

**T.C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**SOURCES OF SPEAKING ANXIETY: EFL TEACHERS'
SUGGESTIONS TO ELIMINATE THESE FACTORS**

MASTER'S THESIS

Özlem TANER UMAÇ

**Department of Foreign Languages Education
English Language Teaching Program**

MARCH, 2025

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(Y2312.021017)**

**Department of Foreign Languages Education
English Language Teaching Program**

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MARCH, 2025

THESIS EXAM REPORT

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..... date anddecision no, the thesis of Özlem Taner Umaç;
whose thesis defense exam was held on 24.03.2025 before the jury members formed
at the meeting no. unanimously* and accepted** decision was made.

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(*) Unanimity/Majority vote will be written in writing.

(**) Acceptance decision will be written in writing.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with the respect that the study “Sources of speaking anxiety: EFL teachers’ suggestions to eliminate these factors”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the process from the project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the References. (24/03/2025)

Özlem TANER UMAÇ

FOREWORD

I am deeply thankful to my thesis advisor Dr. Hülya Yumru for her great direction, support, and patience over this research. This study has been much formed by her careful comments and continuous encouragement. Without her belief in me and her motivation, I would have never been able to complete this process. Apart from my advisors' great mentoring, I want to express my gratitude to Professor Türkey Bulut for the particular attention and care she gives to every student throughout our academic studies. She has always been a wonderful inspiration and a kind of motivator as the Department Head. She reminded me of the power of being a woman and a mother as well as the strength of my line of work all the time.

My family, particularly my father, made me especially happy since he never gave up on me, constantly believed in me even in the most difficult times, and provided continuous inspiration. My dear son Alen has been my lighthouse on this road, my main inspiration. His love, will, and compassion have given me the strength to keep ahead despite all challenges. I want him to know that I struggled a lot during this process, that I wanted to give up many times, but it was his love that kept me going.

A big thanks to my dear, like a daughter, Elçin Şanlı, for always being the one who silenced my worries, rushed to help me whenever I needed, and made me feel better with her presence both in sickness and health.

Finally, I would want to admit my own power and courage in finishing this dream. Managing several obligations—work, study, and motherhood—has not been simple, but this journey has been evidence of my determination.

March, 2025

Özlem TANER UMAÇ

SOURCES OF SPEAKING ANXIETY: EFL TEACHERS' SUGGESTIONS TO ELIMINATE THESE FACTORS

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, when it comes to education and teaching, many challenges may arise. However, when we divide English into skills, it is not difficult to say that students particularly struggle with speaking skills. This study focused on the factors contributing to speaking anxiety at this point. Speaking anxiety can negatively impact language learning by reducing the willingness to speak among students, thus lowering the overall competency. This study examined the most common reasons for speaking anxiety among preparatory class students and teachers' suggestions to overcome these factors. Adopting a mixed-methods research methodology, quantitative information was obtained through the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986) from preparatory school students in a foundation University in İstanbul, Türkiye, while qualitative data were obtained through 10 instructors' semi-structured interviews. Instructors provided suggestions to reduce speaking anxiety. It was found that speaking anxiety stems from different reasons and could be categorized into four groups. The highest score was found in the fear of mistake dimension (3.54). Interviews with instructors identified several major strategies to reduce speaking anxiety. They included the creation of supportive classroom environments, the application of pedagogical approaches that are also communicative, constructive feedback, and the organization of structured speaking activities. Overall, the present research highlighted the importance of both linguistic and psychological factors to lower speaking anxiety effectively. It was suggested in this study that learner-centered teaching approaches can make the learning process less anxiety-prone. The findings may provide valuable suggestions for instructors teaching the subject and curriculum designers to determine measures to reduce anxiety.

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Speaking Anxiety, Classroom Strategies,

Teacher Suggestions



KONUŐMA KAYGISININ KAYNAKLARI: İNGİLİZCEYİ YABANCI DİL OLARAK ÖĐRETEN ÖĐRETMENLERİN BU FAKTÖRLERİ AZALTMAYA YÖNELİK STRATEJİLERİ

ÖZET

Günümüzde İngilizce eğitimi söz konusu olduğunda birçok zorluk ortaya çıkabilmektedir. Ancak, İngilizceyi becerilere ayırdığımızda, öğrencilerin özellikle konuşma becerileri konusunda zorlandığını söylemek zor değildir. Bu çalışma, bu noktada konuşma kaygısına neden olan faktörlere odaklanmış ve İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrenciler arasında en sık karşılaşılan konuşma kaygısı nedenlerini araştırmıştır. Takibinde bu kaygıyı aşmaya yönelik öğretmen önerilerini sunulmuştur. Hem nicel hem de nitel veri kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986) aracılığıyla İstanbul'da bulunan bir vakıf üniversitesinin İngilizce hazırlık programında okuyan öğrencilerin anket sonuçlarından elde edilirken, nitel veriler 10 öğretim görevlisi ile yapılan görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmıştır. Bu çalışma konuşma kaygısının farklı nedenlerden kaynaklandığını ve bu nedenlerin dört ana kategoriye ayrılabilceğini ortaya koymuştur. En yüksek ortalama öğrencilerin hata yapma kaygısı oranında (3.54) çıkmıştır. Öğitmenlerle yapılan görüşmeler, konuşma kaygısını azaltmaya yönelik birkaç önemli strateji ortaya çıkarmış ve bunların bazıları destekleyici sınıf ortamlarının oluşturulması, iletişim odaklı pedagojik yaklaşımların uygulanması, yapıcı geri bildirim sağlanması gibi öneriler olarak bildirilmiştir. Genel olarak, bu araştırma, konuşma kaygısını etkili bir şekilde azaltmak için hem dilbilimsel hem de psikolojik faktörlerin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bulgular, öğrenci merkezli öğretim yaklaşımlarının öğrenme sürecini daha az kaygı verici hale getirebileceğini göstermektedir. Araştırma sonuçları, bu dersi veren öğretmenlere ve müfredat geliştirenlere konuşma kaygısını azaltmaya yönelik stratejiler geliştirme konusunda öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Konuşma Kaygısı, Yabancı Dil Kaygısı, Sınıf Stratejileri,

Öğretmen Önerileri



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AI	: Artificial Intelligence
CLT	: Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	: English as a Foreign Language
ELT	: English Language Teaching
FLA	: Foreign Language Anxiety
FLCA	: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
FLCAS	: Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
L2	: Second Language
SPSS	: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
VR	: Virtual Reality

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Spielberger (1983) describes the term anxiety as “an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by worry”. While anxiety is a natural stress response, too much or chronic anxiety can hinder daily functioning, including learning and academic performance. In educational areas, anxiety shows itself in various forms, including test anxiety, social anxiety, and, particularly, foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety is always a big problem for language acquisition and has been widely studied in recent times to understand its causes, symptoms, and effects. That is why, among its various subtypes, speaking anxiety may seem one of the most challenging obstacles encountered by students. Related to this, in a study by Zhang and Rahimi (2014), while they were studying the corrective feedback and oral communication anxiety, they also highlighted the value of other factors such as linguistic competence, cultural background, and other things about the connection between anxiety and speaking performance. Regarding this, as educators we can not only focus on the anxiety itself and we need to focus also on its reasons. It was again added by Zhang and Rahimi (2014) that psychological and emotional elements have a significant impact on language acquisition in addition to being a cognitive process.

Therefore, in this case, we can accept the fact that the anxiety factor is present in education for some reasons and is it important to investigate this. Many studies conducted so far have shown that anxiety is significant, and this topic has been examined in numerous research studies. However, anxiety cannot be considered by itself only. Higher levels of speaking anxiety may stop learners from effectively using the target language, leading them to avoid spontaneous speaking situations altogether in enjoyment, the enjoyment decreases with increasing anxiety. (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014). This kind of fun enjoyment avoidance creates a self-reinforcing cycle, as limited engagement reduces opportunities for practice, thereby

continuing speech anxiety in the foreign” multiple factors contribute to speaking anxiety, ranging from individual linguistic challenges to broader socio-cultural influences. Suparlan (2021) studied that some major factors of speaking anxiety are being afraid of talking in front of others, and hesitating about the teachers’ reaction. Not having enough self-confidence or individual perspective, limited language proficiency, such as weak vocabulary, pronunciation difficulties, and grammatical uncertainty, can undermine learners’ confidence in their speaking abilities. Additionally, some psychological factors like being criticized by others or evaluation from their friends or any other people, low self-confidence, and students’ expectations of themselves further worsen anxiety. Circumstantial elements also play a role, including dynamics in class, peer expectations, and instructional strategies.

In this aspect, competitive and critical classroom environments can heighten foreign language anxiety, discouraging students from active participation due to fear of making mistakes (Jin et al., 2021). Furthermore, cultural communication norms influence anxiety levels, particularly in societies where confident verbal expression is not a dominant expectation. Research indicates that speaking anxiety can have long-term consequences on students’ overall academic performance and the ability to use targeted language outside the class (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). Learners who experience chronic speaking anxiety may develop negative self-perceptions regarding their language-learning potential, leading to diminished motivation and, in some cases, complete disengagement from language learning. This presents a significant obstacle to language proficiency, as active participation and continuous practice are essential for mastering a new language (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994).

Language anxiety is still the subject of so many studies, but some practical and updated approaches to manage speaking anxiety in EFL settings may remain underexplored. Educators are important factors to make up a supportive and motivational learning settings. Most instructors want to achieve this, but unfortunately, they either cannot fully accomplish their goals on managing these factors or fail to benefit more from each other and their strategies. When we look into the history, with the help of research and experimental studies, it is not difficult to understand that creating a positive classroom climate includes some strategies such as cooperative learning, and emphasizing fluency over accuracy. These can effectively affect the amount of anxiety positively or negatively. Additionally, some

coping mechanisms such as mindfulness and self-regulation techniques can help people lower their anxiety levels. Yet, some of these techniques are not applicable in classroom environments. Thinking of all these reasons for anxiety and strategies, there is still a need for some strategies to cope with this concern in the educational environment. By addressing both the affective and cognitive elements of speaking anxiety, educators can help learners improve in English education.

