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**EFL Students' Standpoints on the Application of Cooperative Learning  
Techniques to Reduce Oral Communication Anxiety**

**Case Study of Third Year Students at the Department of English, University 8 Mai  
1945, Guelma**

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

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## **Dedications**

This work is dedicated with genuine admiration and thankfulness to:

The memory of a gentle soul; my diseased father ‘May Allah bless his soul!’ for constantly applauding, inspiring, and cheering for me and for never allowing me to stumble.

My beloved mother for consistently lifting me up in her prayers

My little brother who have been supportive to my efforts

My uncle Mustapha who has faithfully assisted me in getting through my misfortune

*Asma*

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Without her, none of my success would be possible

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My lovely friend Wissame and her sweet son Djod

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## **Abstract**

The present dissertation attempts to explore EFL students' perspectives about the impact of Cooperative Learning (CL) as a useful teaching approach implemented to overcome English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' oral communication anxiety. Anxiety is a psychological phenomenon that commonly exists in EFL classroom, which may lead the learners to face some hurdles when speaking. In light of this, there is a growing interest to understand the nature of CL as an instructional approach applied in lessening learners' apprehension when interacting orally with their classmates. Accordingly, the research aims at raising the students' awareness towards the significant role played by CL techniques in ameliorating classroom oral performance and creating an anxiety-free learning setting. For the foregoing reasons, this study makes use of a quantitative research method that was manifested through the instrumentality of a students' questionnaire, administered to Third year students (N=70 taken out from 146) at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945-Guelma. In this respect, the collected data presented a positive correlation between the two variables which confirms the research hypothesis that indicates the students' recognition of CL effectiveness in creating an atmosphere that reduces the levels of EFL speaking anxiety. The findings revealed the students' acknowledgment that CL techniques encourage them to get involved in oral communication activities comfortably and largely improving classroom speaking performance.

*Keywords:* Cooperative learning, EFL anxiety, oral communication, speaking.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>CL</b>   | <b>Cooperative Learning</b>               |
| <b>CLT</b>  | <b>Communicative Language Teaching</b>    |
| <b>EFL</b>  | <b>English as Foreign Language</b>        |
| <b>FL</b>   | <b>Foreign Language</b>                   |
| <b>FLA</b>  | <b>Foreign Language Anxiety</b>           |
| <b>STAD</b> | <b>Students Team Achievement Division</b> |
| <b>TGT</b>  | <b>Team Game Tournament</b>               |
| <b>TL</b>   | <b>Target Language</b>                    |
| <b>ZPD</b>  | <b>Zone of Proximal Development</b>       |

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

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## General Introduction

The ever-increasing demand for demonstrating strong communication skills in English language around the globe has indeed created a growing need for non-native speakers to develop a good speaking ability. In this regard, developing this capacity is considered a crucial element for learning English language and tend to be perceived as a valid standard of success by EFL learners. In this respect, these learners may attempt to focus on pursuing the speaking-related aspects more seriously when learning this language.

Speaking a Foreign Language (FL) is disposed to be vulnerable to some influential variables, and the most important one is *anxiety*. In FL learning, anxiety is associated to a relatively great extent with speaking performance and communication. Moreover, speaking is considered as the most “anxiety-provoking aspect in a second language learning situation” (Horwitz & Schallert, 1999, p. 420). In view of the fact that EFL learners are required to use a language, which is clearly not their mother tongue, they usually become anxious and less willing to be involved at any speaking activity. As a result, they may demonstrate a poor speaking performance as they become unable to communicate effectively in the Target Language (TL).

The awareness of the existence of anxiety among learners is very crucial because it helps teachers to identify and address the relationship between students’ anxiety, their speaking ability, and their overall academic achievement. Thus, instructors may attempt to find some teaching strategies and techniques to reduce anxiety and create a less stressful classroom atmosphere. *CL* is one teaching approach that has emerged as an instructional pedagogy that promotes cooperation and encourages interaction and communication. This approach is widely accepted since it has proved its effectiveness in ameliorating learner’s educational achievement and maximizing the positive learning outcomes. Accordingly,

these techniques are found useful in EFL classrooms due to the common focus on communication which would effectively lead to reducing learners' speaking anxiety.

The present dissertation seeks to identify the reasons and the undermined results of the students speaking anxiety and the role of CL approach in diminishing students' anxious habits. This research is also concerned with stressing the significance of teachers' employment of CL techniques in EFL classrooms in order to help students overcome their speaking anxiety. To fulfill this objective, it is important to investigate learners' attitudes and perceptions of CL strategies. This examination will afford insightful background information about CL, speaking and oral communication, methodological approach for data collection and analysis, conclusions, and recommendations.

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

Some students may face constraints in terms of oral communication in EFL classroom, as they may become unable to speak and interact with their classmates and teacher. One among many reasons behind this deficiency is the speaking anxiety, in which the students may find themselves uncomfortable in expressing themselves orally in front of the crowd and they fear to commit mistakes. The CL technique gained the attention of EFL teachers because of its beneficial use in facilitating the learning process. This approach creates a welcoming atmosphere that motivates students to perform better in group work than individually; in addition, it enhances the students' classroom interaction. Therefore, this study aims to explore the students' standpoints about the effective employment of the CL technique on reducing their apprehension when communicating orally in EFL classroom.

### **2. Purpose of the Study**

In the process of FL learning, speaking anxiety is an influential factor that affects negatively EFL students' oral performance. To lessen the severity of this problem, CL can

be utilized as a technique to achieve successful speaking outcomes. Therefore, the aim of this research is threefold:

- 1) To find out the reasons behind speaking anxiety that students face in EFL classroom.
- 2) To investigate the extent to which the CL technique is influential in developing the students' classroom oral communication.
- 3) To raise the students' awareness towards the importance and the effectiveness of the CL approach in creating an atmosphere that reduces the levels of speaking anxiety.

### **3. Research Questions**

One way to achieve a successful classroom oral communication is the application of the CL technique to reduce EFL students' speaking anxiety. Hence, the current research attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent does EFL anxiety affect students' speaking performance?
- 2) Does the CL technique contribute in reducing students' anxiety to communicate better orally in EFL classroom?
- 3) What are the students' attitudes towards the implementation of CL technique for speaking anxiety reduction?

### **4. Research Hypotheses**

In EFL classroom, the use of CL can be an effective technique that encourages the students to get involved in oral communication tasks. Thus, the absence of using this technique may lead to the increase of students' speaking anxiety level. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

The Null Hypothesis implies that no relation exists between the two variables:

(H<sub>0</sub>): If the EFL students' are aware of the effectiveness of cooperative learning technique in the classroom, their oral communication anxiety will not be reduced.

The Alternative Hypothesis suggests that there is a relationship between the two variables:

(H<sub>1</sub>): If the EFL students' are aware of the effectiveness of cooperative learning technique in the classroom, their oral communication anxiety will be reduced.

## **5. Research Methodology Design**

The present study adopts the quantitative design which involves a students' questionnaire that fits the objectives of the study. The design aims to test the research hypothesis and finds answers to the research questions.

### **a. Choice of the Method and Data Gathering Tool**

The study makes use of a students' questionnaire in order to gain insights on the learners' perspectives towards the application of CL for reducing their speaking anxiety when communicating in EFL classroom. The survey was administered online via *Google Forms* (Appendix A) instead of paper format, because of the lockdown caused by the Coronavirus outbreak. The questionnaire enables to collect reliable data in terms of the relationship between CL and the state of disquietude when speaking in class.

### **b. Research Population and Sampling**

The population of the study comprises third year students at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. The sample consisted of 70 students (taken out of 146) that are selected randomly. This group of students is chosen because they take oral expression module and they serve as the appropriate sample; in addition, this module is the suitable environment to communicate orally and this raises the odds to experience EFL speaking anxiety.

### **c. Data Analysis**



The gathered quantitative data will be analyzed and interpreted to draw conclusions. The retrieved data from the students' questionnaire were reported, synthesized, and discussed in the form of text and illustrated in tables.

## **6. Structure of dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into theoretical and practical parts that comprise three chapters. The first chapter is entitled *Oral Communication Anxiety*. It provides insights on FL anxiety, to distinguish its features and possible sources, to determine the existing relationship between anxiety and speaking performance, and to highlight the importance of oral communication in FL learning classroom. The second chapter tackles the teaching approach of *Cooperative Learning*. It deals with an overview about the approach including its elements, strategies, and types, and it features its scientific theoretical support. Furthermore, it addresses the relationship between the use of this approach inside EFL classroom and the EFL speaking anxiety reduction. The practical part is devoted to exploring *The Role of Cooperative Learning Techniques on EFL learners' Oral Communication Anxiety Reduction*. It presents a detailed description and administration of the utilized methodological approach that involves an online students' questionnaire, in which the collected data was analyzed, interpreted, and discussed. Finally, conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and future research objectives are drawn based on the study results.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

## ORAL COMMUNICATION ANXIETY

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## **Introduction**

It is strongly agreed by researchers that anxiety is the most prominent constraint that affects negatively FL Learning. Nearly, most EFL learners have experienced feelings of nervousness, worry, and tension when it comes to express oneself orally in the classroom. It is observed that anxious learners fear to be laughed at and embarrassed when they initiate a conversation or interact with their classmates and the instructor in EFL classroom; thus, they prefer to remain silent to avoid such awkward situation. Hence, oral communication anxiety is a crucial factor that hinders the learners' speaking performance and determines the degree of success in FL learning. Therefore, the chapter aims to provide insights on FL anxiety, to distinguish its features and possible sources, to determine the existing relationship between anxiety and speaking performance, and to highlight the importance of oral communication in FL learning classroom.

## **1.1. Foreign Language Learning Anxiety**

### **1.1.1. Definition of FLLA**

In the past few decades, an extensive body of research was conducted to examine independently anxiety as a psychological factor that affects the learning environment. In the light of this, many researchers offered a set of definitions concerning the concept of anxiety. Spielberg (1983) defined anxiety as a self-feeling of concern, stress, and fear linked to the wakefulness of autonomic nervous system (as cited in Öztürk & DenkciAkkas, 2013, p.358). Arnold (1999) further described anxiety, in his book *Affect in Language Learning*, as “a quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively abstracts the learning process, it is associated with negative feelings such uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension and tension” (p. 8).

In a similar vein, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) advocated that when anxiety is limited specifically to the context of FL learning, it is labeled FL anxiety. They identified

FL anxiety as a specific form of anxiety; which is distinguished from other types of anxiety. Accordingly, they defined FL anxiety as “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (pp.125-128).

The examination of FL anxiety definitions reveals that anxiety is a displeasing emotional state appears when learners are put in a situation that specifically demands learning a FL. Negative feeling of disquiet and trepidation make learning unfavorable experience, because it affects negatively the performance.

### **1.1.2. Characteristics of FLL anxiety**

Anxiety is usually manifested while learning a FL, in which learners display particular behaviors and signs to indicate their uncomfortable state. In this regard, Horwitz et al. (1986) described some characteristics of FL anxiety. Some of these include sweat and irregular heartbeats that are among the physical signs of anxiety; along with mental block that drives them to be distracted and fail to recall the required information. Additionally, they confess to know that piece of information but they forget due to nervousness. It appears that learners express anxiety when they show lack of self-confidence and less likely to participate in classroom as an attempt to avoid confusion and embarrassment (p.126).

Moreover, learners with high level of anxiety have the inability to produce well grammatical structured sentences and utter words incorrectly; they tend to avoid producing complex output in FL, which makes their speech to be less illustrative. In the same time, they face difficulty in understanding the content of the received input whether it is spoken or written (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.126).

Similarly, Young (1991) offered additional description of behaviors arising from FL anxiety that are in three categories: 1) arousal-mediated responses; 2) disaffiliative behavior;

and 3) image-protection behavior. According to Young, the arousal-mediated responses are actions resulted from the wakefulness of autonomic nervous system, where the anxious learners start generally to look uptight, twist, and turn with quick writhing movements, play with close objects and touch the hair or clothes. Secondly, disaffiliative behavior expresses learner's tendency to be less communicatively active in the classroom and consider the act of not to speak as a safe option. Lastly, image-protection behaviors are actions directed to save oneself image. In this regard, learners seek to show politeness, friendship, and transmit signs such as nodding with head or smiling to indicate that they are truly following, interested, and most importantly showing consent with other's minds (p.429).

### **1.1.3. Sources of FL Anxiety**

In the light of the growing number of research conducted to trace the possible sources of FL anxiety, Young (1991) identified six main sources of anxiety in FLL. According to her, FL anxiety stems from:

#### **1.1.3.1. Personal and Interpersonal Anxieties**

Low self-esteem and competitiveness in the classroom are the two most prominent sources of FL anxiety. Competition among the learners results in the arising of anxiety's level. Learners seeking to be the most successful ones along with the constant self-comparison to others, particularly in terms of grades and perfecting one's abilities, makes the process of learning a FL less comfortable experience; pushing the learners to be afraid of negative evaluation or proceeded by others. Equally important, learners who tend to underestimate their abilities have low self-esteem in which it is highly related with the increase of anxiety's level (p.424). Similarly, Krashen explained low self-esteem in relation to anxiety as:

". . . the more I think about self-esteem, the more impressed I am with its impact. This is what causes anxiety in a lot of people. People with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think; they are concerned with pleasing others. And that I think has to do a great degree with anxiety" (as cited in Young, 1991, p.424).

### **1.1.3.2. Learner Beliefs about Language Learning**

The inaccurate beliefs the learner holds towards learning FL can be a source of anxiety. Some learners think that pronunciation is the most important aspect of language learning; and unless correctness is reacquired, language learning cannot take place. Also, they believe translation is the best way to learn a language and all of these can be achieved in terms of two years period. Thus, such unrealistic beliefs lead to anxiety. If learners place a great emphasis on producing accurate sentences as well as making *an excellent accent*, then fail in achieving that, they may experience feelings such apprehension and become disappointed (Young, 1991, p.428).

### **1.1.3.3. Instructor Beliefs about Language Learning**

Young (1991) reported that FL anxiety is provoked when instructors believe their role in the classroom is not about showing friendship; but to be *authoritative* in terms of correcting students' mistakes. They believe in teacher-orientated approach, preferring to lead the class and to do all the talking, and this explains their disapproval with group work. Thus, the context created by the instructor; controls learners' levels of concern (p.428).

