moreover, they think teachers have a crucial role in increasing or decreasing their anxiety; establishing a good relationship with students and cautiously targeting their mistakes is important for students' comfort and maintaining a relaxing classroom environment. This section concludes that several reasons control anxiety levels among EFL students in the classroom, which explains why they may feel anxious towards one module more than another. In this respect, EFL anxiety affects their academic performance in the first place, which may inhibit them from learning the language and obtaining good grades. Teachers play a crucial role in reducing their students' anxiety by adopting some strategies, such as establishing a good relationship with them to make them feel comfortable.

The third section, named *Online Learning,* aims to reveal students' experiences, attitudes, preferences, practices, and perceptions regarding virtual or online learning environments. The analysis of section three indicates that all students have experience with virtual classrooms, attending sessions mostly on a weekly or monthly basis, on Google Meet and Moodle being the most used platforms. Blended learning is the most commonly

employed teaching method at Algerian universities. Additionally, students expressed a clear preference for both asynchronous and blended learning. They mention many reasons for their preference for both methods of teaching, such as greater flexibility, reduced stress, cost savings, and better balance between independent study and interactive learning. The last question of this section is about Students' Preferences in Online Learning, and the results indicate that students prefer online learning primarily because of the freedom and accessibility it provides. They appreciate being able to schedule their studies around personal commitments, which helps lower stress and costs. The different ways to learn and the comfort of participating from home, especially for introverted or anxious students, also make online learning a better option for many. In conclusion, the findings highlight that students view online learning as a flexible, accessible, and low-stress alternative that aligns well with their personal needs and learning preferences.

Section four, entitled *The Role of Virtual Classrooms in Reducing EFL Anxiety,* points out EFL students' perspectives about the benefits of attending online classes by examining their experiences during Covid-19 pandemic, discovering online learning characteristics that helped them feel less anxious, and the problems that were solved in online classes. The results reported that students were satisfied studying online; they felt comfortable when attending their English courses with more privacy and less noise, and they were encouraged to interact and participate since they felt less judged. In addition, they believed that easy participation was an important factor that decreased their anxiety in online classes, speaking behind the screen without facing teachers and peers made the students more comfortable and motivated. And one of the common problems that EFL students face in the classroom is presentations; they often feel nervous performing in front of the class and fear being the center of attention. EFL students found online classrooms to be a suitable solution; they could perform and answer questions with more confidence.

The overall results indicated that EFL students' attitudes are positive towards implementing the blended learning system since they felt comfortable studying online during the pandemic; many challenges they faced and made them feel anxious were overcome to a considerable degree when attending online courses. Consequently, online classes helped them enhance their English level and performance.

To sum up, the research showed that students attitudes point out moderate EFL learning anxiety, which can be reduced through online learning platforms with the use of virtual classrooms. This can be due to the various online learning features that can influence the students' psychological state by providing them with privacy and different communication tools where they are not obliged to engage orally only. And if they do, they are more likely to be less judged. Also, the flexibility of the timetables and taking tests makes them feel at ease and less pressured. Therefore, they interact and perform better.

Conclusion

The collected data from the students' questionnaire revealed that EFL students are looking positively at the concept of learning online, as it provides conditions that help them feel less anxious; they feel more motivated for participation and practicing their language.

Incorporating blended learning in the Algerian educational system became necessary to facilitate language learning for students, most of them experience anxiety during their language learning journey, which may influence their acquisition and performance. Blended learning is suitable learning method that can provide options that meet their needs and preferences.

Pedagogical Implications

The current research draws attention to learners' attitudes towards attending virtual classrooms as an efficient alternative to in-person classrooms; for the sake of reducing their EFL anxiety and achieving a relaxing and pleasant learning environment. EFL learners usually encounter difficulties during their language learning journey; they cannot focus properly on their lessons and avoid participation. They also bypass any tasks that include speaking and performing in front of their peers, besides the negative feelings they experience that impede them from truly learning the language, like persistent judgment, feeling unworthy, and being less confident. All these hurdles are chiefly drawn from EFL anxiety. This is considered a serious phenomenon that is threatening learners' academic performance, cognitive abilities, and language production.

The revealed data shed light on the significance of virtual classrooms in EFL learning. This research had a crucial role in shaping students' perspectives about the significance of online learning in lowering their EFL anxiety and its necessity to be further incorporated into the educational system in the future. Hence, students would be less anxious in their English classes. Accordingly, teachers should promote teaching online and develop methods or strategies to ensure the efficacy of the courses and notice improvements in students' psychological well-being and academic performance.