B. Statement of the Problem

Using English proficiently is an important skill in educational and professional settings in the world. To enable productive interactions in speaking and language proficiency, EFL learners must be proficient in speech use. Despite many years of formal English education, lots of students are unable to use English effectively because of several factors (Horwitz et al., 1986). Such a source of concern can change the way learners approach productive skills like writing and speaking, and may distance us from the intended educational goal. Having taught English speaking for many years, teachers have always noted that learners struggle a lot while learning their English speaking skills. Students have difficulty producing better communication levels, primarily because of believing the fact that they are not confident enough in self-confidence, fear of public humiliation, inferiority complexes, or fear of criticism (Pan and Lou, 2023). Such mental blockages prevent learners from engaging in productive verbal interactions, thereby slowing their acquisition process.

A significant problem while learning a new language is also being afraid of making mistakes and getting a negative judgment from one's peers or educators. (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). In most educational systems, such as in our country, there is a heavy emphasis in language learning on rules of grammar over communicative proficiency. As a result, learners become used to have a strict use of rules when they are learning, this makes them more anxious when applying language in real situations. Perfectionism can discourage risk-taking in language use, again reinforcing anxiety and avoidance behavior (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). Additionally, cultural and pedagogical contexts also condition students' confidence in speech situations. (Dörnyei, 2005). Learning environments that place more emphasis on competitive examinations and official assessments in place of

interactive learning can generate more speech anxiety. Lack of exposure to situations of unprepared speech also worsens the condition, making students incapable of dealing in situations of actual communication. Social expectations of English proficiency also place a burden on learners' shoulders, making them more self-conscious of their capabilities and discouraging their willingness to interact in speech situations. (Liu and Jackson, 2008).

As EFL instructors, it is widely accepted that there is a set of various explanations of speaking anxiety in the literature. ELT instructors are concerned primarily about the reasons why students feel anxious in speaking, even though many of these are highly documented, there is a question of which of these hinders communication most. Consequently, this study attempted to investigate suggestions presented by instructors based on student responses to the problem.

Both student and teacher perceptions can provide a complete picture and enable specific solutions to be developed (Horwitz et al., 1986). Even though almost all educators are aware of this fact, they are still in need of finding better ways to reduce this kind of anxiety. If students are not guided in this regard, they may manage to speak, but not in the intended way. In this study, it was aimed to find variables of EFL learners' speech anxiety and examine potential pedagogical strategies to lessen its effects. By identifying the root causes of anxiety and evaluating classroom-centered strategies, this study may provide practical guidance to educators to structure a more motivational and self-assurance-inducing learning environment. The findings of this work would be integrated into the present data on this anxiety and guide instructional strategies that allow more fluency and self-assurance in speech in English.

C. Research Questions

In this study it was aimed to identify the sources of speaking anxiety among EFL students' and gather EFL instructors' recommendations for lessening these factors. In line with these aims the following questions guide the study:

1. What are the sources of speaking anxiety from EFL students' perspective?
2. What strategies do EFL teachers suggest to eliminate these sources of speaking anxiety?

D. Significance of the Study

Anxiety is a big problem especially while teaching a new language. In these days, there are a lot of studies researching its effects on language learners. As it can be seen from the previous research, among the most important challenges of EFL learners is speech anxiety, in the form of nervousness, fear, or discomfort when required to use English to interact, more often in front of their peers or instructors. Many students feel nervous to participate in speaking activities because it is thought to be the most difficult part of learning a language.

Such excessive anxiety discourages learners from accepting communication-oriented exercises, as an obstruction to their language proficiency and self-confidence. Anxiety has a direct bearing on learning a new language in that highly anxious learners find it hard to produce an understandable speech, hesitate to put their thoughts into practice, or even withdraw from situations that require spontaneous speech. Avoidance behavior is a self-reinforcing process that causes students to use the language less frequently, limit exposure and practice, which in turn raises their anxiety and lowers their confidence. In time, this process yields low motivation and slower language learning.

Most first-year students are at high levels of anxiety when they have just started their education year in a prep program or their first year. When asked to speak in front of others, they hesitate or start showing psychological reactions. Several factors may have contributed to this situation, such as their educational background, socio-cultural background, and level of English. They may feel all alone when it comes to produce something in a very new environment and among new friends. Other external variables like teachers' attitudes, classroom dynamics, or atmosphere could be other reasons. A criticizing instructor, disapproving criticism from their peers, or a judgmental classroom mood also increase anxiety, making students shy away from speech practice. Cultural backgrounds also intervene; in many societies, open or assertive speech is not accepted, making speech in a foreign language even more intimidating to those from shy backgrounds.

Whatever the curriculum implements in some educational places, it is still a need to find out ways to lower speaking anxiety. Educators are the hearth of determining such new strategies as it was mentioned before, many teachers may not

be able to get the necessary resources or professional development to show better ways to their students overcome this anxiety. This is a reflection of the need to discover the origin of speaking anxiety and skill strategies to enhance students' confidence and their proficiency in speaking accordingly. By encouraging instructional approaches, such as anxiety-reducing class activities, personalized corrective feedback, and confidence-building exercises, teachers guide their students to get rid of this fear and to become proficient in using English in communication. In conclusion, EFL speech anxiety is a serious learning problem that affects learners' willingness to speak, language proficiency, and learning in general. The challenge of overcoming it requires a better understanding of its reasons and the use of informed approaches that facilitate a more inclusive learning environment that fosters confidence for language learners. By doing so, instructors can help learners stop the anxiety avoidance, eventually leading them to have a better English level and comfort.

E. Key Concepts and Definitions

- a) **Speaking Anxiety:** McCroskey (1977) described communication anxiety as the amount of worry while talking to another group of people or individual.
- b) **EFL:** stands for English as a foreign Language teaching and learning.
- c) **FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale):** A validated instrument to determine the anxiety level in foreign language classrooms. (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986).
- d) **ELT (English Language Teaching):** the instruction of English to foreign language learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety when it comes to speaking is a serious difficulty for English language learners in their effort to become proficient in interacting in a well-qualified way. Mainly because of self-created proficiency problems, many students experience nervousness when speaking in a different language, particularly in public. (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986) This literature review was focused on the causes of speaking anxiety, its impact on language learning, and evidence-based strategies.

A. Speaking Anxiety in English as a Foreign Language

The use of the English language is the main component of educational systems all around the world. This is more common in countries where the language is not predominantly used, as English is essential for education and global communication (Crystal, 2003). These learners need to be proficient in the language. As well as making quick dialogue possible, speaking helps other language skills (Brown, 2000). However, most English language learners state they tend to sense nervousness and worry whenever called to speak in front of anyone else (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). Moreover, most learners also suffer from learning and speaking English at the same time once. Stress to perform in class for language learning is a primary factor in this condition (Young, 1991). Learners can be extremely hesitant in practicing speech exercises due to fears of criticism or judgment by educators or their peers. (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). The effect is easy to see in cultures that put a high value on and deeply monitor school work (Tsiplakides and Keramida, 2009). Especially in foreign nations, this issue has been compounded by the English educational system's excessive focus on grammar in the presence of speech. Lack of practice in speech tends to be an outcome of the previous system's too much focus on grammar. The students may perceive speaking in public difficult despite the plenty of chances to practice, most likely caused by nervousness and fear of embarrassment (MacIntyre, 1995). The students find it hard to develop their public speech skills in such a high-stress study environment.

The four primary areas, founded on the Horwitz Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), include test anxiety, comparison of self to others, fear of negative evaluation, and self-perceived proficiency. How people perceive that they can use a second language can be defined as self-perceived proficiency and plays a significant role in how self-confident they are when speaking in public. Receiving negative evaluations from others, which discourages students from class discussions, can be defined as fear of negative evaluation. Fear in front of others, also known as communication anxiety, is an issue among EFL learners. In testing instances for language teaching, a specific kind of anxiety known as Test Anxiety, which affects performance and learning outcomes, stands out. (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986).

The theory of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) was first introduced by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986). FLCA includes anxiety in talking to others, exam anxiety, and a fear of poor ratings, as stated above. As it has been researched many times, various variables that result in speaking anxiety in EFL learners have been confirmed in studies. These can be categorized as insecurity, language barriers, cultural differences, and a fear of receiving a poor rating. As a point of evidence, it was studied by Young (1991) that speaking anxiety is highly related to the fear of having wrong outcomes or of being judged by the other learners and educators.

Cultural differences also impact anxiety, such as differences in expectations and style of communication (Tsui, 1996). The use of positive reinforcement, providing a low-anxiety classroom environment, and using communicative language learning methods are a few of the new methods of lowering speaking anxiety. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) highlighted lowering the anxiety while speaking in classroom. Also, reducing anxiety and helping learner confidence is also achieved using communicative activities that allow learner cooperation and participation (Koch and Terrell, 1991). To determine the anxious learners and apply strategies to help them get over their fear, educators play a crucial role.

Teachers should also be agreed to signs of anxiety and support their students accordingly, as recommended by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994). Also Koch and Terrell (1991) suggested that to reduce anxiety and facilitate a learning-friendly environment, educators can apply a range of instructional strategies such as providing explicit instruction, offering regular feedback, and applying peer support.

In a different study, it was mentioned that the use of speech in EFL classrooms was found to be regarded as the source that causes most anxiety (Zhang and Zhong,2012). In the following paragraphs, more was discussed in detail.

B. Reasons of Anxiety

Understanding the causes of anxiety which contribute to speaking anxiety is important for teachers and researchers to apply innovative ways that reduce it and foster a supportive learning environment. This section explained the factors that contributed to speaking anxiety, by highlighting their impact on language learning and possible solutions to help learners overcome these challenges.