### **1.1.3.4. Instructor-Learner Interactions**

FL anxiety is promoted when instructor corrects learners' mistakes in a non- favorable manner. Some students value the significance of being corrected; but the way corrective feedback is given makes the learners frustrated and afraid of committing mistakes.

Additionally, they fear to look stupid in front of their classmates when they are mistaken (Horwitz et al., 1986, as cited in Young, 1991, p.429).

#### **1.1.3.5. Classroom Procedures**

Young (1991) asserted that classroom procedures are mainly about the learner's oral performance in front of the class members. Thereupon, learners manifest anxiety when they are asked to speak because speaking in a FL classroom is what learners fear the most. For instance, oral presentations and oral quizzes are considered the most provoking activities of FL anxiety (p.429).

#### **1.1.3.6. Language Testing**

The last source of FL anxiety is about learner's assessment in the TL. Test's format and the different items it holds, stimulates the production of learner's anxiety. In other words, students who have prepared themselves for a test expecting a specific type of questions and ending up with uncommon test format may experience anxiety and dissatisfaction (Young, 1991, p.429).

#### **1.1.4. Importance of Anxiety**

In several FLL studies, Horwitz et al., (1986) asserted the importance of anxiety in the process of learning a FL which is a quite stressful task. Undoubtedly, anxiety has a negative role on learner's academic achievements. In which, these negative emotions of stress and fearfulness prevent learners from attaining the desirable results of a successful performance, and it is evident that the same learners perform better if they are put in different context. Even more significant, learners with high anxiety level make extra efforts and spend long time on preparation in comparison with those of low anxiety level; but without any improvements in the quality of their performance. This claim is best demonstrated in the statements of a FL learner, who found it challenging to learn the FL regardless the numerous



attempts he made; but in vein. The learner added that in the Spanish class, all his efforts become futile when the instructor calls his name; he freezes and his mind goes blank. (Horwitz et al., 1986, pp.125-126).

Furthermore, FL anxiety crucially affects the learning experiences. Anxious learners would regard the act of using FL as a medium of expression as a risk taking decision. More importantly, learners become careless towards learning the language either by skipping the class, hiding by sitting at the back of the class, or submitting homework way too late (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.126). Consequently, due to nervousness, the learner may experience a total failure s/he did not expect at all. A negative experience such this leaves the learner with traumatic effects (Zheng, 2008, p.5).

Nevertheless, Young (1992) conducted an interview with some FL specialists to investigate the diverse views on FL anxiety. Accordingly, the interview revealed two inconsistent perspectives on the effect of FLL anxiety on learner's academic achievements. The first view advocated by Krashen (1992) who presented the notion of *Facilitating Anxiety*; namely, he encouraged the presence of anxiety in language learning due to its beneficial outcomes on the learners (p.160). Hadley (1992), who assumed the second view, rejected the idea of creating *anxiety-producing situations*, and instead he introduced the *Debilitating Anxiety* (p164).

Along the same line, Scovel (1978) explained the two views where he claimed that *Facilitating Anxiety* stimulates the learner emotionally to challenge the new learning assignment; in which a sufficient amount of anxiety leads to the wakefulness of the neuromuscular system that is needed to achieve a maximum effectiveness in the performance. *Debilitating Anxiety*, however, demotivates the learner and encourages him/

her emotionally to avoid language learning at once; because anxiety is of unwanted degree that throws the complex neuromuscular system into disorder (pp. 138-139).

## **1.2. Oral Communication**

Oral communication is a vital component of research as speaking is the most important communication tool in daily life. Additionally, the act of communicating verbally involves interacting with others on how to feel and think through the use of spoken words.

### **1.2.1. Communication**

Keyton (2010) defined Communication as “the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another” (as cited in Lunenburg, 2010, p.1). The word communication is presumed to be originated from the Latin word *communicare* or *communico* which means *to make in common*. Hence, the proposed definition implies that communication cannot take place unless the exchange of information is built on a common or shared understanding between the sender and the receiver (Lunenburg, 2010, pp.1-2). Additionally, communication, in broad sense, can be oral or written; in which oral communication occurs in face-to face situation or group discussions, phone calls, and in plenty of contexts in which the uttered words are utilized to express meaning. By contrast, letters, memos, reports, and proposals or written texts in short, can form the written communication (Salleh&Noaw, 2000, p.20).

In a similar manner, Brown (2006) discussed the concept of communication as a collection of communicative acts and sequences of items that are intended to happen and designed thoroughly to fulfill a specific purpose. Therefore, communication is not just an event or some sort of random occurrence; it is *functional, purposive*, and essentially *planned* to affect and change some aspects in the surroundings of both sender and receiver. Thereupon, communication has been examined with reference to the effect that speech

realizes; in which this effect has indication for speech's production and understanding that both work in order to achieve the optimum goal of the communicative actions (p.200).

## **1.2.2. Communicative Competence**

Since the 1970s, the domain of language teaching and learning has witnessed a new wave of interests concerning the used method in language teaching. In this context, the focal point of FL learning has changed; where it no longer focuses only on making learners use language accurately, but also appropriately. For this reason, a new concept has been presented which is Communicative Competence.

### **1.2.2.1. Definition of Communicative Competence**

In his book *Principles of Language Teaching and Learning*, Brown (2006) stated that language classroom is regarded as a place “of meaningful and authentic exchanges among users of a language” (p.195). Therefore, FL learning is not considered only a *developmental process* but also “the creation of meaning through interpersonal [communication] among learners” (p.195). Thus, the central focus of teaching the FL is not only about developing certain grammatical abilities of the learners but also to enhance interactive communication among users of language, to enable them to practice the learned language communicatively in classroom as a meaningful context.

In this respect, the concept of communicative competence was introduced first by the sociolinguist Hymes (1972) as a reaction to Chomsky's theory of Linguistics (1965) (or grammatical) Competence. Chomsky's theory received heavy criticism by linguists, not only Hymes because it was complex to be adopted as a theoretical basis in language teaching; and this because it did not include any aspects of “the actual use of language” in social context. Thereby, Hymes provided the term communicative competence as an alternative to Chomsky's concept of competence; and it received scholars' praise for its communicative

view (Bagarić&Djigunović, 2007, p.95). Accordingly, Communicative competence is defined as “the knowledge which enables someone to use a language effectively and their ability to use this knowledge for communication” (Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, 1999, p.62).

Likewise, Saville-Troike (2003, p.18) further added that communicative competence involves not only the knowledge of *language code* or *the form of language*, but also the knowledge of when, where, to whom, what to say, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. In this regard, a competent communicator must have social and cultural knowledge to enable him/her to use and interpret linguistic forms in various contexts. These involve how to talk to persons of different social status, when to take turns in a conversation, how to make an order or request, when to accept or refuse someone’s help, when or with whom to speak or remain quiet, etc.

It is noteworthy that Hymes’s notion of communicative competence was adopted by numerous scholars of the same area of study and this gave the rise of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as a new approach in FL teaching. In this regard, CLT brought new teaching materials that emphasizes learning and practicing the TL through communication among users of language; where it serves perfectly the ultimate goal of FL teaching. Recently, the development of communicative competence concept was also elaborated by the efforts of other linguists (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p.42).

#### **1.2.2.2.Components of Communicative Competence**

The communicative approach of FL learning or CLT aims at teaching the communicative competence including several components. These are the grammatical or linguistic competence, the pragmatic, the discourse, and the strategic competence.

#### **1.2.2.2.1. Linguistic Competence**

According to Hedge (2000), linguistic competence should be regarded as the fundamental component of communicative competence. It is defined as “the knowledge of the language itself, its form and meaning” (p.48). Simply put, in order for a learner to be linguistically competent in the FL s/he must know how to spell words and pronounce them, how to select vocabulary and apply the grammatical rules correctly. Most importantly, linguistic competence asserts the accuracy of language (p.48).

#### **1.2.2.2.2. Pragmatic Competence**

Thomas (1983) stated that pragmatic competence is the ability to use efficiently the language in order to fulfill certain goals and perceive the intended meaning of speech in context (p.92). Additionally, Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor (2006) assumed that pragmatic competence is composed of two sub-competences: illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The former is about knowing how to use *pragmatic conventions* in order to perform appropriately functions of language; while the latter stands for the needed knowledge of *sociolinguistic conventions* to carry out certain functions suitably and distinctly in a given context (p.12).

#### **1.2.2.2.3. Discourse Competence**

It is concerned with *inter-sentential relationship*; it is the ability to connect sentences in *stretches* of written or spoken discourse in order to form meaning out of it (Brown, 2006, p.196). In addition, it is important to have this ability because it enables the learners to choose, arrange, and combine sentences in order to create a unified message. For this reason,

discourse competence combines the linguistic and pragmatic competence through creating meaning out of linguistic forms (Celce-Murcia, 2007, p.46).

#### **1.2.2.2.4. Strategic Competence**

Canale and Swain (1980) defined strategic competence as “the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence” (p.30). In plain language, it is the ability of using strategies to improve insufficient communication, and to overcome any difficulty that occurs while exchanging information in FL. These strategies include paraphrasing, repetition, and modifying words or style (p.31).

#### **1.2.3. Oral communication**

Oral communication is a type of communication, in which the message is conveyed through spoken words in situations such as discussions in oral presentation and/or meetings. An effective oral communication can be achieved once it is supported by the non-verbal aids; that is, communicating successfully through oral forms requires the intervention of body language, tone of the voice, and establishing eye contact, etc. More significantly, people tend to choose oral communication than the written one because it is fast and a straight way of communication, it takes less time and it helps to convey the message immediately. Besides, it gives the opportunity for instant feedback through asking questions, sharing views, and clarifying any vague messages (Prabavathi&Nagasubramani, 2018, p.30).

Oral communication, however, is not an easy task to accomplish and master by FL learners. Therefore, for a communication to be orally effective, it should be based on clarity, brevity, and precision. Namely, it is important to make sure that words are formed and

properly uttered for the sake of common understanding between interlocutors. (Prabavathi&Nagasubramani, 2018, p.30).

In the same manner, the *Common European Framework of References for Languages* (2001) summarized that in order to communicate orally “a speaker must be able to carry out a sequence of skilled actions: 1) plan and organize a message (cognitive skills); 2) formulate a linguistic utterance (linguistic skills); 3) articulate the utterance (phonetic skills)” (p.90).

Unquestionably, communication plays a pivotal role in the process of learning a FL; because the primarily concern of many FL learners is to develop the ability to communicate orally in an effective manner in the classroom. In addition, it is significant to stress the point that FL learning is not about teaching the language but to teach learners to communicate using that FL (Myslihaka, 2016, p.106). Therefore, the objective of FL learning is to boost learner’s oral production by setting activities in the FL class, to amplify the learner’s use of the language inside the classroom (Al Hosni,2014, p.22).

### **1.3. Oral Communication and Anxiety**

Living in a FL environment, makes learners encounter problems on the use of the TL that make them become apprehensive towards communicating orally in FL classroom. In the following, some research studies examined the FL speaking anxiety as a phenomenon that leads to blocking learners’ ability in communicating satisfactorily.

#### **1.3.1. The Relationship between FLL Anxiety and Oral Communication**

To define the existing relationship between FL anxiety and speaking, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) illustrated that FL anxiety is provoked when a specific type of situation urges learners to speak the FL in the classroom. Accordingly, learners become apprehensive as response to an external factor which is communicating orally with the instructor or the

classmates using the TL; where learners are not fully proficient (as cited in Shabani, 2012, p.2378).

Moreover, learners who do not perceive themselves as socially and mentally competent in their native language are often going to experience FL anxiety once they are put in communicative context. It is highly due to the “uncertain, unexpected or unknown linguistic and socio-cultural standards” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p.128). Alternatively stated, learners’ fear of participation in FL classroom is best explained by limited knowledge, lack of vocabulary, practice, or preparation (p.128).

In similar fashion, Oxford (2002) argued that in EFL classroom learners are exposed to many restrictions concerning language use; in which they may have a low mastery of the language or have limited chances to speak the language. Therefore, students under pressure become anxious towards communicating orally in EFL classroom (as cited in Akkakoson, 2016, p.65). Apart from this, Horwitz et al. (1986) confessed that speaking is the most critical issue in FL learning in which it constitutes an immense constraint for anxious learners (p.131).

Thereupon, Horwitz et al. (1986) formulated the concept of *communication apprehension* and perceived it as “a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people” (p.127). It is also considered as an effective factor that gives illustrations in understanding the sources of FLL anxiety (as cited in Toubot, Seng, & Abdullah, 2017, p. 1938).

Similarly, McCroskey (2012) defined communication apprehension as “the fear or anxiety related to either actual or expected communication with another person or persons” (p.78). Simply put, when learners have the inability to adequately speak and express their



thoughts using the FL in front of others; they are more likely going to experience communication apprehension. Hence, this difficulty of speaking in a group using the TL refers to oral communication anxiety (as cited in Toubot et al., 2017, p. 1938).

Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) reported that learners who are uncomfortable in communicating outside the classroom are going to experience even more troubles in FL classroom. Unlike other contexts, learning/teaching setting demands the ongoing systematic review of learners' output. In plain language, learners are more controlled in the classroom; where their oral performance is constantly checked in terms of quality and progress (p.127). In addition, speaking the FL does not only lead to communication apprehension but also to the fear of not being able to understand what others are saying (Yalçın&İnceçay, 2013, p.2621).

### **1.3.2. The Effect of Oral Communication Anxiety on Learner's Achievements**

To give insights on the possible outcomes of oral communication anxiety, Oxford (1999) claimed that anxiety damages indirectly FL learners' achievements through nervousness and disquiet; and directly by minimizing participation inside the FL classroom. Indeed, the fear of speaking in front of the FL class urges the learners to reject clearly the language; and become apprehensive about any future attempts to communicate using the language. Thus, communication apprehension hinders language acquisition/learning and learner's ability in mastering the TL (as cited in Asysyifa, Handayani, & Rizkiani, 2019, p.582). To highlight this point, McCroskey (1976) asserted in the situation where a learner suffers from communication apprehension, s/he would adopt avoidance behavior by refraining from communication at all times. In addition, the learner would encounter FL anxiety that would hinder the expected positive gain of communication (p.39).