Students will not fully clear out, but they will be able to diminish their anxiety levels, which makes them more confident and interactive. Introvert learners who tend to be quiet will have more opportunities to practice English and enhance their pronunciation. The comfort and privacy provided in online settings will reduce most problems related to anxiety. Thus, students can center their attention on learning the language adequately and achieving their optimal performance.

Recommendations for Further Research

It is recommended that:

- Future research should investigate teachers' attitudes about the effectiveness of online platforms, as well as their understanding of students' anxiety, and suggest additional strategies to reduce it.

- More studies should be conducted about the effectiveness of online learning, as there is a lack of research on the impact of virtual classrooms on EFL learners' anxiety.

Limitations of the Study

Like any other investigation, our research faced some challenges:

- Finding trustworthy sources was a big challenge that took time and effort.

- The expected number of students was 85, but only 65 participated because some did not respond, as they did not fit the sample, which only included students who encountered anxiety, and others were absent.

- The limited timeframe did not allow us to gather more data; we wished for a teachers' questionnaire to explore EFL teachers' attitudes on the efficacy of virtual classrooms.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted primarily to investigate students' perspectives about the role of virtual classrooms in reducing EFL learners' anxiety. The significance of this topic is rooted in highlighting the psychological obstacles that EFL students frequently encounter, which can affect their language learning and overall academic performance. A key aspect of this study was to analyze how students perceive virtual learning environments, characterized by their flexibility, accessibility, and innovative features, foster a more encouraging and less daunting setting for students. Furthermore, the research presented a theoretical framework outlining the complex relationship between language anxiety and learning outcomes, highlighting the increasing importance of online learning in general and virtual classrooms in particular in today's language education. The practical study gathered results from a questionnaire given to sixty-five (n=65) EFL students in order to test the research hypothesis and answer the research questions. The results confirmed that anxiety is a challenging obstacle for EFL learners' language learning process to perform and participate better. Additionally, students had a positive viewpoint on virtual classrooms, which are considered a helpful tool to lower their anxiety. In particular, the students agreed that the online learning environment, with its flexibility, privacy, and interactive tools, fosters a more comfortable and less stressful setting. As a result, virtual classrooms were seen as an effective means of enhancing learners' confidence, engagement, and overall language learning.

The quantitative descriptive design utilized in this study facilitated the attainment of valid results and permitted the formulation of several definitive interpretations concerning the research hypothesis and questions posed. The findings obtained from the students' questionnaire provided evidence of a strong belief, high awareness, and positive attitudes

towards the importance and beneficial impact of virtual classrooms in reducing anxiety during the EFL learning process.

This research shows that according to EFL students, virtual classrooms help them feel less anxious which results in improving their learning experience. Additionally, students are encouraged to take full advantage of the flexible and supportive nature of virtual learning environments to build confidence and actively engage in language practice. Finally, the current study and the gathered findings validated the research hypothesis, answered the research questions, and achieved the study aims

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Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire

Exploring Students' Attitudes towards the Role of Virtual Classrooms in Reducing EFL Anxiety

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to answer this questionnaire, which is part of a Master's Dissertation at the Department of English, University 8 May 1945, Guelma. It aims to collect data about your attitudes towards attending online classes and whether or not this way of learning helped lower your EFL anxiety. Your answers are valuable to the present research and will be treated with great care and confidentiality.

Thank you for your contribution.

Ms. Harid Meryem

Ms. Oumeddour Meryem Salsabil

Department of English

Faculty of Letters and Languages

University 8 May 1945, Guelma

2024 /2025

Section One: Demographics

1.   What is your gender?

a.   Male   ☐

b.   Female   ☐

2. How old are you?

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3. How long have you been studying English?

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4. What is your English level?

a. Beginner   ☐

b. Intermediate   ☐

 c. Advanced   ☐

5. Do you speak other foreign languages?

a. Yes   ☐

b. No   ☐

6. If yes, describe your learning experience

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Section Two: EFL Learning Anxiety