1. Self-Perceived Proficiency

According to Okyar (2023), self-perceived proficiency is related to speaking anxiety. Also, Lockley (2013) emphasized that this communication competence is vital to show willingness in communication. Mercer et al also (2012) defined self-assessment as the perceived language ability that one thinks about himself or herself. Some research indicates a high opposite connection between self-assessed proficiency in language use and speaking anxiety. However, Kitano (2001) found that self-perceived speaking ability did not interact with the ability in students. Therefore, it is not always supported by every research, yet mostly self-assessment is likely to be a self-reinforcing process in that increased anxiety serves to lower self-assessed proficiency, negatively affecting language use.

Macintyre, Noels, and Clément (1997) found that worried learners expect too much of their language proficiency, increasing their anxiety and slow down their use of language. Similarly, Sparks and Ganschow (1991) found that poor attitude, lack of motivation, or excessive anxiety, are possibly the outcome of insufficiencies of effective management of learners' first language, even if they are undoubtedly connected with FL learning difficulty. Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) emphasized the role of motivating feedback to elevate self-assessment of students and lower anxiety. Although it is not specifically identified in this study that instructors' feedback is helpful, external feedback may be helpful in defining self-assessed ability. Instructors' and students' strength can increase self-confidence of students and hence lower their anxiety levels.

Effective coping strategies can neutralize the impact of self-rated proficiency in causing anxiety in speaking. Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) found that students' need for help-seeking behavior and self-reassurance tended to cope better with anxiety and boost their proficiency. By looking at all these studies, educators need to be concerned about their students' emotional development and coping mechanisms in addition to their language skills. Such dynamics are still being investigated in recent research. For instance, Okyar (2023) examined Turkish EFL learners and discovered a link between speech anxiety and self-rated oral proficiency, stating that the two had an opposing effect on one another. Similarly, a study by Kelsen (2019) highlighted the connection between anxiety and individual differences in learning contexts by examining the impact of personality traits and self-rated open speech ability on public speech anxiety in EFL presentations.

2. Self-Comparison to Others

Comparing oneself to others has a big impact on speaking anxiety as well. Students frequently feel inadequate and become more anxious when they contrast their skills with those of their friends, especially when they focused on their self-attention. (Daly, Vangelisti and Lawrence, 1989). Competitive classroom environments may worsen these feelings, increase stress levels, and discourage the students from participating in speaking exercises.

Bailey (1983) identified that learners in highly competitive situations show high levels of anxiety and therefore perform badly. Even though this study highlighted the speaking anxiety, students mostly have tendency to show anxiety in writing, which is also a productive skill. Such competitive stress is mainly highly noted in the case of speaking activities in which performance is immediately visible and open to criticism from the others and teachers. Similarly, Price (1991) identified that learners who always compared their quality of public speaking with that of others experienced higher levels of anxiety and decreased self-efficacy. Moreover, Williams and Andrade (2008) demonstrated competitive classroom situations can be reasons for learners' fear of getting poor results, which is caused by nervousness during the performance of speaking activities.

Dweck (2006) introduced the Growth Mindset Theory, which shows that people who believe in their ability to improve through effort and practice experience

lower levels of anxiety. By looking at these scenarios encouraging students to adopt a growth mentality can help them lead language learning with flexibility, it may reduce the negative effects of self-comparison, and develop a sense of progress over competition. To reduce the impact of self-comparison, teachers should apply cooperative learning strategies that will give learners a sense of collective achievement rather than individual competition. Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) highlighted the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies where students work together to achieve common goals. Not only does it reduce anxiety, but it also enhances voluntary participation by creating more positive and inclusive environments. As it is already known by educators, cooperative learning promotes support among students. Learners can view language learning as collaborative rather than individual. In order to enable students, follow their own development instead of comparing it to others, educators should also employ scaffolder practices. The idea that learning is an ongoing process and it is specific to each student can be strengthened by different strategies. Teachers can refocus students' attention from competitiveness to a strong emphasis on personal development. Positive educational strategies that recognize learning success should also be a part of classroom interventions, according to research by Yan et al. (2020). Giving students feedback that emphasizes their strengths rather than their grades might increase their self-esteem. This increases to participate in speaking activities and lessens the pressure of self-comparison. Overall, reducing self-comparison anxiety requires a better approach that integrates cooperative learning, aims development, and positive reinforcement. By reorganization of classroom dynamics to minimize competition and emphasizing individual progress,

3. Test Anxiety

According to Phillips (1992), when students are anxious, the results of those students are mostly worse in their oral tests than their less worried classmates. By looking at this research, we cannot deny the fact that, exam or test situations can make students more stressed-out. Anxiety can be important by the pressure to do well and the worry of being assessed, both of which have an impact on performance. Test anxiety was recognized by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) as a key component of FLCA, emphasizing its importance on language learners.

The connection between speaking performance and test anxiety was mentioned in several studies. Salehi and Marefat (2014) stated that test anxiety negatively affects learners' speaking performance in EFL environments, supporting this conclusion. Speaking exam performance can be severely affected by psychological reactions to test anxiety, such as fast breathing and negative self-criticism. The fear of performance in test situations can also lead to avoidance behaviors, where students deliberately avoid speaking activities to escape the anxiety associated with them. Highly nervous students frequently avoid speaking tasks, which blocks their language development and only serves to increase their anxiety, according to research by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002). Because of this avoidance behavior, it is difficult for students to get better at speaking. Creating a supportive testing setting is necessary. Instructors can use various strategies, such as friendly and fun exercises, giving some space to talk, not focusing on the mistakes, but focusing on the progress and attempts. According to research by Tsui (1996), these techniques can greatly lower exam anxiety in students and enhance their speaking abilities. Furthermore, sometimes using natural assessment strategies works better on students' performances, natural feedback can make students more engaged. It has also been demonstrated that test anxiety may be effectively managed with cognitive-behavioral approaches. According to research by Chan and Wu (2004), elementary students feel more anxious if they are in such a competitive game, tests, or their studies; they also showed that teachers' awareness was not enough. By looking at these, overall anxiety levels could be decreased with the help of an optimistic approach.

4. Making Mistakes

Learners' beliefs in making mistakes also define their speech anxiety. As shown by Subekti (2018), being afraid of making mistakes and getting a poor evaluation is one of the reasons for speech anxiety for learners. The majority of the students believe that mistakes constitute failure and not a natural process of learning. (Horwitz et al., 1986) also stated that anxiety is caused by failure, such a belief brings about more anxiety and resistance to speech activities, and it may stop learning. Horwitz (1988) high anxiety learners generally concern themselves with error in speech, particularly in a public or testing context. Perfectionist learners hold that their speech generation must be errorless, causing self-imposed stress and

perfect speech. Consequently, their potential to produce speech spontaneously and without self-control is nothing to their language proficiency improvement. Rather than perceiving speech to be a vehicle for practicing and learning, such learners concern themselves more with error, leading to hesitation and avoidance strategies.

In addition to an individual's perfectionist character, speaking anxiety with the fear of making mistakes is important. In most cultures, errors or mistakes are perceived more as a mark of incompetence rather than a natural process of learning. Speaking anxiety was clearer in students in those cultures that highly value precision and correctness (Tsui, 1996). These students may feel that mistakes are not acceptable. In educational systems that favor memorization learning and standardized examinations, students can learn that mistakes are not tolerated, which makes their anxiety over error even stronger. (Young, 1991). For example, in some cultures like ours, learners feel too much pressure to be accurate in language learning since speech correction is dominant in such cultures. The threat of public correction or laughter can hold them back from responding in class. However, in some other cultures, grammar or linguistic abilities are not seen as something vital. These kinds of students in these cultures may feel more comfortable and may produce more friendly conversations due to not focusing on their mistakes.

To address anxiety resulting from a fear of making mistakes, it is also important to establish a setting that encourages taking risks and perceives mistakes as a normal process in learning. Instructors also play a crucial role in their students' conceptions of mistakes. Dörnyei (2001) put forward a range of strategies to establish a more encouraging learning environment, such as providing constructive criticism, in place of criticizing just for correctness and added educators can point to students' attempts at communication and give constructive criticism that stimulates improvement over discouragement of participation. The educators can also demonstrate that mistakes occur in learning by telling their own learning experiences of learning a language. Asking students to be concerned with their effort and willingness to communicate more than their fluent performance can help to decrease anxiety.

Additionally, helping to redefine mistakes can also positively boost their confidence. Learners that accepted mistakes as a basic learning process felt a lower anxiety and inclined to be more active in speech activities (Gregersen and MacIntyre,

2014). By conversing with their learners about the role of mistakes in learning a skill, educators can help their learners shift their mindset from viewing mistakes as failure to viewing mistakes as a stepping point towards improvement.

5. Cultural Expectations and Communication Norms

Cultural background is the cause of the self-confidence of learners to communicate in English. It is studied by Tsui (1996) that in cultures in the region of East Asia, where academic achievements are greatly valued, students are more apprehensive when speaking for fear that they will make mistakes and shame themselves publicly.

6. Classroom Environment and Teacher Influence

The classroom learning environment is also a determining factor in improving students' speaking confidence. MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) explained that a cognitive learning environment that is also supportive, minimizes speaking anxiety. Instructors applying positive reinforcement, communicative language instruction (CLT) methods, and cooperative learning strategies can significantly reduce students' fear of speaking (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). In addition, Koch and Terrell (1991) identified that interactive strategies may help learners' speaking confidence with group work to lower individual pressure.

C. Instructor-Learner Interaction

It can be said that instructor–learner interaction could be a reason or result of learning. When students have a good connection with their instructors, they mostly produce expected outcomes. However, in such situations, when they do not feel confident in their instructors, they may feel more hesitant and cannot speak confidently. Some instructional approaches, classroom dynamics, and instructor behavior can unintentionally generate a learning environment in which learners feel intimidated, judged, or apprehensive to speak. (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1991; Dörnyei, 2001) The following are main ways in which instructor-learner interaction can be a cause of speaking anxiety.

1. Strict and Formal Learning Environment

A firm, highly formal learning environment intimidates students and discourages them from taking part in speech activities. Subekti (2018) confirmed that students become more anxious when their instructors maintain strict rules, high expectations, and a strict set of rules in class. The learning environment increases students' fear of making mistakes, making them shy away from speech.