In the same direction, Philips (1992) confirmed that learners who have been through negative learning experiences and are afraid of communicating orally in FL, are more likely to show negative attitudes towards the TL, and to take less than the required number of courses needed in the mastery of that language (p.22). He further reported that there is a strong relationship between FL anxiety and speaking performance. In which, the more learners show high level of anxiety the poorer performance they exhibit in their oral communication (p.20). As a result, FL speaking anxiety would constitute a challenging task for learners to perform successfully in FL classroom where it drives the individual to question ones abilities and to hesitate in speaking in the TL (Horwitz et al.,1986, p.128).

### **Conclusion**

The present chapter dealt with Oral Communication Anxiety and its shortcomings that deteriorate FL learners' language performance. In a matter of a fact, speaking constitutes one of the prominent sources of FL anxiety, as the learners are not communicatively competent in that language; which limit their oral production. In this regard, it is unquestionably important for learners to work on their communicative competence in order to promote their speaking performance, so to be equipped enough to face the fear of communicating orally in FL classroom. Therefore, to reduce oral communication anxiety and increase students' self-confidence, FL teachers can make use of many tools in the classroom such as the cooperative learning techniques.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **COOPERATIVE LEARNING**

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**Introduction**

Modern education has recently shifted attention towards the effective instructional method of teaching named Cooperative Learning (CL). CL can be classified under the teaching approaches that succeeded in overcoming the students' educational problems as it gives the learning process an essential importance. This teaching approach refers to the instructional implementation of group work activities, which encourages learners to cooperate for accomplishing their mutual goals. In this chapter, we attempted to define the concept of CL including its basic elements and techniques. Additionally, we intended to feature theoretical support for this approach from the perspectives of Social Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, and Constructivist Learning. The relationship between CL and FL teaching was highlighted in which a firm connection between the aforementioned approach and oral communication in FL learning was made. Finally, we presented CL and FL speaking anxiety correlation.

### **2.1. Defining Cooperative Learning**

CL has emerged years ago; however, during the last three decades, this concept was investigated and examined increasingly (Woolfolk, 2004). Many researchers defined the notion of CL, and each of the definitions depends on the era or the particular aspect that the researcher wants to highlight. Thus, all of the existing definitions of CL fall within the same scope of arranged learning activities in which knowledge is acquired through an interaction between students in learning groups to learn any academic content. Students in the group are expected to take responsibility of their own learning, help their peers, and motivate them during the learning process (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 192).

In the same vein, Slavin (1995) emphasized the role of CL as an effective teaching and learning technique that encourages learners to become more productive and supportive to each other throughout the learning process. Group members collaborate to study in small

structured groups where they effectively assess each other's performance, benefit from the sufficient discussions about the study materials, and help to fulfil the gaps in each other's understanding (p. 2). Furthermore, Jacobs and McKaferry (2006) pointed out that CL is an operative teaching method for teachers and a supportive one for learners. This tool stimulates the development of the learning process and helps learners to develop their communicative skills (pp. 30.36).

Therefore, the previous views demonstrate that CL is an approach that promotes collaboration and helps learners to be involved in communicative activities. CL includes important components in addition to a variety of techniques that has been adopted increasingly by teachers in all fields of education; due to the satisfactory results that CL has demonstrated.

## **2.2. Basic Elements of Cooperative Learning**

Johnson & Johnson (1998) claimed that the notion of constructing a cooperative group goes beyond the fact of putting students next to each other, then instructing them to work together and cooperate (p. 15). Consequently, Johnson & Johnson (2008) outlined five important elements that support cooperation and coordinated work among learners. These are *positive interdependence, face-to-Face promotive interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and social skills, and group processing*.

### **2.2.1. Positive Interdependence**

Positive Interdependence is successfully achieved when the group members work together cohesively to achieve their learning objectives. Therefore, teachers must design the tasks and define the learning objectives for the learners in a manner that makes them believe that they *sink or swim together* (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Alternatively stating, all learners in a given group should perceive that they have a mutual fate where the success of

the group is dependent on the success of all the members. Positive independence is included in a CL group to stimulate and encourage learners to cooperate in the learning activities and to take responsibility for the success or the failure of the whole group. Hence, learners are expected to demonstrate an increased level of contribution and productivity in the cooperative environment.

### **2.2.2. Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction**

The Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction occurs when a group of learners interact reciprocally to accomplish the group learning goals. Students are required to interact and work together in a way that they support each other's learning by sharing resources and materials, appreciating each other's efforts, providing the group members with effective feedback, and challenging each other's findings (Ryan, 1982). Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction influences learners positively, it drives them to become personally committed to each other's' success as equally as their commitment to their mutual learning objectives (Slavin, 1995).

### **2.2.3. Individual Accountability**

The Individual accountability is dependent on the degree of the achievement, and therefore, the contribution of every member of the group. It is purposed to ensure that all the group members are participating to master the learning tasks and nobody is standing idle. Slavin (1995) stated that the conception of *free ride effect* explains how some members of the group could take advantage of their peers as they would do little or nothing. Consequently, this will result in a poorly constructed cooperative learning. Moreover, Johnson & Johnson (2008) argued that individual accountability exists to determine which individual in the group needs more effective assistance and encouragement to learn (p. 23). Thus, teachers use an individual assessment where the performance of each member is

evaluated through comparing results, estimating the achievement level, then providing feedback to all groups and individual learners.

#### **2.2.4. Interpersonal and Social Skills**

In respect to the complex nature of CL structure, Johnson & Johnson (1998) stated that students are required to learn simultaneously group learning tasks and academic skills along with social and interpersonal skills. Slavin (1996) argued that cooperative learning activities could not be successful without teaching social and interpersonal skills. As a result, these skills; decision-making, communicating, problem-solving, and trust-building, are considered to be very helpful for students to build a successful cooperative work.

#### **2.2.5. Group Processing**

*Group processing* refers to a reflection on the groups' performances; it aims at detecting students' errors and helping them to improve for more effective contribution and to achieve their learning objectives. Johnson and Johnson (1998) claimed that there are two levels of group processing: small group and the whole class. Firstly, small group processing takes place at the end of each session when the teacher devotes some time for processing how cooperative effectiveness could be improved. In this regard, Johnson, Johnson & Houlubec (1994, p. 33) believed that small group processing would:

- Allow group members to preserve healthy relationships among each other.
- Enable the cooperative skills to foster among the students.
- Examine the learning tasks and provide feedback for students' contribution.
- Evaluate the group members' knowledge.
- Reward the successful group and reinforce its members' behaviours.



Secondly, at the whole class level processing, teachers are required to carefully observe the groups, provide an effective feedback for each group and eventually draw conclusions with the whole class.

### **2.3. Types of Cooperative Learning Techniques**

Various CL Techniques can be employed across different range of learners' populations without any consideration to their age, ability level, or their cultural background (Griffith, 1990, p. 41). Among the significant number of the CL techniques that exist, teachers tend to integrate them seeking for the class unity, team building, social skills development, concept development, task specialization, and academic achievement (Kagan,1989). Four popular CL techniques that are frequently used include *Jigsaw*, *Think/Pair/Share*, *Students Team Achievement Division*, and *Teams-Games-Tournament*.

#### **2.3.1. Jigsaw Technique**

Jigsaw is perhaps the best-known CL technique that was developed by Aronson (1987). It is an instructional method that depends on peer interaction. It requires learners to coordinate their knowledge and information to produce the final product where each learner has a different piece of learning material (Huang, Huang & Chen, 2014, p. 130). Slavin (1995) explained that this technique helps students develop their communicative skills in addition to promoting their interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, this technique is believed to be best suitable when teaching literary materials and narrative learning. Jigsaw activities are interactional; thus, they aim at stimulating cooperation in the learning situation through encouraging learners to communicate increasingly. Brown (2001) explained how Jigsaw activities can create an *information gap* where each individual in the group gets a distinct part from the study material. Therefore, the whole group is required to gather their

pieces and complete the learning task, after engaging in a sufficient discussion with their peers in the other groups.

### **2.3.2. Think/ Pair/ Share**

The *think/ pair/ share* technique was firstly proposed by Layman and it was developed later by many researchers including Kagan in 1994. The key objective of this strategy is encouraging students to be more active and increasing participation among learning groups formulated by the teacher. The starting part is thinking of a question or an issue to be posed or raised by the teacher or the students. Then, the teacher may provide the students with few minutes to reflect and think about what they wrote together. Finally, all the class got to share their answers and discuss their ideas (Mc Candlish, 2012, as cited in Retnowati & Ngadiso, 2018, p. 165).

### **2.3.3. Students Team Achievement Division**

*Students Team Achievement Division* (STAD) was created by Slavin (1999), and this strategy was established to meet the requirements of Instructional Psychology. It aims mainly at promoting cooperation among students and helping them to improve their self-regulating learning skills. The STAD groups are formed of four to five students who have heterogeneous combination of gender, race, competence, and so on. The teacher in this case has the role of the facilitator, in which s/he presents the new concept or the learning objectives then provides the students with concise instructions. The learning groups' members can study the assigned material then discuss and exchange their ideas; thus, they will collaborate to master the learned materials in the best way possible for all the members of the group.

Slavin (1995) devised four essential elements in implementing STAD in the classroom: *Class Presentations, Teams, Quizzes, and Team Recognition*. The

aforementioned elements are enforced continually over the class sessions.

#### **2.3.4. Team Game Tournament**

*Team Game Tournament* (TGT) is a type of Cooperative Learning Strategies that was originally created by David DeVries and Keith Edwards (1972). TGT model focuses on the element of autonomy; students are supposed to dependently construct their own knowledge through a process that involves various activities for students, that are selected haphazardly for each group of maximally five students (Salvin, 2011). The role of each student in the group is a *peer tutor* where s/he is supposed to take the responsibility of teaching and evaluating his/her peers.

Accordingly, (Surya & Sitorus, 2017) summarized the procedure of TGT technique in the following steps. Firstly, teachers select four to five students with heterogeneous status, gender, and race. Secondly, each student is grouped on some basis of his/her respective ability level. Thirdly, assigned students take a position of tournament table as guided judges and auxiliary judges. Finally, grading and evaluating the group's performance at the end of the tournament (p. 18).

#### **2.4. Supporting Theories of Cooperative Learning**

Slavin (1999) affirmed in his investigations that CL is one of the teaching approaches that has resulted in the most successful learning experiences in education. One of the key reasons that led to its effectiveness in EFL classes in particular, is its scientific theoretical foundations. The followings are the major theoretical perspectives that underline CL principles: *Social Interdependence Theory*, *Constructivist learning theory*, and *Cognitive Perspective Theory*.

##### **2.4.1. Social Interdependence Theory**

It is important to mention that *social interdependence theory* provides a fundamental background to understand the essence of CL, and it underlines the basic procedures for the most common techniques used in teaching. According to Johnson & Johnson (2008), this theory occurs when the degree of accomplishing goals for each individual is influenced by the actions of others. In this regard, social interdependence theory has two types that are the *positive* and *negative*. Positive social interdependence exists when individuals cooperate to achieve their mutual goals, while the negative one refers to the competition between individuals for achieving mutual goals.

Additionally, Deutsch (1949) claimed that each type in this theory creates a distinct *psychological process*. In terms of cooperation, three psychological processes are included. *Substitutability* is related to the collaborative work of the learners when they join efforts and act interchangeably. *Inducibility* refers to the open-minded state of each individual and his/her's ability to accept deferent views, while *Positive Cathexis* is managing to use psychological energy independently from own self, but rather with different people around (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 366). By contrast, the opposite of the three aforementioned elements comprises *Non-substitutability*, *Negative cathexis*, and *Resistance to being influenced by others*.

Promotive interaction is an important concept that is incorporated in social interdependence theory as a result of positive interdependence, and the former corresponds aptly with the core of the CL theory. It encourages individuals to interact and cooperate increasingly through promoting each other's learning by sharing resources and study materials; considering the collective efforts and respecting everyone's own view, and constructively managing to address disagreements (Wang, 2001).

In summary, Johnson and Johnson (2003) emphasized the strong connection between CL and social interdependence theory. Cooperation is a significant aspect of social interdependence theory which has been applied in different educational fields. The integration of activities with cooperative tendencies helps students to participate actively in the learning process to accomplish their academic goals while considering the psychological part as adopting the individual differences and treating some social problems (p. 942).

#### **2.4.2. Constructivist Learning Theory**

Similarly, to CL approach, *constructivist learning theory* has significantly contributed in the development of the Learner-Centred approach. It is viewed that the theory of constructivism is a learning process that enables learners to become more active as they take charge of constructing their own knowledge (Almala, 2005, p. 10).

Under a Constructivist perspective, “learners are active organisms seeking meaning” (Driscoll, 2000, p. 376). They are supposed to be active in constructing meanings after they process and choose the external information according to their prior cognitive structure (Glaserfeld, 1989, p. 11); instead of receiving and accepting passively the external information similar to what the traditional education perspectives advocated.

Constructivist learning contradicts sharply with the traditional learning in which teachers tend to expose students to a large amount of information in a short period of time then expect them to accumulate and to memorize it. However, the rapid exposure to information cannot guarantee that the students had deeply understood the presented materials. On the other hand, the effectiveness of the constructivist approach lies on the various manners that enable students to approach an information. They can construct meanings through discovering, checking, researching, and analyzing (Huang, 2006).

Consequently, constructivism considers teaching as a process where learners construct knowledge and cooperate with the teacher and their classmates. Accordingly, the

construction of the meaning occurs through reciprocal interaction with others. Therefore, constructivist principles can be applied in CL practices where students can be divided into learning groups and cooperate to construct the knowledge.

### **2.4.3. Cognitive Perspective Theory**

Cognitive theory seeks to identify the mental processes and to explain the human mind's contribution in the process of thinking and learning. Piaget and Vygotsky, the cognitivist pioneers, have created permanent theories concerning the development of the *cognitive perspectives*. Their theories hold that the mutual interaction between learners in the academic frame can ameliorate their ability of processing knowledge, new concepts, and critical skills (Slavin, 2011).

*Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD) is one of Vygotsky's (1920) well-known theories in the field of educational psychology. It explains the difference of learner's capacities in performing a given task autonomously, and when cooperating with others. Vygotsky's ZPD notion stressed on the role of cooperation in the growth of children's knowledge. He argued that cooperative activities fostered children learning abilities more effectively than working individually (Slavin, 2011).