7. Among the modules you are studying, what learning content makes you anxious? (Select one or more)

a. Linguistics   ☐

b. Literature   ☐

c. Civilization   ☐

d. Evaluation and Testing ☐

e. Advanced Reading ☐

f. Discourse Analysis ☐

g. Communication Practices ☐

h. Ethics and Deontology ☐

i. Research Methodology ☐

8. State the learning problems that make you anxious in the classroom

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9. What makes you anxious in EFL classroom? (Select one or more)

a. I always feel that my classmates speak English better than I do	
b. It is stressful when the teacher might suddenly call my name	
c. I feel disturbed when I am asked unexpected question in English	
d. I fear that my peers will make fun of me when I speak English in class	
e. I get nervous when the test does not match my expectations	
f. I feel frustrated when the teacher corrects my mistakes many times	
g. I feel anxious when I want to get better grades than my peers	
h. I keep thinking that I should have a perfect accent	
i. I become nervous in many other situations besides EFL learning (environmental, psychological, social…)	
j. I feel anxious only when I have to speak in class or when I encounter difficulties	
k. I consistently feel anxious when performing a particular activity (eg: reading, speaking..)	
l. I always hesitate when it comes to participation	

10. Considering your experience with EFL anxiety, how did this kind of anxiety affect your academic achievement?

a. Poor performance ☐

b. Acquisition difficulties ☐

c. Lack of self-confidence ☐

d. Inability to speak spontaneously ☐

e. A motive to work hard ☐

11. Do you think teachers have anything to do with students' anxiety in class?

  a. Yes ☐

  b. No ☐

12. How can teachers help students be interactive and confident in English classes? (Select one or more)

  a. Maintaining a good relationship with students ☐

  b. The teacher guides students through the learning process rather than correcting mistakes ☐

  c. Sitting in a semicircle with your peers to feel more connected ☐

  d. Making project works instead of ordinary quizzes ☐

  e. Avoid interrogating students and make them feel at ease to answering ☐

  f. Others ☐

Section three: Online Learning

13. Have you ever participated in virtual learning classrooms?

a. Yes ☐

b. No ☐

14. How often did you usually attend virtual classrooms in the past few years?

 a. Daily ☐

b. Weekly ☐

c. Monthly ☐

d. Rarely ☐

15. What platform do you use the most for virtual classes?

a. Zoom		b. Dropbox	
c. Google Meet		d. Moodle	
e. Google Clasroom		f. Others	…………………………………………… ………………… …………………………………………… …………………

16. Which type(s) of online teaching and learning do your teacher(s) use?

g. Synchronous learning (face to face learning)	
b. Asynchronous learning (distance learning)	
c. Blended learning (mixing both onsite and online learning)	

17. Which learning modality do you prefer?

a. Synchronous learning.   ☐

b. Asynchronous learning.   ☐

c. Blended Learning   ☐

18. Whatever is your answer, please justify

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19. What do you most prefer about learning online? (select one or more)

a. Students have flexible schedules and deadlines for assignments submission	
b. It saves costs related to commuting, accommodation, and materials.	
c. Students have access to lessons, recorded lectures and digital libraries	
d. Beneficial for those who have jobs and responsibilities.	
e.It allows students to revisit recorded lectures and materials as needed.	
f. Students can use chat for participation instead of speaking	
g. The use of audiovisual materials (videos, pictures, vocal records, video confirencing…) for a more enjoyable experience	

Section Four: The Role of Online Learning in Reducing EFL Anxiety

20. How do you describe your experience with online learning during the COVID-19

Pandemic in relation to EFL anxiety?

a. Very Uncomfortable   ☐

b. Uncomfortable   ☐

c. Comfortable   ☐

d. Very comfortable   ☐

21. Whatever your answer, please justify

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22. What makes you less anxious when learning online? (Select one or more)

a. Participation is easier in online classes	
b. Taking tests online is at our pace	
c. Feeling less judged in online classes	
d. Performing better in online presentations	
e. Speaking behind the screen, and we do not have to reveal ourselves	
h. Making less mistakes while speaking in online classes	

23. Name challenges that caused your EFL anxiety in traditional classrooms and were

solved during virtual classrooms

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24. Do you feel that online learning has helped you reduce EFL anxiety?

a. Yes   ☐

b. No   ☐

25. If yes, how?

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26. Please feel free to share any suggestions or recommendations about the topic