2. Fear of Instructors' Negative Assessment

Students often become anxious due to fear of being judged by their instructors. For example, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), fear of negative assessment mostly stems from the teachers' talking way that is closer to perfect speech and classmates. Young (1991) also supported that idea by focusing on the reasons why students are unwilling to take part in class activities, he claims that it's a fear of making mistakes. With this information in hand, the fear of being judged negatively by educators or friends brings low self-confidence and avoidance behavior.

3. Classroom Procedures and Surprise Speaking Assignments

Speaking activities like cold calling, calling a student to talk without a warm-up, can elevate state anxiety to a high level. Indrawati, Yunus, and Zakinah (2022) found that students felt anxious, lost concentration, and showed poor fluency when unexpectedly called to speak in class. When speaking classes are done in an unprepared way, the anxiety becomes unavoidable.

4. Overcorrection and Focus on Errors

In some educational settings, instructors expect too much from their students. Instructors who put a great emphasis on grammar on fluency can also trigger their student's anxiety level. To avoid these kind of corrections, this study intended to find out strategies from new generation instructors. The focus on correct pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary errors created insecurity in students in their speech, reinforcing avoidance strategies.

5. Lack of Supportive Feedback

Encouragement and constructive criticism help to ease speech anxiety. However, it was noted that when educators fail to encourage, their students become more anxious and reluctant to speak in class. For example, Dewaele et al. (2018) explained that positive attitudes of teachers, including encouragement and constructive feedback, significantly reduced students' second language anxiety, whereas the absence of such support led to increased anxiety and reluctance to participate in class. Educators who fail to give effort recognition and only indicate mistakes can unintentionally cause their students to avoid speech activities.

6. High Expectations and Speaking Performance Pressure

When an instructor is unrealistically demanding in fluency and precision, learners feel anxious when making speeches. Wang (2023) confirmed that when learners felt that their instructors were demanding and perfectionist, they felt a lack of self-confidence and avoided public speech.

D. Types of Anxiety

Nervousness or anxiety are well-known factors that affect learners in different aspects of life, especially language learning. It can impede their performance, lower confidence, and create barriers against effective communication. This section provides an overview of anxiety types, highlighting their significance in language learning and students' academic performance.

1. Trait Anxiety

Trait anxiety, a stable characteristic, influences individuals making them feel anxious across various situations, and it is believed as a component of characteristic. (Spielberger, 1983). In language learning, this continuous anxiety affects focus and engagement, even in low-pressure situations. Learners with high characteristic anxiety often take neutral or routine classroom tasks as threatening, worsening their fear (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Young (1990) stated that when students perceived ability taken into consideration speech anxiety shows itself most. Chronic constant thinking of negative perceived failures is common, leading learners to focus on past errors rather than present opportunities. A study on genders and language

anxiety by Novak (2024) showed that FLA scores were highly correlated with self-rated English ability, pronunciation ability, and use of English for both males and females. FLA was also related to the period for which the females were studying English, but no such association was found for the male group. However, the most predictive factor for males was the use of English, while for females it was the self-rated pronunciation ability. In this context, we can say that the intensity of anxiety among students differs concerning some factors, either gender-based or gender-neutral. However, the core reason, as may already be seen, cannot be the gender; it can also be the person by itself.

Socially, trait anxiety continues to limit learners' interactions with peers and instructors. According to Worde (1998), trait anxiety is unquestionably a chronic condition that is seen as a component of personality. Therefore, it can still be restated that anxiety is seen as an ongoing personality characteristic that reflects an overall tendency to react anxiously in a variety of circumstances. As McIntyre suggested (2017) trait anxiety tends to be stay the same in different settings. Researches show that depending on the conditions or not people feel anxious, and in educational settings it still needs to be explored. Trait anxiety is a part of peoples' characteristic so it can't be thought apart from peoples' personality. A study by Fallah (2017) highlighted the results of the students' speaking activities' output which was shaped by state and trait anxiety can affect their mindfulness in a negative way since they are mostly worried. It can be said that individualized approaches can effectively lessen the long-term impacts of trait anxiety, this study may highlight it by getting the suggestions from instructors.

2. State Anxiety

State anxiety, short-term emotional response to specific situations, is particularly during difficult academic tasks such as oral presentations or exams. Different from trait anxiety, state anxiety is coming with a changing situation and it is a kind of reaction to only that time. Naser and Nijr (2019) stated that this anxiety is a kind of reaction for a person who thinks that risky situations are ahead. For example, Rajan and Patel (2022) found that EFL learners with heightened state anxiety struggled with verbal working memory tasks, particularly when responding to unfamiliar prompts. This cognitive situation often results in fragmented speech and hesitations, and undermines overall communication effectiveness. Emotionally,

state anxiety provokes intense fear and self-doubt, particularly during evaluative scenarios. anxiety levels than those presenting in live settings. This phenomenon was attributed to the potential of recorded mistakes, which increased the fear of judgment. Social interactions are also disrupted by state anxiety, particularly in group work. Additionally, Marvan (2016) explained that if a learner is in the middle of a class and doesn't understand the teachers' words, he/she may trigger this anxiety. by looking at all those researches there is still need for the lowering this type of concern in education

3. Situational Anxiety

Situational anxiety, which occurs in specific situations (Spielberger, 1966), can be seen in oral exams, spontaneous presentations in class settings. Despite being temporary, this kind of anxiety can significantly affect performance and participation in education. A Kassem (2021) investigated the challenges faced by students in speaking and writing due to anxiety, exposure, and linguistic factors, and stated that speaking causes the most situational anxiety, and writing also causes anxiety but to a lesser extent. Interestingly, task sequencing was found to facilitate fluency in writing and to reduce anxiety, which shows that structured approaches can help reduce speaking anxiety as well. Debates can also build written and oral skills by increasing motivation and reducing communication apprehension. Since writing is also a productive skill, it contributes to one's language development. It was shown by the research conducted by Abdi Tabari and Goetze (2024) that the simple-to-complex group performed the best in the writing activities. The complex-to-simple group was better than the random group in accuracy, vocabulary complexity, and fluency. Over time, all participants improved their writing, and those in the simple-to-complex group felt less anxious and enjoyed the tasks more. Both speaking and writing are productive skills, and thus situational anxiety can impact the learners' performances in both skills. This study shows that task sequencing can not only reduce anxiety in writing but can also have implications for the management of speaking anxiety because lower stress and greater involvement can lead to overall language production.

These findings underlined the necessity of gradual exposure to tasks and scaffolding to lessen the situational anxiety. Behaviorally, situational anxiety often reveals in visible signs such as hesitancy, trembling, or withdrawal from

participation. Since it is a kind of anxiety which cannot be controlled and can come in various situations, this also needs to be overcome in class conditions. It never disappears from one's life but it can be seen in different situations. For example, in a study 2022 study Zhang, Warner and Mao stated International students are the ones who come from a new country with a language and cultural background on their shoulders, not those who were born in the US or any other country.

As it can be understood from this study, in this kind of cultural barrier, when it comes to speaking in new cultures and societies or classrooms, public speaking is not easy for those students. Efforts to address situational anxiety among English language learners have largely focused on minimizing unpredictability. A study by Kahlon et al. (2023) stated the efficiency of immersive virtual reality as a tool for providing structured environments where learners can practice public speaking. These kinds of strategies or technological approaches can help reduce situational anxiety. Participants who engaged in VR-based exposure therapy reported a notable reduction in anxiety, which explains the potential of innovative technologies in anxiety-related challenges.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

The research plan, data collection tools, and participant details of the study were described in this part.

B. Research Design

The objective of this research was to establish the reasons for speaking anxiety in the context of EFL and teachers' recommendations for such reasons. The study approach was selected to acquire a close-up picture of how teachers' or any other factors impact the students. Besides, educators' recommendations were incorporated in the findings' discussion and likely implications for future studies. To obtain more detailed and comprehensive results, this study used a mixed-method design that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques (Creswell and Creswell, 2018 p, 198). The survey was distributed among EFL learners to analyze their self-assessed level of proficiency, concern about negative assessment in the testing context, and making mistakes and their comparison with others. A survey was applied in order to analyze speech anxiety levels. To acquire a more definite picture, semi-structured interviews were also done with EFL teachers to acquire their observations regarding learners' speaking anxiety and pedagogic approaches applied to assist the learners. The qualitative approach provided a view about how instructor personality, corrective feedback, instructional approaches, and classroom management impact the willingness of the learners to speak. Dörnyei (2007) explains that focus group interviews with teachers can provide a clearer view of classroom dynamics and instructional approaches applied in order to reduce speaking anxiety.

C. Participants

This study includes 93 Preparatory School students from a Foundation University in the fall term of the academic year. The convenience sampling method was employed in participant selection, one of the most used methods of sampling in second language education studies. Dörnyei (2007) describes convenience sampling as a method of participant selection in terms of practical convenience in terms of geographical closeness, convenience of access, or willingness to participate. Similarly, Etikan et al. (2016) cited Dörnyei's (2007) definition of convenience sampling—that is, the selection of target population participants who are readily available, geographically close, or easily accessible at an appropriate time. When time limits or logistical difficulties make random sampling impossible, this approach is especially helpful since it allows researchers to obtain significant findings even with possible limitations.

The students in this study were from different departments, from Nursing, Psychology, Medicine, to Engineering, and were of pre-intermediate level proficiency in English. As a university preparatory school program, these students receive 27 hours of education in English per week, under the needs of the syllabus of the program. There are approximately 18-19 pre-intermediate level students in every class. The research was administered after the first term of the academic year, to enable students to make healthier and more reliable decisions about their perspective of English. Participants' ages are between 18 and 22 years old. In addition to student participants, there were also 10 volunteer EFL instructors selected to be interviewed via semi-structured interviews. These ten different instructors at a prep school answered interview questions related to the student survey results. The survey measured sources of students' speaking anxiety. Instructors tried to give suggestions on how to eliminate them. There were four open-ended questions in the interviews, presented in the appendices (see Appendix 3). To have high standards of ethics in research, participants were explained in detail the reasoning of this study and their respective roles in the research process. Also, instructors were explained in clear terms that their participation was voluntary to maintain transparency and adherence to ethical principles.