In a related vein, Vygotsky (1978) tackled another crucial element in connection to cooperative learning which is social interaction. He assumed that "individual learners first learn through individual to individual social interaction and then knowledge is individually internalized" (p. 84). Thus, he believed that learning can take place only through interaction with different individuals in a given learning environment. Moreover, the theory seeks to emphasize the importance of reciprocal interaction in making the learning context more natural and encouraging learners to become more active in the learning process.

In a similar perspective, Piaget's *Cognitive Development Theory* (1936) has established a firm foundation for modern teaching and learning trends. The essence of this

theory is that children can progressively learn and construct knowledge due to biological maturation, in addition to the interaction with the environment. The theory suggests that learners are autonomous in constructing and reconstructing knowledge, and connecting it with their prior information and experiences from their learning contexts. Hence, interaction among learners is a vital element in the process of learning. Accordingly, Piaget encourages the application of the cooperative approach more frequently in the learning settings. In this regard, he pointed out that teacher's role should be restricted to a facilitator, and provide more learning opportunities for students to interact and collaborate together.

## **2.5. Forms of Active Learning Based on Cooperative Learning**

CL has emerged as the earliest teaching approach that promotes group-learning. This teaching approach has succeeded to become the mainstream approach in many fields of education compared to the wide ranges of teaching approaches that existed throughout time. The account of its success involves four other teaching/learning approaches emerged to share similar goals as CL. *Problem-Based Learning*, *Team-Based Learning*, *Collaborative Learning*, and *Peer-Assisted Learning* are group-learning approaches and forms of active learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991) that are based on CL principles. These are explained as follows:

### **2.5.1. Problem-Based Learning**

*Problem-Based Learning* is developed by Howard Barrows in 1960. The approach is constructivist in nature as it defines learning as an active process, where students are stimulated to solve a given problem then retain the relevant information and the course concepts. The primary focus of this approach is not the correct results, but rather the learners' participation for searching, discovering, and making efforts to gather the relevant information. Moreover, the main goals of Problem-Based Learning aside from problem solving are developing collective skills, critical skills, and self-regulating skills. The

procedures implemented in this type of learning are inherited from the core of CL (Johnson, Johnson, & Smith, 2013, p. 14). Accordingly, the process of learning occurs through small learning groups act to solve a given problem in which the assigned group members cooperate to master the task materials.

### **2.5.2. Team-Based Learning**

Team-Based Learning is a practical and instructional teaching approach, it has introduced different teaching strategies that promote interaction and teamwork. This approach aims at enhancing the learning process through the use of strategies that involve problem-solving activities performed by self-managed teams. The teacher sets groups of five to seven members with diverse competence, race or gender. Students are responsible for cooperating and contributing in the teamwork practices that includes four fundamental essential elements. Firstly, formulating permanent teams strategically. Secondly, using *Readiness Assurance* method to ensure that students are familiar with the assigned task. Thirdly, designing class activities and assignments that stimulate students' critical thinking. Finally, evaluating student's performance through peer assessment and incorporating feedback system (Michaelson, Davidson, & Major, 2014, p. 59).

Additionally, Team-Based Learning is arguably effective due to two key facts. The approach is a learner-centred that focuses on the learner's engagement in solving problem activities with a rare intervention of the teacher. The nature of the activities used enable students to develop collaborative skills and to grow their sense of responsibility towards their teammates (MacCormack & Garvan, 2014).

### **2.5.3. Collaborative Learning**

Britton (1990), who proposed collaborative learning, was influenced by Vygotsky's theories (1978) about the effect of the society on the individuals' mind; thus, these theories



form the foundation for the development of this approach. As an educational approach, collaborative learning is considered a pedagogy that is carried through group work (Matthews, 1996, p. 101). Bruffee (1984) claimed that college teachers use collaborative learning activities because it can offer a social context for students to learn from discussions provided by the teachers or classmates (p. 642). This approach demands from teachers and learners to join efforts together to discover, understand, and produce knowledge through face-to-face interaction (Damon & Phelps, as cited in Freeman & Richards, 1996, p. 261). Collaborative learning and CL may appear as identical approaches at the first sight and many researchers tend to use the two terms interchangeably. In fact, the difference between the two approaches is very slight. However, for Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (2013), CL's structure is more explicit and evident because its techniques clearly dictate the instructions for both learners and the teacher. On the other hand, collaborative learning has a less structured nature as it focuses entirely on the student's role in the process of learning; therefore, the teacher's position remains vague and less effectual (p.14).

#### **2.5.4. Peer-Assisted Learning**

*Peer-Assisted learning* is a learning approach that is based on CL principles. It aims at encouraging cooperation and competitive interaction among learners. This approach is defined as the acquisition of skills and knowledge that occur through an active assistance among students that share equal position (Johnson et al., 2013, p. 15). Peer-assisted learning has similar basis as all of the approaches that subsumes the concept of cooperation; however, this approach provides a less formal learning environment and allows students to discuss their ideas, to review the studied materials, and to create their own learning methods.

#### **2.6. Cooperative Learning and Foreign Language Teaching Classroom**

It is clear that CL is highly connected to FL learning. They both share the same set of principals which are based mainly on communication trends. CL as a teaching approach seeks to promote interaction and provide more opportunities for communication.

Correspondingly, FL teaching is not restricted only to teaching linguistic skills and new vocabulary but it is concerned also with how these skills are used appropriately in any social or academic context (Apple, 2006, p. 284).

Many researchers in the field of linguistics affirm on their investigations the effectiveness of using CL techniques in FL classes. They substantiate the fact that CL techniques help students to enhance the supreme features of learning a FL which are comprehension, cognition, and communication skills. (Stepanovienè, 2013, p. 247). In the same vein, Allwright argued that the communicative nature of CL methods enables learners to develop their communicative skills alongside with grammar and syntax of the TL (1979, p. 170). Moreover, Kagan (1994) observed that CL proved to be a beneficial approach that improves students' language acquisition/learning and therefore their academic achievements by using the organized and the rational methods that it offers.

Casal (2005) on the other hand offered a well-grounded practical study that highlighted what he referred to as the perfectly harmonizing relationship between language learning and CL methodology and techniques. His research findings revealed that CL approach is favorable in language classes in particular due to the following aspects: the supportive atmosphere for communication and cooperation, autonomy and personal responsibility for learning, reciprocal interaction and continuous participation of all the learners in the learning process (pp. 21-22).

As a result, CL is a worthwhile approach that needs to be infused into EFL classrooms because its techniques correspond perfectly with FL teaching tendencies that focus primarily on communication.

## **2.7. Cooperative Learning and Oral Communication Connections**

The field of FL teaching devotes a high importance to teaching the learner how to communicate in the TL language, considering the cultural, social, and the academic aspects and norms of FL native speakers. Communication is a dynamic process which aims at constructing meaning through the interaction between learners or between learners and teacher. Learners' oral communication, therefore, is improved simultaneously with the increase of the interaction inside the FL classroom.

Accordingly, teachers are required to select learning methods that involve interactive tendencies. CL is an internationally accepted learning approach that promotes interaction among students (Tan, 1999). Shumin (1997) stated that "through cooperative learning strategies teachers can help adult learners to develop their abilities to communicate in the target language" (p. 7). Thus, CL is very beneficial in developing learner's communicative competence.

In a cooperative environment, reciprocal interaction among learners is crucial. Through interaction, learners discover how to receive and deliver information, to perceive diverse perspectives and concepts, and to communicate in an appropriate manner (Gillies, Ashman & Terwel, 2008). Moreover, Jacobs, and McKaferry (2006) referred to CL as an efficient tool that stimulates the development of the learning process and helps FL learners to develop their communicative skills (pp. 33.36).

To conclude, as communication is the primary goal in the process of FL teaching, CL has proved to be one of the most suitable approaches that enable students to foster their oral communication.

## **2.8. Cooperative Learning and Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety**

FL learning is often confronted with an obstacle that is particularly related to this field. It is named by many researchers as FL anxiety. Yong (1991) stated that FL anxiety appears through some psycholinguistic elements such as forgetting words, losing the rhythm and intonation of the language, *freezing up* while performing and being unable to speak (p. 428). Moreover, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) claimed that FL anxiety prevents FL learners from participating in the learning activities and decrease their willingness to perform any communicative task. As communication and speaking are crucial features in FL learning, FL anxiety can be a barrier that inhibits FL learners' academic achievements.

CL is the approach that uses cooperative activities to create an anxiety-free learning setting and to support the selfless behaviours of the students (Johnson, & Johnson, 1995). Accordingly, this approach has proven to reduce anxiety and tension in the learning environment (Kagan, 1994).

According to Stepanovienė (2013), the integration of CL techniques often changes the climate of the classroom. Anxiety would be reduced and students' fear of participation would be eliminated. Anxious learners are now allowed to speak and contribute in the collective classroom activities without experiencing the pressure of speaking under the spotlights (p. 248). Furthermore, Nakahashi (2007) study investigated the role of CL activities on reducing FL anxiety. The findings revealed that learner's anxiety diminished after implanting CL activities, thus, their language proficiency and speaking proficiency in particular has improved (as cited in Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2010, p. 52).

Therefore, CL can contribute in reducing FL speaking anxiety due to the nature of the activities that this approach can offer. CL techniques encourage FL learners to speak increasingly and to overcome the stress related habits.

## **Conclusion**

Large amount of research in the field of educational psychology is devoted to the learning approach of CL. The reviewed studies have provided strong evidence that affirms the effectiveness of this pedagogical approach in ameliorating learner's educational achievement and maximizing the positive learning outcomes. CL environment is structured on the basis of elements that encourage learners to coordinate for constructing mutual understanding. Finally, CL approach suits FL classes the most due to the common focus on communication. In terms of FL speaking anxiety reduction, research showed that this approach demonstrated satisfactory results because of the cooperative setting that it creates.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### **EXAMINING EFL STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES AND ITS IMPACT ON ORAL COMMUNICATION ANXIETY**

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## **Introduction**

The current chapter demonstrates the applied methodology used to test the research hypothesis in which a quantitative design was adopted for the sake of eliciting valid results and finding out compatible responses to the research questions. The quantitative procedure

investigates to what extent the cooperative learning techniques are effective in reducing EFL students' oral communication anxiety. To meet this goal, data was collected using students' questionnaire that was administered to third year students at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. The compiled information are reported, analyzed, and interpreted, to obtain a full understanding of students' perspectives towards the impactful use of cooperative learning techniques in improving EFL classroom oral performance.

### **3.1. Methodological Approach**

The investigation of cooperative learning as a useful technique to minimize EFL speaking anxiety entails employing a quantitative design that involves *students' questionnaire*. The employed research method allows extracting in-depth information from the collected data and confirming or disconfirming the research hypotheses.

A quantitative research is defined as an accurate explanation of a given issue or *phenomenon* in which information is gathered in numerical form and analyzed with the help of mathematical methods; using statistical techniques in particular (Muijs, 2004, p.1). The analysis of numbers is the primary concern of any quantitative research design; because analyzing numerical data using statistics aims at finding out a proper answer to the research questions. Even more significant, the quantitative research is deductive in nature as the concepts of the phenomenon that is being examined are narrowed into variables - the independent or *predictor variable* and the dependent or *outcome variable* - where the correlation between these variables is going to be tested. Thus, a quantitative research method goes about *quantifying* and analyzing the variables in order to get results; and the extracted knowledge is based on scrupulous surveillance, measurement, and explanation of an *objective reality* (Sousa, Driessnack, & Mendes, 2007, p.503).

Furthermore, the quantitative approach has an array of benefits. These include providing statistical data as a means to save time and resources, allowing to have objective and bias-free interpretations of the collocated data due to the indirect contact between the researcher and research respondents, and to make the generalization of the findings possible that can be applied to other populations (Daniel, 2016, p. 94).

Therefore, this methodological approach helps in producing a worthy research outcomes that are interpreted for the sake of giving a better understanding of the investigated phenomenon.

### **3.2. Description of the Students' Questionnaire**

Babbie (1990) defined questionnaire as the document that holds a set of questions and different types of items designed to collect convenient information to be analyzed later (as cited in Acharya, 2010, p. 2). The questionnaire is the most popular research instrument and main tool of collecting quantitative data, owing the fact that it allows gathering information in a *standardized* way so that the quantitative data are *internally consistent* and *coherent* for interpretation. Hence, the questionnaire is regarded as the fundamental base of any survey; and in order for this medium to be effective, in terms of obtaining easy understanding by the respondents and high quality usable data, a careful attention must be paid when designing and planning the questionnaire (Roopa & Rani, 2012, p.273).

Additionally, the questionnaire is a useful data collection tool since it allows gathering information from a large number of respondents in a short period of time with minimum costs. It can be used to determine and assess the participants' knowledge, standpoints, and attitudes about certain topic; and due to its fixed answer forms, responses are interpreted and organized in a less complicated manner. Importantly, the questionnaire is characterized to



be flexible which permits fulfilling the objectives of any type of a research project (McNabb, 2012, pp.147- 148).

Thereafter, the current study makes use of a questionnaire for the purpose of having authentic and reliable results. This medium serves to shed light on the utmost importance of cooperative learning as an efficient teaching approach implemented to overcome EFL classroom anxiety when communicating orally.

### **3.2.1. Aims of the Students' Questionnaire**

The students' questionnaire is used to evince students' knowledge about the impactful use of cooperative learning techniques in creating an anxiety-free learning setting; also, to clear up the picture about the sources of the difficulties the EFL students encounter when communicating orally in the classroom. Thus, the questionnaire aims are twofold:

- 1) To determine the degree to which they are involved in classroom oral activities and spot the difficulties they encounter when speaking in English.
- 2) To figure out the extent to which they are aware of the efficacy of cooperative learning techniques in ameliorating EFL classroom oral performance.

### **3.2.2. Students' Questionnaire Administration**

The questionnaire was administered to Third year students during the second semester, at the Department of English, University 8 Mai 1945, Guelma. The questionnaire was created in Google Forms, emailed, and shared via social networking Facebook with the target sample. For the sake of realizing trustworthy answers, the participants are required to sign in to Google to assure that they are limited to submit one response only. In addition, the respondents were notified beforehand that their responses would be dealt with great confidentiality.