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Thank you

Résumé

  Les classes virtuelles sont devenues récemment l'un des moyens les plus utilisés de la langue anglaise au sein des universités algériennes, depuis la pandémie de COVID-19. Dans les classes d'anglais comme langue étrangère, les enseignants adoptent de diverses stratégies pour développer l'interaction des apprenants avec le contenu du cours et gérer les difficultés d'apprentissage. Cependant, les apprenants évitent généralement de communiquer pour plusieurs raisons, notamment leur état psychologique qui les empêche d'effectuer correctement les tâches et de s'intégrer dans le processus d'apprentissage. Ce phénomène est appelé l'anxiété d'apprentissage et il peut influencer négativement les performances des élèves en classe d'anglais comme langue étrangère. A cet égard, nous émettons l'hypothèse que l'intégration de classes virtuelles peut aider les étudiants à réduire ce problème en apprenant l'anglais comme langue étrangère. Cette étude descriptive quantitative vise à découvrir les raisons de l'anxiété en classe de langue étrangère et à explorer les points de vue des étudiants sur l'importance des classes virtuelles afin de diminuer leur problème de l'anxiété. Un questionnaire a été adressé aux étudiants de première année de Master de département de lettres et de langue anglaises à l'université 8 Mai 1945 – Guelma. Les résultats révèlent que plusieurs raisons provoquent de l'anxiété dans les classes d'anglais comme langue étrangère, notamment la peur de commettre des erreurs et d'être critiqués par leur entourage et leurs enseignants. Le manque de préparation aussi conduit à une méconnaissance du contenu des épreuves, une faible confiance en soi et la manière dont leurs enseignants les traitent. Les étudiants ont réagi positivement via l'intégration des classes virtuelles comme un moyen d'apprentissage qui les aide à réduire leur anxiété liée à l'apprentissage d'anglais comme langue étrangère. Les données confirment l'hypothèse de la recherche. Par contre, la majorité des étudiants préfère étudier en ligne car cette stratégie diminue leur anxiété. Les fonctionnalités de cette stratégie telles

que : l'utilisation des pseudonymes, la désactivation de leur caméra vidéo ou l'utilisation de la boite de discussion écrite afin de s'exprimer les rendent plus à l'aise.

Mots Clés: Classe d'anglais comme langue étrangère, anxiété d'apprentissage, attitudes des étudiants, études en ligne, classe virtuelle.

الملخص

بعد الاعتماد على التعليم المدمج كوسيط تعليمي منذ جائحة كوفيد-19، أصبحت الفصول الافتراضية أحد أكثر الطرق استخداما في فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الجامعات الجزائرية. يعتمد الأساتذة أثناء تعليم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية على استراتيجيات متنوعة تعمل على تطوير تفاعل الطلبة مع محتوى الدرس والتعامل مع صعوبات التعلم. من جهة أخرى، عادة ما يتفادى الطلبة التواصل والتعبير لعدة أسباب منها الحالة النفسية التي تحول دون تأديتهم للمهام كما ينبغي وتعيق الاندماج مع عملية التعلم. تعرف هذه الظاهرة بقلق التعلم والتي قد تؤثر سلبا على أداء الطلبة في فصل تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وعلى إنجازاتهم الأكاديمية كذلك. في هذا الخصوص، نركز على أن عملية دمج الفصول الافتراضية قد يساعد على تخفيف قلق التعلم لدى الطلبة في فصل تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تهدف هذه الدراسة الوصفية الكمية إلى اكتشاف أسباب القلق داخل فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية واستكشاف وجهات نظر الطلبة فيما يخص فوائد الفصول الافتراضية في التقليل من قلقهم. لتحقيق هذا الهدف، تم توزيع استبيان على طلبة السنة الأولى ماستر قسم الآداب واللغة الإنجليزية التابعين لجامعة 8 ماي 1945، قالمة. كشفت نتائج هذا الاستبيان أن أسباب القلق في فصول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية متعددة؛ من بينها، وبشكل أساسي، الخوف من ارتكاب الأخطاء ومنه التعرض للانتقاد من طرف أقرانهم وأساتذتهم، نقص التحضير الذي يؤدي إلى عدم الإلمام بموضوع الامتحان، قلة الثقة بالنفس وكذلك طرق تعامل الأساتذة مع الطلبة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، بيّن الطلبة موقفا إيجابيا تجاه عملية دمج الفصول الافتراضية كوسيط تعليمي من شأنه المساعدة في تقليل قلق التعليم المرتبط بتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. ومنه نستنتج أن المعلومات المجمعة تؤكد صحة افتراضية هذا البحث، وبالتالي فإن معظم الطلبة يميلون للدراسة عبر الأنترنت لمساهمتها في تقليل نسبة القلق. تجعل ميزات الخصوصية التابعة لهذه الطريقة كاستخدام اسم مستعار، إيقاف كاميرات الفيديو واستعمال صندوق الدردشة للمشاركة في الدرس عن طريق الكتابة عوضا عن التحدث الطلبة أكثر ارتياحا للدراسة حسب سرعتهم الخاصة وأقل انتقادا عند ارتكاب الأخطاء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فصل تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، قلق التعلم، مواقف الطلبة، الدراسة عبر الأنترنت، الفصل الافتراضي.