D. Data Collection Instruments

In this section, instruments of data collection were explained in detail throughout the study. Mixed-method research design was adopted.

1. Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

The first instrument for gathering data Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) in 1986. (see the Appendices 1). As it was stated in the study by Sharkawy (2019), the items in the survey are categorized into four subcategories: Self-perceived proficiency, Self-comparison to others and competitiveness, exam, and making mistakes. Horwitz (1986, p. 129) stated that the pilot testing of the FLCAS students from Spain at the University of Texas showed high reliability and validity. FLCAS's internal reliability score was Cronbach's alpha value of .93; over eight weeks, test-retest reliability produced a $r = .83$ ($p = .001$). Panayides and Walker (2013) also validated FLCAS for EFL learners among Cypriot high school students. Their study demonstrated that the remaining 28 items formed a scale with only one dimension with excellent reliability following the elimination of five items that were contrary to the Rasch Rating Scale model. These results confirm the FLCAS's reliability over several student groups. In this study, the Turkish translated version was used to ensure that participants, who are not native English speakers, understood the survey items properly, thus reducing potential understanding problems. The translated questionnaire form from English to Turkish is adapted from Dalkılıç's (2001) research on the *Role of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety in English Speaking Courses*. The questionnaire was used in Turkish by the researcher, and its internal reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, giving a score of .90.

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

The following instrument employed to obtain data in the study was the semi-structured interviews. There were ten EFL instructors. The interviews were done with instructors and written fully to guarantee precision in documenting their viewpoints. A thematic analysis was conducted employing an inductive coding method to determine repeating patterns and put results into important themes. The comments were carefully reviewed several times to familiarize with the data. Main

ideas and commonly referenced subjects received the initial codes, allowing methodical categorization of answers. The codes were then categorized into general themes reflecting the participants' concerns. There were Turkish and foreign instructors who come from different educational backgrounds.

For example, responses regarding students' self-doubt, lack of confidence, and anxiety about their language skills were categorized in Self-Perceived Proficiency Anxiety. Responses regarding students' self-comparison with their classmates, competition anxiety, and measurement of their learning were categorized in self-comparison. Descriptions regarding students' anxiety about failing in tests, assessment stress, and general exam anxiety were put in the category of test anxiety. Responses that conveyed students' anxiety about mistakes, their response to criticism from teachers and others, and their viewpoint about the effect of mistakes in learning were collected in the category Beliefs About Making Mistakes. The thematic categorization, in this manner, provided a systematic framework for teachers' views regarding speaking anxiety among students. Thematic analysis is still a reachable method to analyze qualitative data. (Braun and Clarke 2006), This helped in the correct measurement of the data and systematic integration of teachers' views in the study.

E. Data Analysis Procedure

Speaking anxiety was quantitatively measured with Horwitz's (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). The responses were imported into an Excel file, and the data was analyzed using SPSS 29.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Qualitative information was collected through semi-structured interviews with ten volunteer EFL teachers once the survey results were analyzed. In addition, interview information that was collected qualitatively from EFL teachers analyzed using descriptive analysis. Descriptive analysis, offered by Elo and Kyngas (2008), is a method that is usable with both qualitative or quantitative information with inductive or deductive approaches depending on the type of survey. Descriptive analysis was used to systematically explain the observations made by the teachers regarding the anxiety in speaking among the students and proposed means to lessen it.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Introduction

This section consists of two main components, which are quantitative (Section 4.2) and qualitative (Section 4.3) findings. The former is the first part that involves the analysis of the quantitative data from the scale-based (FLCAS) survey, while the latter section is about evaluating the qualitative information obtained from semi-structured interviews with the instructors.

B. Findings of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

The results were classified and analyzed in four categories, which are as follows: Self-Perceived Proficiency, Self-Comparison to Others and Competitiveness, Fear of Performance in Test Situation, and Learners' Beliefs About Making Mistakes in English Class.

Table 1. Correspondence of FLCAS Items to Causes of Speaking Anxiety

Categories	Frequency of Items	Number of Items
self-perceived proficiency	9	1, 11, 14, 17, 18, 22, 27, 28, 32
self-comparison to others and competitiveness	12	5, 7, 9, 13, 15, 16, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 31
fear of performance in test situation	5	3, 8, 10, 21, 30
beliefs about making mistakes in English class	7	2, 4, 6, 12, 19, 29, 33

1. Findings on Learners' Self-Perceived Proficiency

The analysis of responses to FLCAS Items 1, 11, 14, 17, 18, 22, 27, 28, and 32 tells us much about how well students feel they can speak English, a key determinant in how their language learning path is shaped overall. The findings indicate to a pattern of increased worry and self-doubt, which may have important implications for instructional practices and in preparatory English programs.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Self-Perceived Proficiency

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English class.	5(5.4%)	11 (11.8%)	22 (23.7%)	23 (24.7%)	32 (34.4%)
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes.	35 (37.6%)	24 (25.8%)	15 (16.1%)	14 (15.1%)	5(5.4%)
14. I wouldn't be nervous speaking English with native speakers.	31 (33.3%)	26 (28.0%)	9(9.7%)	16 (17.2%)	11 (11.8%)
17. I often feel like not going to English class.	5(5.4%)	12 (12.9%)	11 (11.8%)	22 (23.7%)	43 (46.2%)
18. I feel confident when I speak in English class.	37 (39.8%)	21 (22.6%)	19 (20.4%)	12 (12.9%)	4(4.3%)
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.	7(7.5%)	16 (17.2%)	17 (18.3%)	25 (26.9%)	28 (30.1%)
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English class.	7(7.5%)	16 (17.2%)	18 (19.4%)	19 (20.4%)	33 (35.5%)
28. When I am on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	31 (33.3%)	24 (25.8%)	17 (18.3%)	13 (14.0%)	8(8.6%)
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.	35 (37.6%)	19 (20.4%)	16 (17.2%)	16 (17.2%)	7(7.5%)

Findings from Item 1 reveal that a large majority of learners' experience uncertainty. As it is seen in Table 2 above, the 32 participants are unsure about their speaking skills in English. In comparison, only 5.4% strongly disagreed, indicating that few students are consistently certain. These data indicate that many students lack confidence in speaking English. Similarly, Item 17 shows a high level of anxiety-related avoidance. Almost 70 % of the students agreed with this statement when combined, indicating that a considerable percentage of students are hesitant to attend English classes, maybe due to perceived deficiencies in speaking skills. Also, the reason behind the high unwillingness to attend classes could be the upcoming final exams of the students.

In Table 2, Item 11 provides an indirect measure of anxiety. While 35 students, which is 37.6%, strongly disagreed, indicating that a large proportion of students find English lectures difficult, 24 students, 25.8%, disagreed or were neutral, possibly indicating a lack of strong emotional engagement in this setting. These findings are consistent with findings in other items, indicating that emotional responses, particularly anxiety, vary among individuals. Item 27 emphasizes the effect of anxiety on students. 35.5% strongly agreed, with another 20.4% agreeing, shows that most of the students are confused and nervous when they try to speak English. These findings support the argument that students' nervousness often makes it hard for them to communicate effectively in class.

In Table 2, the findings of item 18 correlates with the high anxiety seen in the other items. While more than 62 % disagreed, only a few were optimistic, with 12.9% agreeing and 4.3% strongly agreeing. This shows that, whereas a small

percentage of students consider themselves to be confident speakers, the vast majority lack confidence, particularly when dealing with classmates or teachers. Item 22 elicits a variety of responses regarding preparation. While 30.1% strongly agreed, indicating that some students are under less pressure to prepare, 17.2% disagreed, and 18.3% were undecided, showing variation in perceived preparation levels. This finding could imply that preparation levels are closely linked to individual self-assessments of competency and confidence.

Item 28 reveals that the majority of students' approach English class feeling anxiety or a lack of confidence. As shown in Table 2 above, more than half of the participants (59.1%) disagree, indicating that they are not sure or relaxed before attending class. This suggests that for many learners, expectation of English class may be associated with anxiety or negative anticipations, which could reflect their prior experiences, fear of evaluation, or low self-perceived proficiency. Item 32 also reveals anxiety in communicating in English. While 37.6% strongly disagreed, and 20.4% disagreed, suggesting that a majority feel discomfort in such communications, a minority of students expressed comfort (17.2% agreeing and 7.5% strongly agreeing). These findings might reveal that communication with native speakers is perceived as specifically challenging for most learners, likely due to self-comparisons and fear of making mistakes. Also, item 14 highlights a high level of anxiety in these settings. 33.3% strongly disagreed, and 28.0% disagreed, shows that a majority of participants feel anxious when communicating with native speakers. A minority (17.2% agreed, and 11.8% strongly agreed) feels less nervous, suggesting that while some learners have developed a degree of comfort, but the overall tendency points toward high anxiety. In short, the results show that students' self-perceived English proficiency is strongly correlated with anxiety, feeling nervous, and lack of confidence. While some students express that they are comfortable and prepared, most students, especially related to interactions with teachers, native or non-native, peers, feel unsure and stressed in speaking assignments. These findings draw attention to the diversity of students' experiences and the big influence of situational and social elements on self-perceived competency.

The results demonstrate an important correlation between students' perceived proficiency and their degrees of worry, anxiousness, and confidence in English-speaking situations. Although certain students show resilience and readiness, a

considerable majority express feelings of stress and uncertainty, especially during classroom interactions with instructors and classmates. These findings emphasize the necessity for specific educational strategies to reduce anxiety and promote a more comfortable educational atmosphere.