The questionnaire is composed of 32 questions structured into three sections that include two open-ended questions and 26 close-ended questions, in which the former enables the informants to answer without restricted to specific options while the latter allows them to choose from the proposed possibilities. The four follow-up questions were used to justify their answers (Appendix A). The important key linguistic concepts were defined at the start before engaging in the process of responding to the survey.

The first section is entitled *Personal Information* and it comprises five questions covering the respondents' background as their communicative level in English. The second section deals with *Oral Communication Anxiety* and it contains 17 questions designed to unravel the source of the obstacles the EFL learners face when communicating orally in the classroom. The third section covers *Cooperative Learning Techniques* which consists 15 questions that seeks to determine the participants' attitudes towards the significant role played by the cooperative learning techniques in decreasing EFL classroom speaking anxiety.

### **3.2.3. Population and Sampling**

The Third-year participants involved in the study were selected randomly as a sample to this research and it consists of 70 students, taken out from 146, that willingly agreed to respond to the questionnaire. The sample is suitable for the present study based on the consideration that they take oral expression module which provides a convenient environment for the learners to possibly face restrictions on the use of English in expressing oneself satisfactory. Consequently, this in turn leads to communication apprehension; and it is an opportunity to raise their awareness about cooperative learning techniques and its impact on lessening the fear of speaking in EFL classroom. Additionally, these students'

communicative competence and mastery of English language is supposed to be more developed in comparison to those of first and second year students.

### 3.3. Findings

In the following section a detailed description of questionnaire results is provided. The collected data is reported and results are analyzed and presented in texts and tabulations.

#### a. Section One: Personal Information

This section aims at obtaining general information about EFL students involved in the study such as their aim behind learning English, their level of English, years of learning English, etc.

**Question 1:** Is learning English your personal choice?

Yes  No

According to the results displayed in Table 3.1, the vast majority of respondents (85.7%) pointed out that the choice of learning English was directed by a deep personal conviction. This implies that the participants are motivated to learn the language. However, few respondents (14.3%) claimed that it was not their primary choice when they applied to the university. This may push them to have a passive stance towards the examined topic and would not be of interest to them.

**Table 3.1**

*English as a Personal Choice*

| Option | Number | Percentage % |
|--------|--------|--------------|
| Yes    | 60     | 85.7         |

|              |           |            |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| No           | 10        | 14.3       |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b> |

**Question 2:** How long have you been studying English?

The obtained data revealed a great variety in responses regarding the years dedicated in studying English. A large number of the students (87.14%) stated that they have been studying English for ten (10) years. This predicts that the majority may have achieved a good level in their academic record. Few students (8.57%) are found to have 11 years while others (2.86%) 12 years. Only one informant (1.43%) has spent 13 years in studying English. This indicates that these students may have dropped a year or two and/or failed in their studies once or more (Table 3.2).

**Table 3.2**

*Period of English Instruction*

| <b>Years</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|--------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 10           | 61            | 87.14               |
| 11           | 6             | 8.57                |
| 12           | 2             | 2.86                |
| 13           | 1             | 1.43                |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 3:** What is your English language level?

Beginner  Intermediate  Advanced

A large portion of informants (72.5%) opted for the choice of intermediate level. This connotes that it is less challenging for these students to communicate orally in front of their

classmates and teacher. A small portion (21.7%) turned out to have advanced level which suggests that they have reached a good mastery of English. However, four respondents (21.7%) acknowledged that they are beginners. This hints that these students are yet to master the language and they are in need of improving their level for communicative objectives (Table 3.3).

**Table 3.3**

*Students' Level of English*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Beginner      | 4             | 5.8                 |
| Intermediate  | 50            | 72.5                |
| Advanced      | 15            | 21.7                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 4:** As an EFL learner, do you learn the language for communicative purposes?

Yes  No

As demonstrated in Table 3.4, it is apparent that the majority of students (78.6 %) acknowledge the significance of learning English for communicative purposes. This indicates that the informants are truly aware of the vital role communication plays in the process of learning English, which in turn boosts their communicative competence and improves their oral performance. A minority of students (21.4%), however, show their disapproval with such item. It denotes that they may have other purposes of learning English besides communication.

**Table 3.4**

*Learning English for Communicative Purposes*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 55            | 78.6                |
| No            | 15            | 21.4                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 5:** How much do you think that your communicative ability in English has improved since you have started your first year's oral expression courses?

High                       Moderate                       Not at all

According to the compiled information presented in Table 3.5, a significant number of students (61.1%) assumed that their communicative abilities have improved moderately since their first year's oral expression courses. This implies that they gained knowledge to communicate using English; but their communicative abilities need to be developed more. Small portion of the students (25.7%) feels that their communicative capacities are highly improved. This might show the important role classroom oral communication plays in improving learner's communicative competence and mastery of English. Only (7.1%) of students opted for *Not at all* which indicates that they have severe difficulties in using English as a tool of communication inside the classroom.

**Table 3.5**

*Improvement of Students' Communicative Abilities*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|

|              |           |            |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| High         | 18        | 25.7       |
| Moderate     | 47        | 67.1       |
| Not at all   | 5         | 7.1        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b> |

### b. Section Two: Oral Communication Anxiety

This section seeks to investigate the nature and the sources of problems the EFL learners experience when communicating orally in the classroom.

**Question 6:** How do you find English oral session?

Very Interesting     Interesting     Not interesting

This question aims at figuring out participants' attitudes towards oral expression session. The given responses reflect students' interest and awareness towards the significance of classroom oral communication. More than half of the informants (N= 38) find oral session *very interesting* while less than half (N=27) assumed it is *interesting*. This reveals students' desire to speak and get involved in classroom oral discussions without facing any restrictions on language use, and that they are interested in learning English particularly for communication purposes. Only five students believed that English oral sessions are *not interesting* at all, which may suggest that they remain silent and passive during the session. This can be explained as the students may have communication deficiencies that directly affect their willingness to interact and speak in front of others; or they are simply not interested in the interactive tasks or the discussed topics of this module because they are tiresome and repetitive (Table 3.6).

**Table 3.6**

*Students' Attitudes towards English Oral Session*

| <b>Option</b>    | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Very Interesting | 38            | 54.3                |
| Interesting      | 27            | 38.6                |
| Not interesting  | 5             | 7.1                 |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 7:** How important do you consider classroom's oral communication in developing your English level?

Very important

Somehow important

I do not know

Not really important

Not important at all

The overall responses are found to be positive as Table 3.7 indicates that a large number of the respondents (60%) admit the *utmost importance* classroom oral communication has in developing their English level; while few students (27.1 %) chose *somehow important*. This denotes that these students are mindful about the effectiveness of classroom oral interaction. Six students (1.85 %) opted for the option *I do not know* which may suggest that they hesitate to participate and get involved in classroom oral activities because they think that they are not communicatively capable; thus, it did not allow them to make judgments about its importance. However, some students denied the importance of classroom oral communication as (2.9%) of them find it *not really important* while one informant declared that communicating orally inside the classroom is *not important at all* in English development which is incorrect; because, classroom oral communication is



considered the supreme feature of FL learning that is exactly needed in the process of developing learners' communicative competence.

**Table 3.7**

*Importance of Classroom Oral Communication*

| <b>Option</b>        | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Very important       | 42            | 60                  |
| Somehow important    | 19            | 27.1                |
| I do not know        | 6             | 8.6                 |
| Not really important | 2             | 2.9                 |
| Not important at all | 1             | 1.4                 |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 8:** How would you describe your level of communicative competence?

Very good

Good

Average

Bad

Very bad

The compiled data revealed that over half of the students' total number (N= 38) believe their level of communicative competence is *good* while others (N=7) assume that they have a *very good* level. This implies that these participants have developed not only communicative but also linguistic abilities that would enable them to ameliorate their academic level. Less than half of students (N= 26) claim that their level of communicative competence is *average*. This may be explained as these students have communicative competence deficiencies; due to certain difficulties that occur throughout the communication

process and this competence is in demand of ongoing development. No student (N=0) chose *bad* or *very bad* which means that they do not suffer from all the deficiencies related to communicative competence (Table 3.8).

**Table 3.8**

*Students' Consideration of Their Communicative Competence*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Very good     | 7             | 10                  |
| Good          | 38            | 54.3                |
| Average       | 26            | 37.1                |
| Bad           | 0             | 0                   |
| Very bad      | 0             | 0                   |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 9:** While being in a foreign language class, do you feel?

Calm and at ease  Nervous and worried

This item investigates students' feelings regarding their attendance in foreign language class. In response to this question, the vast majority (71.43%) find themselves at ease and calm while being in English class. This implies that these learners are competent and confident to share their knowledge and express their minds freely without any external pressure. However, a minority (28.57%) is nervous and worried. This signifies that they face an extreme nervous reaction to foreign language learning due to the assumption they made about their English level; as it is limited and it is not satisfactory to qualify them to participate in classroom activities (Table 3.9). ~~More to the point, they express anxiety throughout showing lack of self-confidence. In which their language knowledge remains passive because of the negative prejudgments they made about the learned language.~~

**Table 3.9***Students' Feelings towards Attending a FL Class*

| <b>Option</b>       | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Calm and at ease    | 50            | 71.43               |
| Nervous and worried | 20            | 28.57               |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 10:** How often do you participate in classroom oral activities?

Always

Often

Rarely

Never

The results demonstrated in Table 3.10 shows a considerable percentage of students (41.4%) chose *Often* while others (34.3%) picked *Always*. This denotes that these respondents do intensively involve in classroom oral activities without having the fear of making mistakes and/or be embarrassed. Importantly, they are mindful about the weightiness of practicing the learned language communicatively through interacting orally with class members. A low percentage of students (22.9 %) agreed that they rarely participate in the classroom. This might suggest that they may suffer from communication apprehension that would make them terrified of stating their views and perform orally as required like the other classmates do. Only one informant opted for *Never*; which indicates that s/he is unaware of the significance of communicating inside the classroom as a meaningful context. Or these can simply refer to learners' lack of enthusiasm to take part in oral activities unlike other tasks.

**Table 3.10**

*Frequency of Participation*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Always        | 24            | 34.3                |
| Often         | 29            | 41.4                |
| Rarely        | 16            | 22.9                |
| Never         | 1             | 1.4                 |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 11:** To what extent do you agree that speaking English in front of your classmates and the teacher makes feel relaxed?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

As it is shown in Table 3.11, the overall number of the respondents (N= 40) answered with *Agree* while seven students (N=7) opted for *Strongly Agree*. This implies that the majority of students show positive reactions towards speaking in EFL classroom. More to the point, it is apparent that their communicative and linguistic abilities have reached a developed and/or beyond accepted level that allows them to perform orally without experiencing speaking anxiety. Few respondents (N=9) chose *neither agree nor disagree*. This might suggest that these participants are not sure about their opinions because they have no idea about the impact EFL speaking anxiety has on their performance. However, a very significant number (N=11) stated that they *Disagree* with such item while others (N=3) opted for *Strongly Disagree*. This implies that these students experience oral communication

anxiety in which they strive to utter words with the presence of the class members; therefore, they manifest anxiety when they are asked to speak that threatens them the most. Consequently, this may push them to avoid engaging in communicative events at once and remain passive along the session.

**Table 3.11**

*Existence of Classroom Speaking Anxiety*

| <b>Option</b>              | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Strongly agree             | 7             | 10                  |
| Agree                      | 40            | 57.1                |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 9             | 12.9                |
| Disagree                   | 11            | 15.7                |
| Strongly disagree          | 3             | 4.3                 |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 12:** Suppose your EFL teacher suddenly calls your name to answer loudly, what would be your reaction?

- a. I answer with great certainty
- b. I freeze and cannot find the words
- c. I get nervous so my speech gets messy
- d. I do not even understand the teacher's question

As it is observed in Table 3.12, a significant percentage of students (45.7%) opted for choice *a* which is answering the instructor with great certainty. This indicates that these students apparently have a low level of speaking anxiety in which asking them to speak without being prepared beforehand does not provoke them to be terrified in performing given communicative acts and/or showing lack of self-confidence. Another considerable

percentage of students (41.4%) chose *b* and it connotes that they suffer from a severe EFL speaking anxiety which targets the learners' neuromuscular system and throws it into disorder. As consequence, they are mentally blocked to the point that they would be unable even to articulate a single word and make a quick response. A low percentage of students (28.6%) stated that they get nervous by the second the teacher points the finger asking them to speak which results in a messy speech. Their reaction is regarded as the most frequent EFL anxiety as they generally start a dreadful stammer once they attempt to initiate a conversation and have impaired inability to properly produce structured sentences and mainly utter words incorrectly. Only one informant (1.4%) claimed that s/he does not even understand what was just asked from him/her. This indicates that this student faces a grievous difficulty of sensing the received input, and due to the negative impact EFL anxiety has on students' cognitive abilities they become distracted and lose concentration.

**Table 3.12**

*Manifestation of FL Speaking Anxiety*

| <b>Option</b>                                      | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage%</b> |
|--|---------------|--------------------|
| a. I answer with great certainty                   | 32            | 45.7               |
| b. I freeze and cannot find the words              | 29            | 41.4               |
| c. I get nervous so my speech gets messy           | 20            | 28.6               |
| d. I do not even understand the teacher's question | 1             | 1.4                |
| <b>Total</b>                                       | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>         |

**Question 13:** While having a class discussion, do you:

- a. Get involved with ease and confidence
- b. Avoid talking and choose to hide

- c. Sit at the back of the class and remain quiet
- d. Hesitate to speak even if you have plenty of ideas to share

The compiled responses revealed that the majority of students (42.59 %) opted for the choice *a* which is getting involved in class discussion with ease and confidence. This suggests that they do not experience feelings of nervousness and worry when it comes to the use of English as a medium of expression inside the classroom; and mostly they have high self-esteem that allows them not to underestimate their abilities. The minority of the informants (20%) and (11.4%) have opted for choice *b* and choice *c*, respectively. This shows the negative impact EFL oral communication anxiety has on learners' speaking performance. Due to this state of anxiousness, learners generally exhibit negative attitudes towards language learning in which they become careless through adopting avoidance behaviors as hiding at the back of the class and avoid talking as much as possible. However, a significant percentage of students (41.4 %) opted for the option *d* which is hesitating to involve in class discussion regarding the fact that they have a plenty of ideas to share. This reflects learners desire to articulate their views and take a side in class discussion; but due to EFL anxiety, they are frightened to sound unconvincing or make mistakes while speaking and be laughed at. This explains student's tendency to be less communicatively active inside the classroom and recognize the act of speaking as a wise decision to avoid confusion and embracement (Table 3.13).