2. Findings on Self-Comparison to Others and Competitiveness in Speaking Skills

The analysis of FLCAS following Items gives information on participants' views about their speaking abilities compared to their classmates and their sense of competitiveness in English language speaking activities. The results are organized under general themes to improve understanding. Table 3 below presents the overall results corresponding to this category.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Self-Comparison to Others and Competitiveness

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes.	17 (18.3%)	31 (33.3%)	16 (17.2%)	13 (14.0%)	16 (17.2%)
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.	8 (8.6%)	17 (18.3%)	20 (21.5%)	22 (23.7%)	26 (28.0%)
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.	10 (10.8%)	15 (16.1%)	18 (19.4%)	22 (23.7%)	28 (30.1%)
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English classes.	6 (6.5%)	10 (10.8%)	14 (15.1%)	26 (28.0%)	37 (39.8%)
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	5 (5.4%)	21 (22.6%)	12 (12.9%)	23 (24.7%)	32 (34.4%)
16. Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about them.	12 (12.9%)	14 (15.1%)	21 (22.6%)	23 (24.7%)	23 (24.7%)
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.	9 (9.7%)	15 (16.1%)	23 (24.7%)	23 (24.7%)	23 (24.7%)
23. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.	9 (9.7%)	12 (12.9%)	20 (21.5%)	25 (26.9%)	27 (29.0%)
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.	13 (14.0%)	10 (10.8%)	18 (19.4%)	28 (30.1%)	24 (25.8%)
25. English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.	12 (12.9%)	18 (19.4%)	13 (14.0%)	20 (21.5%)	30 (32.3%)
26. I feel more tense and nervous in English class than in my other classes.	11 (11.8%)	12 (12.9%)	12 (12.9%)	25 (26.9%)	33 (35.5%)
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.	5 (5.4%)	14 (15.1%)	21 (22.6%)	25 (26.9%)	28 (30.1%)

Understanding students' attitudes toward speaking English is heavily influenced by their opinions of their abilities, self-comparison with peers, and emotional responses in the classroom. For example, in Table 3 above, Item 5 shows that 51.6% of students overall disagreed with the statement. This reveals that the majority of learners may be worried about attending further English-speaking lessons. Anxiety, a lack of confidence, or unpleasant past experiences with speaking classes may all contribute to this conflict. On the other hand, approximately 30% of students agreed, indicating that a significant number of students are open to

additional practice and actively want to improve their speaking skills. These varied replies reflect the diversity of learners' mindsets, with some students feeling motivated while others may be avoiding extra speaking opportunities due to underlying issues or anxieties. Also, knowing how students view their English-speaking ability is vital since it affects their classroom participation and confidence. Findings from Item 24 draw attention to high levels of student anxiety. More than fifty percent of the learners were self-conscious in such circumstances; a total of 55.9% of participants agreed. Speaking in front of classmates seems to increase self-awareness, most likely from fear of judgment, mistakes, or negative assessments. Alternatively, 24.8% of students did not agree with the item, indicating that they do not suffer from such self-consciousness.

Anxiety and its effects on cognitive function are identified as important elements impacting students' ability to speak English successfully in class. For example, Findings from Table 3 Item 9 show that more than half of the students (53.8%) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This means that unprepared speaking activities cause significant anxiety in learners, negatively affecting their capacity to communicate. The pressure of speaking spontaneously might increase feelings of weakness and fear of making mistakes, and increase anxiety. Furthermore, Item 13 shows the emotional consequence of such perceptions: The large percentage of strong agreement (39.8%) indicates a widespread reluctance to participate, fueled by embarrassment and self-doubt. Only 17.2% of respondents disagreed with this assertion, implying that most students lack confidence when it comes to actively participating in speaking activities. This research demonstrated how fear of judgment, along with self-perceived deficiencies, can reduce classroom involvement and speaking practice.

In addition, peer competitiveness has an impact, as shown by Item 16, Nearly half of respondents (48.4%) agreed, implying that peer competition adds to the stress of speaking activities. While competition can motivate some learners, it can also cause a sense of pressure, affecting their performance and confidence. Learners who feel dominated by their peers may avoid speaking activities, whereas those with greater flexibility may use competition as motivation to improve. Moreover, findings of the item 26 show significantly high anxiety students go through especially in English language courses. With 62.4% agreeing in total, the results show that a good

majority of students feel tense and worried. However, 24.7% of participants disagreed, implying that a minority of students feel somewhat at ease and do not get very anxious in English lessons. These findings emphasize the need to address the reasons for fear in English classes to establish a safer and encouraging environment, as the majority of the participants seem to need support.

As can be seen in Table 3, Item 7 emphasizes self-doubt. More than half of the students (51.7%) agreed or strongly agreed, indicating that self-comparison is a common worry. Many students believe they are inferior to their peers in terms of speaking skills, which can lead to increased anxiety and reduced involvement in class activities. This behavior to compare themselves negatively may come from a lack of self-confidence or a fear of negative evaluation, both of which can prevent active classroom engagement. Item 23 emphasizes the peer comparison role in shaping the judgments made by the learners regarding their speaking skills. In line with findings, the majority of the learners, 55.9%, agreed and 22.6% disagreed with the statement, indicating that more than half of the students frequently feel inferior to their classmates in speaking English. This constant feeling of comparison can be prompted by observing their classmates' fluency, vocabulary, or confidence, leading to feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Many students feel pressure when they evaluate themselves compared to their peers, which might cause them to become hesitant or nervous when speaking. Similarly, item 31 indicates that the fear of criticism is a serious concern among most participants. The findings reveal that 57% of the students agreed with the proposition, which means that the majority feel apprehensive about speaking English as they do not want criticism from their classmates. This apprehension can give rise to anxiety, reticence, and lack of confidence in speaking. About the students who feel secure enough to speak without fearing their peers' reactions, only 20% did not agree with the situation.

This is about the cognitive and affective challenges that students experience as a result of teachers' and classmates' perceived assessment of their performance, according to Table 3. Emotional pressure is illustrated in Item 15, a large percentage of the respondents (59.1%) agreed, showing that most often, students feel frustrated or upset when they cannot understand instructor corrections. This intense emotional response is perhaps a combination of competitiveness, fear from criticism, and self-perceived inadequacy. When students view corrections as a reflection of their general

competence and not as a way of improvement, they feel inadequate and less likely to actively participate.

Another finding from number 20 indicates that the students were anxious about what teachers and their classmates would perceive about them during class interaction. The findings show that 49.4% of the students agreed with the item, indicating that almost half the students show strong physical symptoms of anxiousness when ready to be asked to speak. This implies that the prospect of speaking in front of others increases their anxiety, most likely due to a fear of making mistakes or being evaluated. In contrast, 25.8% of students disagreed, indicating that certain participants are less affected by physical effects. Meanwhile, 24.7% of students were undecided, demonstrating that anxiety levels can change depending on the situation or their preparedness. Item 25 expresses students' concerns about keeping up with the pace of lessons, which reflects anticipated criticism from both teachers and peers. The results show that 53.8% of students agreed with the statement, showing that more than half of the students are concerned about the pace of the class, which could lead to a fear of falling behind and being perceived as less capable. Whereas, 32.3% of students disagreed, indicating that a significant percentage is comfortable managing the pace of the lesson. Overall, the findings suggest that self-comparison and perceived competitiveness significantly influence learners' anxiety levels. A small number of students demonstrate confidence and adaptability, but the majority find higher levels of stress, especially in peer-assessed and instructor-evaluated speaking situations.

3. Findings on Learners' Fear of Performance in Test Situation

FLCAS' following items reveal students' test anxiety, a major role in their academic success. These items assess test-related anxiety, including physical and emotional reactions, cognitive problems, and readiness. This section examines how students respond to oral and written examinations to identify stressors and their effects on performance. The overall findings are presented in the following table and organized in two themes, which are also explained below.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Fear of Performance in Test Situation

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.	5 (5.4%)	12 (12.9%)	18 (19.4%)	24 (25.8%)	34 (36.6%)
8. I am usually at ease during oral exams in English.	29 (31.2%)	22 (23.7%)	14 (15.1%)	17 (18.3%)	11 (11.8%)
10. I worry about the consequences of failing the English class.	8 (8.6%)	10 (10.8%)	21 (22.6%)	28 (30.1%)	26 (28.0%)
21. The more I study for English tests, the more confused I get.	8 (8.6%)	15 (16.1%)	17 (18.3%)	24 (25.8%)	29 (31.2%)
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.	5 (5.4%)	14 (15.1%)	16 (17.2%)	23 (24.7%)	35 (37.6%)

In Table 4, responses to Item 3 demonstrate that a significant number of students' experience physical symptoms of nervousness during class participation. A majority, 62.4%, agreed with the statement. This suggests that teachers' asking students to speak in class causes significant stress for many participants. In contrast, 18.3% of respondents disagreed, implying that there are still several students who felt more at ease in these situations. The remaining 19.4% were uncertain, which could indicate that their reactions varied based on the environment or task. Item 10 emphasizes the cognitive aspects of academic performance anxiety. 58.1% of students agreed that the potential effects of failure in English classes are a significant cause of concern. This suggests that academic pressure is a widespread issue, most likely caused by the high stakes related to language proficiency. On the other hand, 19.4% of respondents disagreed, 22.6% remained indecisive, indicating confusion or situational flexibility in how people see the consequences of failure. In item 30, learners display cognitive overload. Many students find language study overwhelming, as 62.3% either agreed (24.7%) or strongly agreed (37.6%). The complexity of English grammar may increase students' nervousness. In comparison, 20.5% disagreed, demonstrating a smaller group feels more confident in language learning. Learners experience assessment-related anxiety in many ways, including physical stress, cognitive worry about failure, and overwhelmed by language difficulty. These emotional and cognitive reactions could undermine students' class performance and cause a cycle of fear and low involvement.

Findings from Table 4, Item 8 provides details on students' confidence and preparedness for oral assessments. The findings show that most of the students are uncomfortable, with 54.9% disagreeing with the statement. This indicates that more than half of the students feel significantly uncomfortable during oral exams, potentially because of anxiety, fear of criticism, or a lack of confidence in their

speaking skills. Interestingly, 30.1% of participants agreed, indicating that a remarkable percentage of students felt at ease and competent in these situations, which may be influenced by factors such as previous experience with the same type of exam or level of preparation. Also, responses to item 21 reflect learners' perceptions of the relationship between preparation and clarity. The majority of respondents, 57.0%, agreed, demonstrating that despite more preparation, many students believe that studying causes more confusion than clarity. This could indicate difficulty understanding complex linguistic rules, insufficient study strategies, or overwhelming test materials, which is inevitable in a preparatory class. In contrast, 24.7% of students disagreed, indicating that a smaller number saw studying as a constructive and confidence-building activity. Overall, these findings show that test-related anxiety substantially impacts students' performance, seen in both psychological and cognitive stress reactions. The statistics show that oral examinations, in particular, arouse elevated anxiety, with numerous students feeling uncomfortable and doubting themselves. Secondly, anxiety over failure and linguistic complexity gives rise to a general feeling of exam anxiety. These findings highlight the need for specific interventions, such as formal oral practice sessions and anxiety management skills, to establish confidence and examination performance among the students.

4. Learners' Beliefs About Making Mistakes in English Class

The participants' concepts about making mistakes are presented through two themes: Fear of Judgment and Social Anxiety, and Perfectionism and Internal Pressure. These themes account for the cognitive and emotional feelings that the learners hold about linguistic mistakes. The study examines these items in connection in order to determine the way in which the students feel and behave towards their mistakes in class and learning process. Table 5 below represents the general findings corresponding this category and is followed by in-depth explanations classified under the two themes.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Learners' Beliefs About Making Mistakes in English Class

Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.	35 (37.6%)	20 (21.5%)	21 (22.6%)	12 (12.9%)	5 (5.4%)
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.	12 (12.9%)	16 (17.2%)	9 (9.7%)	20 (21.5%)	36 (38.7%)
6. During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	8 (8.6%)	15 (16.1%)	15 (16.1%)	24 (25.8%)	31 (33.3%)
12. In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	10 (10.8%)	11 (11.8%)	20 (21.5%)	26 (28.0%)	26 (28.0%)
19. I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	6 (6.5%)	18 (19.4%)	17 (18.3%)	21 (22.6%)	31 (33.3%)
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.	6 (6.5%)	13 (14.0%)	23 (24.7%)	26 (28.0%)	25 (26.9%)

This theme focuses on students' emotional and cognitive reactions to perceived criticism in English class. Replies to Item 2 demonstrate that the majority of the learners do worry when they make mistakes. Specifically, 59.1% did not agree with the statement, indicating that most worry about mistakes in class. This demonstrates that many students are afraid of negative judgments by their teachers or classmates, which could make them less willing to participate. Nevertheless, only 18.3% agreed, indicating that a small percentage feel calm and worried about their mistakes. The rest, that is, 22.6%, were undecided, indicating that there is variation in how the learners perceive the consequences of their mistakes in class.

Reactions to Item 4 reveal even more anxiety among the students. In all, a total of 60.2% agreed, which means most of the students struggle when they do not understand what is being explained by the teacher. This anxiety might be caused by the possibility of being less competent. In contrast, 30.1% disagreed, which means that some of the students are less affected by such situations, probably because they feel more secure in their linguistic competencies. The reactions to item 6 reveal more about how anxiety is manifested in the form of distraction. A total of over half (59.1%) reported having distracting ideas during class, perhaps as a result of anxiety or lack of confidence. This distraction would hinder their focus and uptake of information well. Contrarily, 24.7% disagreed, which means that a smaller percentage might stay focused during class activity.

The findings of Item 12 reveal the effect of anxiousness on the cognitive competencies of the learners. A very large majority of the respondents, 56%, agreed, indicating that anxiety results in forgetting in class. This reveals how anxiety about being judged impacts the learner's memory, diminishing overall performance.

Contrarily, 22.6% of the respondents disagreed, while 21.5% were undecided, demonstrating the inconsistency of this topic worth investigating further. Finally, demonstrates that unprepared situations activate a strong level of anxiety in most students. A total of 58.1% agreed, indicating that uncertainty regarding their ability in responding creates anxiety. In contrast, 26.9% disagreed, implying that some participants are not impacted by spontaneous questioning. Meanwhile, 15.1% were unsure, indicating differences in how students respond to spontaneous assessments.

Item 19 shows that many learners are afraid of making mistakes in class. Around 55.9% of the participants agreed, indicating that over half of students perceive teacher corrections as a factor of anxiety rather than constructive feedback. Frequent corrections may raise concerns about weaknesses and pressure to perform perfectly. In contrast, 25.9% of students disagreed, suggesting that fewer students' views corrections more positively. Corrections are seen differently based on experience and teaching style, since 18.3% of respondents were undecided.

Responses to item 29 emphasize the struggle that students feel to understand the language used in class. Over half of the participants (54.9%) agreed, showing that insufficient understanding causes significant anxiety. This may be due to learners' internalized expectation of perfection. However, 20.5% of students disagreed, revealing that a smaller group can handle limited comprehension without stress. A noteworthy 24.7% of students were indecisive, which may indicate different confidence levels in the same class or different language experiences. These findings show that many students feel pressure to avoid mistakes and grasp everything, linking mistakes with negative outcomes. This perfectionistic perspective may create an unwilling participation.

C. Findings of Semi-Structured Interviews with the Instructors

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten volunteer EFL instructors to find detailed information about the causes contributing to speaking anxiety and investigate potential solutions. Following an analysis of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) results, instructors were asked to offer solutions for reducing anxiety associated with four primary categories; Self-Perceived Proficiency, Self-Comparison to Others, Test Anxiety, And Making Mistakes. The answers to each interview question were classified, with each category

examined according to the specific themes that developed from the instructors' recommendations. The research categorizes responses to identify effective techniques to strengthen support and confidence in EFL courses. By organizing the responses into meaningful categories, the analysis highlights effective strategies that can be applied in EFL classrooms to have a more supportive and confidence-building learning environment. The following sections present the categorized findings and thematic insights taken from the instructors' responses.

- **Interview Questions are as follows:**

1. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' self-perceived proficiency anxiety?

2. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' self-comparison to others' anxiety?

3. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' test anxiety?

4. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' beliefs about making mistakes?

1. Analysis of Instructors' Suggestions on Eliminating Self-Perceived Proficiency Anxiety

The responses of ten instructors to the survey findings were analyzed and grouped under three main aspects: Gradual Exposure and Scaffolder Tasks, Encouragement and Positive Reinforcement, and Using Technology for Practice and Feedback. The study uses implications all around to clarify the conclusions of their recommendations for useful classroom environments.

a. Gradual exposure and scaffolded tasks

To help students develop confidence gradually, some teachers underlined the need of beginning with easy tasks and slowly raising the complexity. Instructor 1 "Starting with pair work or small group discussions before progressing to whole-class presentations could ease their anxiety". "I would go one by one and step by step to make students feel more comfortable, as a teacher, I always remember being asked direct questions in front of others, and that never helped me as a L2 learner when I was a student. However, being supported by a friend could be a good way to

reduce my anxiety, thinking that we are a team.’

This advice suggests that by dividing speaking assignments into reasonable steps, students can concentrate on smaller, easier-to-handle activities before handling more public or difficult speeches. This method may lead to certain early success for students and strengthen their confidence. She mostly emphasized the scaffolding tasks.

Instructor 9, “I would begin with simple tasks like “What’s your favorite hobby? -Who are you doing that with?” to find a way to have a friendly conversation and comfort the student. Because, when they see us not as someone there to evaluate them, but as someone who asks them daily questions, it values them, and genuinely engages in their conversations, they feel more comfortable”. This instructor also supported the scaffolded strategies.

This strategy helps students engage with greater enthusiasm by connecting with the concept that easing them into speaking activities instead of beginning with challenging questions lowers their cognitive load and anxiety.

Instructor 10 supported the scaffolded approach by saying, “I would recommend my colleagues use shorter tasks like phrase completion before having a conversation by using open-ended conversations. Since students hesitate to continue speaking as they feel more anxious when they believe their speech needs to be longer”.

This reflects an understanding that students benefit from clear guidance and structure, particularly when they lack confidence. This shows a knowledge that, especially in cases of lack of confidence, students develop from direct guidance and control. Students develop themselves to be successful and ready for more challenging circumstances by progressively raising the level of complexity of their duties. The common focus on slow exposure among several teachers, points to a universal agreement among students that they feel less stressed when their skills may be developed progressively.

b. Encouragement and positive reinforcement

Throughout the interviews, it was observed that the most emphasized and frequently noted theme was positive reinforcement. For example, Instructor 2 emphasized the power of simple positive comments, “Saying something as simple as

‘That’s a good point’ or ‘Great effort’ ‘Good job’’, she added that if students are aware of being celebrated or appreciated by their instructors their fear shifts from fear or failure to motivation and it may assist them in believing they are headed in the correct direction.”

This strategy stresses how little affirmations may establish a beneficial classroom environment that enables students to feel able and valuable even in cases of poor performance. Emphasizing their strengths will help teachers inspire their students and lower their fear of failing.

Instructor 5 “If a student uses a simple sentence correctly, I respond, ‘Great! You communicated your idea clearly. This might be the most important thing I have observed over the years. A student who realizes that their instructor respects their progress rather than focusing on their mistakes never gives up on trying, especially university students, who have already developed a sense of identity.” suggested to focus on small praises.

This indicates that appreciating development—no matter small—helps students to believe they are capable of becoming better. It encourages students to have a growth mentality, in which situation they concentrate on improving their skills above perfection.

“I first highlight their achievements; then gently correct the mistakes they have made. Students who treat others well are often more receptive to good feedback. This then motivates them to keep on trying without thinking about mistakes. Their emphasis on self-perceived competence therefore changes from mistakes to development.” Instructor 8 stressed the positive feedback method.