### **Table 3.13**

#### *Engagements in Classroom Discussion*

| Option   | Number    | Percentage% |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| a. Get involved with ease and confidence                       | 36        | 51.4        |
| b. Avoid talking and choose to hide                            | 14        | 20          |
| c. Sit at the back of the class and remain quiet               | 8         | 11.4        |
| d. Hesitate to speak even if you have plenty of ideas to share | 29        | 41.4        |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b>  |

**Question 14:** What makes you feel stressed or nervous in the class? You may choose more than one option.

- a. When I cannot express myself well in English
- b. When I am asked to speak
- c. To be negatively evaluated, criticized, and be laughed at when I speak and make mistakes.
- d. When I see my classmates perform better orally
- e. Being unable to understand what others are saying

Concerning causes of EFL anxiety (Table 3.14), participants had to choose one or more answers from the five choices. The majority (58.8 %) opted for the first choice in which they agreed that they feel nervous when they are unable to express themselves well in English. This indicates that learners generate anxiety when they have impaired ability to concentrate; therefore, they get paranoid and lose words that are appropriate for articulating thoughts clearly. Additionally, these students may have hundreds of ideas to share but due to anxiety they would be distracted and never be able to perform orally in a satisfactory way. Option *b* attracted 27 students (38.57%) and it implies that speaking in English simulates the



production of learners' anxiety; as performing orally may be considered the most provoking activity in EFL learning.

A significant percentage of students (35.3%) claimed that the fear of being negatively evaluated, criticized, and be laughed at when speaking and make mistakes is what makes them stressed in EFL classroom. Evaluation is a quite sensitive matter to learners since FL anxiety concerns performance evaluation. Accordingly, they show apprehension about others' assessments and they usually expect from the instructor or classmates to provide negative evaluation to their speaking performance. This is mainly centered around grammar mistakes or inaccurate/intelligible pronunciation, in which any correction is perceived as a failure. Hence, the speaker would think that s/he sounds stupid in front of the class members and therefore s/he expects a harsh criticism and be laughed at.

Another considerable percentage (41.2%) picked option *d* and stated that seeing their classmates performing better orally makes them stressed. This can be explained by the fact that competition among the learners leads to the increase of anxiety level as learners seem to be in endless self-comparison with others. In this regard, seeking to be better pushes them to become afraid to proceed and may not be rewarded for their speaking performance. A low percentage of students (20.6%) opted for choice *e*. This indicates that due to ramifications of EFL anxiety learners become mentally blocked and lose focus; thus, they face difficulty in understanding the content of the spoken input.

### **Table 3.14**

*Sources of Foreign Language Learning Anxiety*

| Option  | Number | Percentage % |
|---|--------|--------------|
| a-When I cannot<br>express myself well in English   | 40     | 58.8         |
| b. When I am asked<br>to speak  | 27     | 38.57        |
| c. To be negatively evaluated,<br>criticized, and laughed at when I<br>speak and make mistakes. | 24     | 35.3         |
| d. When I see me<br>classmates perform better orally  | 28     | 41.2         |
| e. Being unable to understand<br>what others are saying   | 14     | 20.6         |

**Question 15:** Does committing oral mistakes make you doubt your level of English?

Yes  No

According to the findings displayed in Table 3.15, more than half of the total number of students (N= 39) asserted that committing oral mistakes does not make them doubt their level of English. This implies that they are mindful about the substantial part of mistakes making have in the process of FL learning. More to the point, oral mistakes have a positive effect on improving oral English intelligibility because these inaccuracies help learners to determine how the language is learned and what strategies used to be overcome. Less than half (N= 32) answered with *Yes*. This indicates that these students suffer from high level of EFL anxiety, which forces them to construct mistaken beliefs about EFL learning. For them, there is no room for errors when expressing oneself orally in front of others in which it is an

absolute must to utter sentences accurately with a good accent; and unless these two terms are achieved, the quality of their speaking performance is not considered of high level. Thus, they regard the act of commenting oral mistakes as a sign that leads them to question their English level.

**Table 3.15**

*Effects of Oral Mistakes on Students' English Level*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 32            | 45.7                |
| No            | 39            | 54.3                |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 16:** Do you find that the state of anxiousness affects negatively your participation and academic achievements?

Yes  No

As it is shown in Table 3.16, a large portion of students (N=55) acknowledged the harmful effects EFL anxiety has on their participation and academic achievements. This hints that anxiety controls the degree of success in mastering the language in which the frequent feeling of debilitating anxiety makes language learning a less favorable experience; that in turn prevents the learner from performing successfully as required. A very small portion (N= 15), however, show disfavor with this question. As they claimed that EFL anxiety does not crucially affect their participation and overall academic achievements. This suggests that they encourage the presence of facilitating anxiety that would motivate them emotionally to challenge the new learning task, and which enables them to maximize the effectiveness of their oral performance inside the classroom.

**Table 3.16**

*Effects of FL Speaking Anxiety on Learner's Participation and Academic Achievements*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 55            | 78.57               |
| No            | 15            | 21.43               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 17:** If yes or no, please justify why.

In regards to the previous question, the informants offered several arguments concerning the impact of EFL anxiety on oral performance and academic achievements.

Learners who were in favor of this item, their justifications are summarized as follows:

- As a student who has several ideas to share, due to anxiety s/he would never be able to compose one coherent sentence. It prevents him/her from giving his/her best in answering questions or presenting orally.
- Anxiety kills one's abilities and self-confidence; consequently, s/he can hardly express clear thoughts or information. It leads the person to sense worthlessness and doubt in every move s/he will do.
- Being stressed makes the learner lose the flow of ideas and s/he may skip so many in order to finish as soon as possible. For this reason, the uttered words sound unconvincing; hence, the next time the learner chooses not to speak in an attempt to avoid embracement.
- Being always in a stressful state makes the learner fear participating and expressing oneself freely. As a result, the teacher would not know the students' real level who may avoid practicing English communicatively as the new learned vocabularies.

- The ramifications of anxiety cannot be neglected on the level of both competence and performance in an EFL classroom; it acts as a barrier that does not allow the learner to participate effectively. Besides, it serves as an obstacle for his/her academic achievements.

Alternatively, those who opted for *No* did not offer many arguments. The important ones are summed up as follows:

- EFL anxiety does not affect negatively one's participation and academic achievements, but rather it increases success inside the classroom.
- Being anxious is the first step to have better learning because students learn from their mistakes that motivates them to try harder in such kind of situations.

### c. Section Three: Cooperative Learning Techniques

This section aims at enlightening perspectives about the pivotal role played by the cooperative learning techniques in reducing EFL classroom oral communication anxiety.

**Question 18:** Are you familiar with the term Cooperative Learning?

Yes

No

As it is observed in Table 3.18, the overall number of the participants (N=54) admitted that they are familiar with the term cooperative learning. This refers to a legit indication that the cooperative learning is a considerably adopted approach in the teaching/learning process. Thus, this may reinforce the fact of the participants' familiarity with the approach's various techniques. However, few students (N=16) were not familiar with the term cooperative learning. This can be explained as they were typically unfamiliar with the appropriate academic term of this approach but they might have been learning through one of its techniques along their academic years at some point.

**Table 3.18***Students Familiarity with Cooperative Learning*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 54            | 77.14               |
| No            | 16            | 22.86               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 19:** In EFL classroom, do you prefer to work:

- a. Individually
- b. Pair work
- c. Group work

The statistics related to this question demonstrated that the respondents generally preferred to *work in pairs* (37.14%). This denotes their preference to join group work activities at its narrowest level, mainly because they get to profit from the coordinative and supportive atmosphere that the collective work provides when excluding the crowdedness. According to other informants (34.29%), *individual work* seems to be favorable and approximately equal to pair work. The percentage for this category justifies the fact that individual work is appreciated because it offers complete freedom of expression in addition to the ability of the individualistic evaluation. Some students (28.57%), however, seem to be attracted to *group work* activities. This indicates that such way of learning could also have countless advantages as far as EFL classrooms are concerned. It emphasizes the learners' autonomy in the learning process as it minimizes the teachers' role (Table 3. 19).

**Table 3.19***Students Preferred Type of Learning*

| <b>Option</b>   | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|
| a. Individually | 24            | 34.29               |
| b. Pair work    | 26            | 37.14               |
| c. Group work   | 20            | 28.57               |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 20:** If yes or no, please explain why.

In accordance with the previous asked question, the learners who were in favor of *working individually*, their arguments are summarized as follows:

- Working individually enables the learner to express his/her ideas freely and coherently. Additionally, it makes the process of organizing thoughts easier which offers a sense of creativity in performing a given assignment.
- Working individually pushes the student to finish the work on point because no one will exercise pressure or impose ideas on him/her. Also, the work is mentored according to one's own terms.

Those who were in favor of *group work* justified their answers by indicating the following:

- Since group work makes learners work on unified goal, it offers an opportunity to help each other in which this exchange of ideas helps in producing a well rich and organized work.
- It is helpful to learn and work with the group members because it brings a good collective result and it makes the process of doing the assignment easier and more enjoyable.

- It is the ideal place to speak and perform without any fear because the learner can get motivated by the other members of the group in which s/he become more active and surer about his/her abilities.

By contrast, learners who opted for *pair work*, provided some justifications that are summarized as follows:

- Pair work gives the chance to communicate with one person comfortably in which they can help each other without being in need to satisfy all the group members or handle their problems.
- A group of two is more effective and effortless to be organized where the process of exchanging ideas and views is less complicated than group work as the latter is noisy and troublesome when it comes to discuss thoughts together.

**Question 21:** How do you describe the process of working in groups?

- a. Motivating
- b. Relaxing
- c. Enjoyable
- d. disturbing
- d. Embarrassing

It is noted from the Table 3.21 that a considerable number of the informants (37.14%) admitted that the process of working in groups is *enjoyable*. Just a little less than the previous percentage (31.43%) confessed that working in groups is motivating. The responses, therefore, reflect the positive attitude these students have towards group working process. The positive effect that group work creates is explained with prioritization of the dynamic roles exchange and of sharing knowledge between the learning group members, and which works on stimulating them to be more productive and supportive of each other's learning. Other participants (21.43%) claimed that the process of working in groups is *disturbing*. One



explanation to this, group work can become disturbing in case some students have not taken it seriously as they should. As a result, they distract their peers from accomplishing the learning objective. Additionally, some respondents (8.57%) considered that working in groups is *relaxing*. This implies that this way of learning constructs a stress-free environment for students where they can benefit from the opportunities provided for learning. Only few students (1.43%) described the group learning process as *embarrassing*. This is mainly related to the students' personality traits, practically introverts in this case.

**Table 3.21**

*Students Impressions on Group Work Activities*

| Option          | Number    | Percentage % |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. Motivating   | 22        | 31.43        |
| b. Relaxing     | 6         | 8.57         |
| c. Enjoyable    | 26        | 37.14        |
| d. disturbing   | 15        | 21.43        |
| d. Embarrassing | 1         | 1.43         |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Question 22:** On what basis do you prefer your study group to be formulated?

- a. Gender
- b. Competence
- c. Preference
- d. Randomly

Formulating the study groups based on the competence seemed to be preferable by the majority of the participants (N=34). This choice refers to the student's willingness to work with group members who have the same *proficiency* level, in order to guarantee the

coherence among the peers which allows achieving the intended success. This also may refer to their willingness to set groups on the basis of *competence*; however, the groups should include both competent and incompetent students in order to create balanced atmosphere. Some informants (N=18) opted for *preference* which indicates that students care about the group's harmony and trust regardless of the members' gender or competence. In addition, other respondents (N=13) chose that the group members are preferred to be selected *randomly*, it implies that they focus on the learning tasks and achieving their objectives priorly to any other element including picking favorites. Finally, the *gender* factor obtained the lowest rank (N=5) which clearly implies that these students have difficulty working in groups with the opposite gender (Table 3.22).

**Table 3.22**

*Basis of Setting Learning Groups*

| Option        | Number    | Percentage % |
|---------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. Gender     | 5         | 7.14         |
| b. Competence | 34        | 48.57        |
| c. Preference | 18        | 25.71        |
| d. Randomly   | 13        | 18.57        |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Question 23:** What are your attitudes towards group work activities? You can choose more than one answer.

- a. I get motivated by the other members of the group
- b. I feel less anxious when I work surrounded by other classmates
- c. I get to learn better from the collective mixture of ideas and skills
- d. I get to speak at ease without experiencing the pressure of speaking by myself

- e. I get no chance to express my ideas and answers
- f. I get embarrassed and shy to defend my arguments
- g. I get stressed out because of arguing with other members over the answers

The item's results in Table 3.23 present the students' attitudes towards group learning activities. The participants were able to choose more than one from the seven provided options. The overall responses were positive towards group learning. The results demonstrate that over half of the participants (58.2%) opted for the option *c*, which indicates that group work activities are based on the notion of the mutual exchange of knowledge and skills. Thus, students become able to discover new learning resources including peers' skills, knowledge and researches, rather than the traditional ones provided by the teachers only.

A large percentage (53.7%) was in favor of the choice *a*, in which the process of learning while being surrounded by other individuals increases the competition, thus, many students may get motivated to participate and be productive. Another considerable portion of the participants (47.8%) claimed that they feel less anxious around their classmates. This is considered as one of the major positive effects of group work activities; it is resulted from coordinative and casual learning setting that it creates. Others (23.9%) confessed that group learning encourages them to speak more freely as it helps to reduce the pressure of speaking under the spot light.

By contrast, certain students seem to have different attitudes towards group learning activities. Some respondents (25.4%) expressed that they get stressed out during group work activities due to the different opinions and views proposed and that may oppose theirs'; which eventually leads to arguments. Other participants (10.4%) admitted that they get embarrassed and shy to speak and defend themselves. This reveals that students of introverted personality who avoid confrontation and communication may not get the chance to learn and to be evaluated appropriately. Finally, few informants (9%) opted for the option

e, which explains that group work activities are unfavorable for certain type of students because of the enforcement of the collective and cooperative methods only.

**Table 3.23**

*Students Attitudes Toward Group Work Activities*

| Option  | Number | Percentage % |
|---|--------|--------------|
| a. I get motivated by the other members of the group                              | 36     | 53.7         |
| b. I feel less anxious when I work surrounded by other classmates                 | 32     | 47.8         |
| c. I get to learn better from the collective mixture of ideas and skills          | 39     | 58.2         |
| d. I get to speak at ease without experiencing the pressure of speaking by myself | 16     | 23.9         |
| e. I get no chance to express my ideas and answers                                | 6      | 9            |
| f. I get embarrassed and shy to defend my arguments                               | 7      | 10.4         |
| g. I get stressed out because of arguing with other members over the answers      | 17     | 25.4         |

**Question 24:** How often does your teacher ask you to participate in cooperative learning activities?

a. Always

b. Often

c. Rarely

d. Never

The data obtained from the Table 3.24 showed that the majority of the learners (65.2%) have been asked quite often to participate in CL activities. This hints that this approach has proved its effectiveness in the EFL classrooms since teachers tend to implement its techniques at different levels in higher education. Other informants (21.7%) claimed that they were rarely been asked to join this kind of activities. This suggests that some teachers may not choose to integrate CL tasks due to some disciplinary procedures, or simply they may have their own personal strategies to deliver knowledge. Some respondents (13%) maintained that their teachers always expose them for these activities. However, only (1.4%) of the participants stated that s/he has never been asked to perform any of this type of activities; which indicates that this category of students may not be familiar with CL formulas or any terms that label its techniques.

**Table 3.24**

*Teacher s' Frequency of Implementing Cooperative Learning Activities*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| a. Always     | 9             | 13                  |
| b. Often      | 45            | 65.2                |
| c. Rarely     | 15            | 21.7                |
| d. Never      | 1             | 1.4                 |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 25:** To what extent do you agree that cooperative learning activities can improve your classroom oral performance better than the individualistic activities?

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

The received responses as shown in Table 3.25 indicate that the majority of the respondents (42.86%) acknowledged the effectiveness of CL activities in enhancing their classrooms oral performance better than the individualistic activities. This reveals that CL activities help students to engage more in classroom oral activities as it reduces the pressure of speaking individually. Another considerable portion of the students (30%) was uncertain of which type of activities can improve their classroom oral performance. Others (15.71%) were undoubtedly convinced that CL tasks are more operative to develop their speaking performance. In opposition, other respondents with (10%) and (1.43%) have selected disagree and strongly disagree about the fact that CL approach can improve their oral performance, this denotes that these students preferred the individualistic activities. This fact implies that this type of learners must have a confident extroverted personality and have no fear of public speaking act, or it could be the opposite as they might be uninterested in either ways.

**Table 3.25**

*The Extent to which Cooperative Learning Activities are better than The Individualistic Activities*

| <b>Option</b>        | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| a. Strongly agree    | 11            | 15.71               |
| b. Agree             | 30            | 42.86               |
| c. Uncertain         | 21            | 30                  |
| d. Disagree          | 7             | 10                  |
| e. Strongly disagree | 1             | 1.43                |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 26:** Whatever is your answer, please explain.

Participants offered a set of arguments regarding the influence of CL activities on the improvements of classroom oral performance. These are summed up as follows:

- CL activities make the students feel less stressed and more at ease when oral mistakes are common among their peers. This encourages them to speak more without feeling judged, and by committing many mistakes the oral performance will be enhanced as these inaccuracies are part of learning.
- Working in groups make the learner feel more relaxed to communicate without having fear, in which s/he get motivated by the other group members and be confident to learn more and practice the required knowledge.
- Learning groups push the shy person to come out of his/her shell and become more interested in other's views and more willing to talk and take part in cooperative tasks.

The respondents who were more in favor of individualistic work suggested some arguments that are presented briefly as follows:

- CL activities are not helpful at all because they are not taken seriously. It is noticed that one person might do the job of a whole group especially if the student works with someone with whom s/he does not have the same level.
- Individual work is better than the team cooperation in terms of time, organizing ideas, research, and presentation. This can be explained that cooperative activities allow the students to exchange information and ideas that they were not aware of; and importantly to get diverse perspectives about the examined topic.

**Question 27:** Do you feel that you can overcome your nervousness when you speak in learning groups?

Yes

No

As considered by the largest portion of the participants (N=59), speaking in learning groups avails learners to overcome their nervousness. This indicates that implementing group working process may change the climate of the classroom, where stress is reduced and stressful learners may speak and contribute in the collective classroom activities without experiencing the pressure of speaking under the spotlights. On the other hand, only a minority (N=11) rejected this fact which is explained with the stress and nervousness that these learners may still experience when speaking in learning groups. This is arguably related to the personal psychological reasons linked to one particular person.



**Table 3.27***The Effectiveness of Learning Groups in Overcoming Speaking Nervousness*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 59            | 84.29               |
| No            | 11            | 15.71               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 28:** Do you think that cooperative learning techniques are effective to reduce your oral communication anxiety?

Yes  No

As the Table 3.28 revealed, the majority of the participants (N= 54) approved the statement which holds that CL techniques are effective to reduce learners' oral communication anxiety. This affirms that CL approach includes various operative techniques that promote collaboration and encourage learners to communicate increasingly. Simultaneously, anxiety would be reduced and students' fear of speaking would be lessened. In contrast, other informants (N=11) expressed their disagreement with the statement and claimed that CL techniques do not help in reducing learners' oral communication anxiety.

**Table 3.28***Cooperative Learning Effectiveness on Reducing Students' Oral Communication Anxiety*

| <b>Option</b> | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Yes           | 54            | 77.14               |
| No            | 16            | 22.86               |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 29:** If yes or no, please explain why.

Concerning the participants who had agreed on the previous statement, the following sums up their justifications:

- CL helps learners to overcome their nervousness and decrease the stress due to the nature of its activities that require students to work together and to share responsibility and outcomes. Thus, the pressure of failing alone would disappear and learners would feel less anxious while speaking.
- CL creates a motivating learning environment in oral expression sessions where learners get to dig into debates and arguments. This setting allows the learners to feel free to express their opinions and be less worried about committing mistakes or worrying about the teacher's interventions or judgments.
- Oral communication anxiety decreased when the teacher plays less roles in EFL classroom. Students prefer to speak or discuss things with their peers because they share the same level of proficiency. Hence, no one would feel anxious to impress the other.
- CL has a positive effect on some learners' personality. It helps the introverts to overcome their shyness and become confident and less stressed and anxious. Additionally, it helps students to develop their speaking skills.

On the contrary, the informants who disagreed with the previous statement provided the following arguments:

- Oral communication anxiety and the nervousness are part of the individual's personality in which it cannot be improved or adjusted in several sessions in schools.
- CL activities can cause some disciplinary problems because of the crowdedness of the groups and the lack of the academic communication manners that the majority of the Algerian students are not aware of.

- The extroverted learners can always over shine the introverted ones, which may lead to increase the anxiety and stress of the latter.

**Question 30:** Which of the following cooperative techniques can help you to reduce your EFL oral communication anxiety?

- a. Jigsaw
- b. Think /Pair /Share
- c. Students Team Achievement Division
- d. Team Game Tournament

Analyzing the results in the Table 3.30 shows that a little less than half of the respondents (48.75%) selected *Think /Pair /Share* to be the CL technique which helps them best to reduce their EFL oral communication anxiety. The procedure implemented in this type of technique is basic and easy and perhaps it is the reason for its massive popularity. Consequently, these learners tend to lean toward this particular technique because it allows them all to participate and be more engaged in the learning process.

Among the other CL techniques provided, *Team Game Tournament* technique was selected by 35.29 % of the participants. This indicates that modern education which focuses on autonomy and learner-centered approaches is receiving a wide acceptance in all of the academic sectors. This technique embodies the aforementioned principles; it highly promotes autonomy and creates a competitive environment that stimulates learners to be more productive and communicative. Others (8.75%) selected the two of the techniques provided *Jigsaw* and *Students Team Achievement Division*. These methods share the same principles. Yet, the Jigsaw method is known to be a little trickier and requires students to think and put more effort to accomplish the learning task.

**Table 3.30**

*Cooperative Learning Techniques that Reduce Students' EFL Oral Communication Anxiety*

| Option                                | Number    | Percentage % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| a. Jigsaw                             | 6         | 8.57         |
| b. Think /Pair /Share                 | 34        | 48.57        |
| c. Students Team Achievement Division | 6         | 8.57         |
| d. Team Game Tournament               | 24        | 35.29        |
| <b>Total</b>                          | <b>70</b> | <b>100</b>   |

**Question 31:** Which of the following forms of group learning you find beneficial to reduce your EFL oral communication Anxiety?

- a. Problem-Based Learning
- b. Team-Based Learning
- c. Collaborative Learning
- d. Peer-Assisted Learning

The obtained data from the Table 3.31 revealed that a considerable portion of the sample (37.14%) believed that *Problem-Based Learning* is the most effective type of group learning for EFL oral communication anxiety reduction. This active form of learning seems to attract the student's attention due to its nontraditional methods that allow the learners to search, discover, and make efforts to construct knowledge with their peers; hence, this would allow the learners to interact reciprocally. Other students (25.71%) chose *Team-Based Learning* as the most beneficial approach for lessening their oral communication anxiety. This indicates that this form of group learning has introduced different teaching strategies that encourage interaction and teamwork, and for this reason, the learner can get more opportunities to communicate. Similarly, some participants (25.71%) opted for *Collaborative Learning* that shares nearly the same principles with the previous approach;

which subsumes the concept of cooperation. Respondents with 2.86% selected Peer-Assisted Learning, and 8.58% did not provide any answers to this item.

**Table 3.31**

*Forms of Group Learning to Reduce Students' EFL Oral Communication Anxiety*

| <b>Option</b>             | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| a. Problem-Based Learning | 26            | 37.14               |
| b. Team-Based Learning    | 18            | 25.71               |
| c. Collaborative Learning | 18            | 25.71               |
| d. Peer-Assisted Learning | 2             | 2.86                |
| Did not answer            | 6             | 8.58                |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>70</b>     | <b>100</b>          |

**Question 32:** If you have further recommendations or suggestions regarding the subject under investigation, please feel free to share.

The responses to this question were very few, only (N=6) participants have answered it. Each answer tackled distinct points as it is summarized in the following suggestions:

- CL techniques and methods are beneficial and they should be implemented at the early stages of learning.
- Reframing teachers and learners to be familiarized with the importance of such approach is crucial due to the sensitivity of the subject under investigation.
- CL approach may not succeed in the Algerian university due to the conventional mentality of the students and teachers who still rely only on the traditional systems of teaching and learning.

### 3.4. Students' Questionnaire Summary of Results

The compiled data of section one revealed that nearly all respondents have chosen learning English personally, which indicates their positive attitudes towards the learned language. Additionally, the EFL learners are considered mindful about learning the language for communicative purposes which suggests the eminent importance they place on communication to develop their English level. Moreover, oral expression courses are found to have a great contribution in developing the learners' communicative abilities in English, which is regarded as a meaningful context to practice the learned language communicatively.

The analysis of section two uncovered that students are quite interested in English oral sessions, and mostly they admit the effectiveness of classroom oral communication in developing their English level. Furthermore, they clearly proclaim that their communicative competence level varies from very good, good to average. Accordingly, the majority of EFL learners find themselves at ease and calm in the classroom. However, these students may manifest anxiety once the EFL instructor calls their names to answer, and a lot of them hesitate to involve in class discussion regardless the fact they have rich knowledge to share. Moreover, the main reason that controls students' level of anxiety is the inability to express oneself well in English in which learners face restrictions on voicing their thoughts clearly. Also, learners acknowledged the negative impact EFL anxiety has on their speaking performance and overall academic achievements; and it implies that this state of anxiousness hinders their success in mastering the English language.

The third section revealed that the process of working in groups is a widely accepted form of learning among EFL students. The attraction to such type particularly is explained with its exceptional learning methods and techniques that promote cooperation and allow communication skills to foster among these learners. Moreover, most learners confirm their positive attitudes towards the role of implementing group work activities in order to help

students develop their speaking performance. Therefore, cooperative learning has been approved to be an effective approach that helps EFL learners to overcome nervousness and speaking anxiety.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the obtained data from the students' questionnaire revealed the students' recognition of their speaking difficulties among which apprehension to communicate orally in EFL classroom. The findings provide a faithful indication that affirms their belief that CL approach is effective in ameliorating EFL learners' performance in relation to speaking and oral communication. Accordingly, implementing this approach activities and techniques efficiently may result in overcoming the most common concerns of speaking anxiety.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The paramount interest of the present research is to enlighten learners' perspectives about the integration of cooperative learning as an effective teaching approach implemented to overcome oral communication anxiety and promote learners' classroom oral interaction. With reference to English use as a medium of expression inside the FL classroom, third year students encounter certain challenges as they are not communicatively competent to face the

fear of speaking in front of class members in which they have limited vocabulary knowledge, lack of grammar, and helplessness in sensing the received data. Along with psychological issues such as low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence and experience competitiveness among learners, this may lead to the increase in FL anxiety levels for some. Such problematic situation is beyond any doubt would affect the learner's frequency of participation inside the classroom, and consequently hinders learners' overall academic achievements.

The findings have a decisive influence in drawing learners' attention on the significance of practicing English for communicative purposes inside the classroom. The conducted research served as a pivotal contributor in boosting learners' communicative competence, including the linguistic abilities, and promoting the classroom speaking performance for an effective interaction with class members. Accordingly, learners would be equipped enough to overcome the psychological issues including FLL anxiety and communication apprehension, in which they become more self-confident to use the spoken English as a means for articulating thoughts without any threats. On this basis, EFL instructor's job is to encourage students to get involved in classroom oral activities by implementing some teaching strategies and techniques that would create a welcoming atmosphere for learning.

In actual fact, not all the students take part in classroom interactive tasks and it is due to the negative prejudgments they made on their speaking performance; as they fear to speak and make grammar mistakes or utter words wrongly then sound absurd and be laughed at. Thereafter, the instructor can apply the cooperative learning technique as a tool to encourage learners to involve in learning groups without any concerns about committing mistakes; and at the same time motivating their peers to take part in the communicative tasks. Particularly, this medium stimulates the development of the learning process and helps learners to develop



their oral communicative abilities as it provides more opportunities for students to produce the language.

It is worth noting that learners should be mindful about the effectiveness of cooperative learning tasks in reducing anxiety sensing in the EFL environment. This tool changes the climate of the classroom, as students may feel more comfortable to speak and express their ideas freely. Thus, this pedagogical approach is useful in ameliorating learner's oral performance and increasing his/her tendency to be more active and expressive in the collective classroom activities, without experiencing the pressure of speaking under the spotlights. Furthermore, teachers should integrate this effective teaching approach to overcome their learners' communicative difficulties in order to have positive learning outcomes.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In view of the obtained results, further research is recommended to be carried out in the following areas:

- An observational study is needed on how to robustly capture the impact and outcomes of CL on reducing EFL anxiety when learners engage in classroom oral communication tasks.

- Investigating the subject under inquiry from teachers' point of view. More methodological work is required to resolve the influence of EFL instructor's negative feedback on learners' speaking performance that would stimulate the production of EFL anxiety.
- In-depth exploration on the importance of cooperative learning method in the development of learners' creativity and critical thinking.
- Other studies are needed to explore the different sources of difficulties learners may encounter when communicating orally inside the EFL classroom.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The empirical results reported herein should be considered in the light of some limitations:

- The limited area of research is due to the finite number of participants' sample that may not generalize the findings and which pushes to assess the plausibility of the hypothesis on larger population.

- The Coronavirus outbreak influenced negatively the research progress. During the quarantine period that the whole world was going through, affected the process of investigation as the participants of the study were absent and the universities/libraries were closed.
- The data gathering tools were planned to involve a quasi-experimental method of one group pre-test and post-test survey, in addition to classroom observation. These tools were substituted by an online students' questionnaire and the researchers found themselves urged not to use another data-gathering tool as the teachers' questionnaires, to explore their standpoints and practices about the investigated topic due to the aforementioned reasons.
- Some informants' lack of interest in answering the questionnaire limited our chances to collect more usable data as some follow-up questions were left unanswered.
- Indifference may have been present in the questionnaire as the participants may give responses that are not useful to the present topic in order to finish as quickly as possible.

### **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

The present study was carried out primarily to hold an inquiry on the importance of implementing the group work activities in the process of speaking EFL communicatively. This worthwhile teaching method succeeded in bringing pleasant results concerning the increasing awareness level of developing EFL students' communicative competence and

improvement of language speaking performance. The quintessence of the topic at hand is to cast lights on psychological problems that students may encounter when the spoken word is uttered; and the detrimental impact of this displeasing emotional state on their classroom oral interaction and overall academic achievements. Fundamentally, the research presented a theoretical framework to demonstrate how cooperative learning techniques contribute in overcoming students' classroom speaking anxiety.

The practical study obtained findings with the use of students' questionnaire administered to 70 Third year students, in order to test the research hypothesis and answer the research questions. Based on the achieved results, oral communication anxiety exists in EFL classroom as some learners suffer from communication apprehension. Additionally, students are found to have positive attitudes towards the integration of cooperative learning techniques in EFL classrooms to which they are familiar. Furthermore, they agreed that the process of learning in groups helps to produce communicatively competent learners and promote collaboration among them, and to overcome the fear of communicating orally inside the classroom.

The quantitative research design adopted in the current study allowed achieving valid results. In spite of the fact that the EFL instructor gives precedence to implement cooperative activities in classroom; this teaching approach if is not applied appropriately to meet the desirable goals of communication in FL class learners may show passive stance towards it. This is manifested in their lack of enthusiasm, cooperation and willingness to take part in the classroom interactive tasks. In the light of this, the EFL teachers are required to make their students cognizant about this effective instructional approach that creates a supportive atmosphere for oral communication and cooperation, and making the process of learning significantly easier than they do individually.

The present study has come to the conclusion that the research hypothesis is confirmed throughout the process of inquiry. Comprehensively, the study presents a paramount argument that teachers should make students aware about the significance of involving group work activities during the EFL learning process. Additionally, they need to ascertain the weightiness of this teaching technique in encouraging the anxious learners to involve in classroom interactive assignments by being motivated via their peers, for the sake of realizing more positive learning outcomes.

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## **SITOGRAPHY**

### **Online Students' Questionnaire**

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe96LcSyWJTh1YopxOITju0KT92nnddK8yZvYlfI2PnHgCDHIw/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe96LcSyWJTh1YopxOITju0KT92nnddK8yZvYlfI2PnHgCDHIw/viewform?usp=sf_link)

## **APPENDIX A**

## **Students' Questionnaire**

### **Examining EFL Students' Perspectives about Cooperative Learning Techniques and Its Impact on Oral Communication Anxiety**

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to answer the following questionnaire which is a part of a Master dissertation research. The questionnaire aims at figuring out your awareness towards the effectiveness of cooperative learning techniques in reducing oral communication anxiety in EFL classroom. Additionally, the questionnaire will enable us to determine the sources of the difficulties the EFL learners encounter while communicating orally, which in turn leads to speaking anxiety. The important linguistic terms are defined in a separate page. Your responses are going to be treated with great confidentiality and care.

Thank you for your collaboration and for the time devoted to answer the questionnaire.

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#### **Section One: Personal Information**

**1. Is learning English your personal choice?**



Yes  No

2. How long have you been studying English?

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3. What is your English language level?

Beginner  Intermediate  Advanced

4. As an EFL learner, do you learn the language for communicative purposes?

Yes  No

5. How much do you think that your communicative ability in English has improved since you have started your first year's oral expression courses?

High  Moderate  Not at all

### Section Two: Oral Communication Anxiety

6. How do you find English oral session?

Very Interesting  Interesting  Not interesting

7. How important do you consider classroom's oral communication in developing your English level?

Very important

Somehow important

I do not know

Not really important

Not important at all

8. How would you describe your level of communicative competence?

Very good

Good

Average

Bad

Very bad

**9.** While being in a foreign language class, do you feel?

Calm and at ease  Nervous and worried

**10.** How often do you participate in classroom oral activities?

Always

Often

Rarely

Never

**11.** To what extent do you agree that speaking English in front of your classmates and the teacher makes feel relaxed?

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree.

**12.** Suppose your EFL teacher suddenly calls your name to answer loudly, what would be your reaction?

a. I answer with great certainty

- b. I freeze and cannot find the words
- c. I get nervous so my speech gets messy
- d. I do not even understand the teacher's question

**13.** While having a class discussion, do you:

- a. Get involved with ease and confidence
- b. Avoid talking and choose to hide
- c. Sit at the back of the class and remain quiet
- d. Hesitate to speak even if you have plenty of ideas to share

**14.** What makes you feel stressed or nervous in the class? You may choose more than one option.

- a. When I cannot express myself well in English
- b. When I am asked to speak
- c. To be negatively evaluated, criticized, and be laughed at when I speak and make mistakes.
- d. When I see my classmates perform better orally
- e. Being unable to understand what others are saying

**15.** Does committing oral mistakes make you doubt your level of English?

Yes  No

**16.** Do you find that the state of anxiousness affects negatively your participation and academic achievements?

Yes  No

**17.** If yes or no, please justify why.

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**Section Three: Cooperative Learning Techniques**

**18.** Are you familiar with the term Cooperative Learning?

Yes

No

**19.** In EFL classroom, do you prefer to work:

a. Individually

b. Pair work

c. Group work

**20.** If yes or no, please explain why.

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**21.** How do you describe the process of working in groups?

a. Motivating

b. Relaxing

c. Enjoyable

d. disturbing

d. Embarrassing

**22.** On what basis do you prefer your study group to be formulated?

a. Gender

b. Competence

c. Preference

d. Randomly

**23.** What are your attitudes towards group work activities? You can choose more than one answer.

a. I get motivated by the other members of the group

b. I feel less anxious when I work surrounded by other classmates

c. I get to learn better from the collective mixture of ideas and skills

- d. I get to speak at ease without experiencing the pressure of speaking by myself
- e. I get no chance to express my ideas and answers
- f. I get embarrassed and shy to defend my arguments
- g. I get stressed out because of arguing with other members over the answers

**24.** How often does your teacher ask you to participate in cooperative learning activities?

- a. Always
- b. Often
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

**25.** To what extent do you agree that cooperative learning activities can improve your classroom oral performance better than the individualistic activities?

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

**26.** Whatever is your answer, please explain.

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**27.** Do you feel that you can overcome your nervousness when you speak in learning groups?

- Yes  No

**28.** Do you think that cooperative learning techniques are effective to reduce your oral communication anxiety?

- Yes  No

29. If yes or no, please explain why?

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30. Which of the following cooperative techniques can help you to reduce your EFL oral communication anxiety?

- a. Jigsaw
- b. Think /Pair /Share
- c. Students Team Achievement Division
- d. Team Game Tournament

31. Which of the following forms of group learning you find beneficial to reduce your EFL oral communication Anxiety?

- a. Problem-Based Learning
- b. Team-Based Learning
- c. Collaborative Learning
- d. Peer-Assisted Learning

32. If you have further recommendations or suggestions regarding the subject under investigation, please feel free to share.

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Thank you.

### Definitions of key terms

- **Collaborative Learning:** pedagogical approach that demands from learners/teachers and learners to join efforts together to discover, understand, and produce knowledge.

- **Communicative competence:** the knowledge which enables someone to use a language effectively and their ability to use this knowledge for communication.
- **Cooperative learning:** these set of methods in which students work together in small groups and help one another to achieve learning objectives.
- **Jigsaw technique:** a cooperative learning technique which requires learners to coordinate in producing a final product where each learner have a different piece of the learning material. The, the whole group members gather their pieces and complete the task.
- **Peer-Assisted Learning:** a learning approach where the acquisition of skills and knowledge occur through an active assistance among students that share equal position without any intervention of a teacher and out of the academic setting.
- **Problem-Based Learning:** teaching approach where students are stimulated to solve a given problem then retain the relevant information and the course concepts.
- **Team-Based Learning:** practical and instructional teaching approach, it has introduced different teaching strategies that promote interaction and teamwork. It includes four phases; formulating the group, using *Readiness Assurance* method, designing critical thinking activities and using peer assessment and feedback.
- **Team Game Tournament Technique:** a cooperative learning technique which focuses on the element of autonomy. The learning process involves various group work activities. TGT included four stages; selecting group members, grouping each member according to his/ her ability level, assigning students on the tournament tables as guided judges and auxiliary judges. Grading and evaluating each group performance at the end of the tournament
- **Think/ Pair/ Share technique:** a cooperative learning technique in which students work together to solve a problem or answer a question about an assigned task which is posed by the teacher, after that the learners reflect and discuss their ideas.

- **Students Team Achievement Division Technique:** a cooperative learning technique in which small groups of learners with different levels of ability work together to accomplish a mutual learning goal. The STAD is implemented through; Class Presentations, Teams, Quizzes and Team Recognition

## **Résumé**

La présente thèse vise à étudier les points de vue des étudiants sur l'impact de l'Apprentissage Coopératif (AC) en tant qu'approche pédagogique efficace à suivre pour surmonter l'anxiété de communication orale observée chez les étudiants en anglais comme langue étrangère. L'anxiété est un phénomène psychologique très fréquent chez les étudiants



de la langue anglaise qui peut induire les apprenants à rencontrer des difficultés lorsqu'ils parlent. A cet effet, il est d'intérêt primordial de comprendre la nature de l'AC en tant que approche pédagogique appliquée pour atténuer l'appréhension des apprenants pendant leurs interactions orales avec leurs collègues en classe. Par conséquent, cette recherche vise à sensibiliser les étudiants au rôle important de ces techniques dans l'amélioration et la performance de l'expression orale en classe et la création d'un environnement favorable sans angoisse. En tenant compte des données susmentionnées, cette étude utilise la méthode de recherche quantitative basée sur un questionnaire pour les étudiants de 3<sup>ème</sup> année (N=70 prélevés sur 146 étudiants) du Département d'anglaise à l'université 8 mai 1945 Guelma. A cet égard, les données recueillies ont démontré qu'il existe une relation positive entre les deux variables, ce qui confirme l'hypothèse de cette recherche vue que les étudiants sont conscients de l'efficacité d'AC visant à réduire les degrés d'anxiété pendant la communication orale d'anglais. Les résultats ont révélé que les élèves reconnaissaient que les techniques d' AC les encourageaient à s'impliquer confortablement dans les activités de communication orale et à améliorer largement les performances orales en classe.

**Mots Clés :** L'apprentissage Coopératif, L'anxiété, Communication Orale, Parler

#### ملخص

تحاول هذه الأطروحة أن تبحث حول آراء الطلاب في مدى تأثير التعلم التعاوني كنهج تعليمي ناجح يتم إتباعه للتغلب على قلق التواصل الشفوي لدى طلاب اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. القلق هو ظاهرة نفسية شائعة لدى طلاب فصل اللغة الانجليزية الذي يترتب عنه صعوبات في التحدث بهذه اللغة. وعلى ضوء هذا، هناك اهتمام متزايد لفهم طبيعة التعلم التعاوني كأسلوب تعليمي يطبق لتخفيف من حدة توتر الطالب عند تفاعله الشفوي مع زملائه. وفقاً لذلك، يهدف البحث لتنمية وعي الطالب بالدور الفعال الذي تؤديه تقنيات التعلم التعاوني في تحسين الأداء الشفوي داخل الفصل و خلق جو

تعليمي خالي من التوتر. بناء على الأسباب المذكورة، تستخدم هذه الدراسة طريقة البحث الكمي التي تجلت من خلال إدارة استبيان لطلاب السنة الثالثة(العدد=70 مأخوذة من 146) في قسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة 8 ماي 1945، قالمة. وفي هذا الصدد، قدمت البيانات التي تم جمعها علاقة إيجابية بين المتغيرين والتي بدورها تؤكد فرضية البحث التي تشير إلى إدراك الطلاب لفعالية التعلم التعاوني في خلق جو يقلل من مستويات القلق من التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يقررون بان تقنيات التعلم التعاوني تحفزهم على المشاركة في أنشطة التواصل الشفوي بشكل مريح و تحسين أداء التحدث في القسم بشكل كبير

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعلم التعاوني، قلق تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية، التواصل الشفهي، التحدث.