The focus on positive reinforcement throughout these reactions indicates that students succeed in surroundings where their development is acknowledged and their mistakes are seen as chances for growth instead of mistakes to be avoided.

c. Using technology for practice and feedback

Instructors that incorporate technology into their lessons mostly focused on the idea that digital technologies create better speaking practices with low-pressure environments for students.

Instructor 7. “Personally, I think tools like Duolingo, driven by artificial intelligence, should be used. Digital tools help students see their development free from fear caused by judgment. Flipgrid and other classroom tools let students practice before sharing their answers to the class. These instruments give learners a private space where they may practice speaking, therefore overcoming their anxiety of evaluation.”

Instructor 3: “I would definitely go with the use of Flipgrid, as you already know, we have been using Flipgrid, for personal assignments and students can get immediate feedback while eliminating the social pressures of the classroom. It allows students to develop their skills in a safe, self-paced environment, helping them build confidence before engaging in live speaking tasks.”

Instructor 2: “AI in today’s world helps students to rehearse, it can bridge the gap between preparation and performance, helping students feel more prepared and less anxious.”

The responses from each instructor show a range of techniques closely related to the results of the survey on self-perceived proficiency anxiety. While positive reinforcement focuses learners from fear of failure to motivation for improvement, gradual exposure through scaffolded activities helps students acquire confidence gradually. Moreover, using technology offers students private, judgment-free chances to improve their abilities. These strategies taken together provide sensible, evidence-based answers for lowering speaking fear and creating an encouraging classroom to help and get rid of their self-perceived proficiency anxiety while or before speaking.

2. Analysis of Instructors’ Suggestions on Eliminating Self-Comparison Anxiety

Ten teachers’ answers to Question 2 were arranged and categorized under three main themes; Promoting Collaboration and Teamwork, Developing Individual Learning and Self-Reflection, also Reducing Competition in Assessment and Feedback. Suggestions are presented throughout analysis, indicating how teachers’ strategies address self-comparison anxiety, as well as practical implications for classroom uses.

a. Promoting collaboration and teamwork

Several teachers stressed the importance of creating an environment where students can work together, so that the focus changes from competition to helping each other.

Instructor 1: “Activities that give friendship and teamwork priority over competition help to build a sense of belonging. Students who participate in group projects or think-pair-share start to view their colleagues as teammates rather than opponents. This strategy improves instruction as well as promotes a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment. Although we see that students enjoy competitive elements in games like Kahoot, I have observed for years that when it comes to education, they believe the process should not turn into a competition with winners and losers. Instead, they see it as a positive learning experience for everyone.”

Instructor 3: “Group projects like role-plays and conversations help students think about how to support each other, not how to compare. Working together lets students enjoy the skills of other students without seeing them as threats, which makes for a great school environment.”

Instructor 7 also added. “Collaborative digital tools such Google Docs or Padlet allow us to move from competition to collaboration.” These tools encourage teamwork and discussion, therefore guiding students to see their work as a single team project. By emphasizing team performance, one eliminates self-comparison. Encouragement of teamwork lets students appreciate their unique contributions and helps to lessen peer pressure. Simply given group projects with equally assigned tasks offer everyone’s worth and equality.

b. Promoting personal development and self-reflection

Several teachers wanted their students to be able to work on personal growth instead of comparative study. Instructor 4 emphasized personal development, stating, I constantly say, ‘look how much you’ve developed. Don’t forget where you started, how you have changed, and to appreciate yourself.’ ‘Because this kind of focus to language learning helps students to see it as an individual, rather than as a comparative, process, which corresponds the results of comparison anxiety surveys.’

Using recordings or word lists, Instructor 8 promoted measuring progress over time so that development could be shown. “It makes them move away from

wondering, ‘Am I smarter than my friend?’ toward ‘How does my performance today measure out against last month?’ He said. It encourages students to concentrate on their performance rather than catching others. Instructor 2 also said that when pupils have personal goals, their attention switches from others to themselves. She went on: “I can say, ‘Try to talk two minutes today,’ instead of measuring them against someone else.” It stresses the need for success by measuring it against individual specifications instead of other comparisons. As we can see from the responses taken from instructors, teachers help students to monitor their development toward goals and see their performance by motivating personal reflection and goal-setting. This approach reduces self-reflected anxiety and helps them grow confident.

c. Minimizing competition in assessment and feedback

Responses from instructors showed that they mostly discussed the necessity for assessment and comment, emphasizing individualization and reducing rivalry. Instructor 5 discussed the necessity for personal comment, saying, “I’d say, ‘You did well here, and this is what you need to work on,’ with the focus being more about their improvement than how well they did concerning somebody else.” It encourages the learner to work on themselves and not seek approval from others.

Instructor 10 suggested the design of tests that exclude the opportunity for comparisons. His idea was, “Students should be worked with one-on-one by the examiner on speaking assignments rather than being given over to their peers.” It reduces exposure to peer performance, so the student is less likely to compare himself when presenting or practicing speaking assessments.

Instructor 9 “I provide rubrics in advance with specific speaking performance requirements so that the students work towards meeting those and not others. Especially when it comes to produce a good oral test performance, the target should be introduced before the application” highlighted the importance of specific rubrics in administering tests, and added ‘the students can therefore work for achieving specific goals and not against one another. Avoiding from competition in administering speaking tests or any kinds of tests provides teachers a room so that the students can work without restrictions. That is why personal assessment is vital rather than competitive assessment.

The responses by the instructors reveal self-comparison issues with the help of teamwork, to have personal growth in students' performances during oral examination, educators should give importance to the oral exam process personal assessment. It also supported that working together changes the environment from competition to teamwork, with a sense of collective achievement. Personal goals and tracking individual progress allow the students to evaluate themselves, so they do not compare themselves with others. They do not need to worry about someone else's speaking performance. Finally, individualized feedback and individual assessment promote a culture focusing more on personal growth than competitiveness. These suggestions, from classroom contexts, offer practical methods in responding to the survey results while allowing the students to deal with their self-comparison anxiety. The survey results showed how important it is to keep competition to a minimum in speaking tests. In Table 3 in Quantitative findings, Item 7 shows that 51.7% of students think their friends are better at speaking English than they are. In the same way, 55.9% of students (Item 23) often feel like they are not as good at speaking as their peers. In Item 31, 57% of students said they were afraid their friends would laugh at them when they spoke English. These results show that self-comparison anxiety has a big effect on students' confidence and their desire to take part in speaking activities. In light of these results, teachers' efforts to make tests less competitive are even more important because it creates an atmosphere where students focus on their own progress instead of comparing themselves to their peers.

3. Analysis of Instructors' Suggestions on Eliminating Test Anxiety

The responses of the instructors to Question 3 were evaluated and organized into three major themes: familiarization and preparation, creating a supportive testing environment, and providing constructive feedback and encouragement. Inferences are used throughout to illustrate instructors' strategies and their implications for reducing anxiety about tests.

a. Familiarization and preparation

Most instructors highlighted preparation and familiarity with the test format as significant methods for reducing test anxiety in speaking. Instructor 1 told us: "Regular use of quizzes or speaking practice tests can tell students with test structures and help to lower their anxiety related to inexperience of speaking in front

others.” stressed the use of low-risk assessments that looked like serious examinations, like the Speaking Proficiency test at the end of the prep year. This way shows that students are less nervous and more confident during tests when they know what to expect.

Instructor 3 agreed with this method and said, “Students who know how the test is set up are less stressed and they are ready to produce speaking outcomes when the times comes.” They stressed how important preparation tests are because they let students study in conditions that are similar to the real tests, which makes things clearer.

Some words or discussion strategies for speaking exams, like “Let me think for a moment, May I start? I couldn’t agree more so on. “should be taught to students to help them get ready for speaking tests, according to Instructor 8. This shows that we are aware of the fact that teaching students how to handle unexpected scenarios can greatly reduce their anxiety. Learners feel less nervous about tests when they know what to expect because they are more familiar with the content.

b. Creating a supportive testing environment

Several instructors emphasized the necessity of maintaining a peaceful and positive environment during testing to make students feel more at ease. Instructor 2 ‘I periodically start the test with a simple warm-up question to which everyone can answer. It relaxes them and increases their confidence. Simple warm-up questions might help learners breathe before a speaking test. This method allows the students to get used to the exam, creating a nice atmosphere for the rest of the session. ‘

Instructor 9 underlined the significance of beginning with simple, predictable questions, such “Can you introduce yourself?” then working on more challenging questions. This approach assures the confidence building among students, which will help them all through speaking exam. Saying, “I always create a pleasant environment, not to put them under the pressure of being evaluation”

Instructor 6 showed his shift from challenging settings to more supportive ones. ‘Early in my career, I thought that silence and strict rules were absolutely necessary, but today I realize that encouragement works better. Our change in using positive verbal and nonverbal signals—such as nodding and smiling—show how well teachers’ encouraging behavior helps to lower test-related anxiety in speaking

exams'. These responses in the findings of interviews showed us that a welcoming testing environment helps students feel motivated instead of judged, therefore it reduces their anxiety. Beginning with easy tasks and offering positive feedback all through the test helps students to stay calm and focused.

c. Providing constructive feedback and encouragement

Constructive feedback after speaking or writing assessments encouraging these processes and were the common themes to overcome testing problem. Instructor 4 emphasized the need of constructive comments, saying, "I focus on beneficial and positive criticism, initially highlighting their correct actions and later on showing them the way to go." This method helps students to see the exams are natural parts of testing

Instructor 5 added, "I mostly focus on showing them where they originally succeeded. 'You handled that topic nicely!' .I would say before discussing areas that could use improvement, putting students' strengths first helps them to get more confident and inspired to grow.

"The feedback we provide after the exams emphasizes their efforts instead of only outcomes," Instructor 10 said, addressing the need to move away from result-oriented tests. This is the feedback in line with the survey results on the anxiety of failing, and it suggests to give top priority to progress rather than test itself.

Constructive feedback helps students to recognize the significance of assessment as a learning tool. Educators assist students in reducing negative emotions associated with testing so that their skills will be enough to lead. The instructor's two comments mostly emphasize the establishment of a helpful environment. They kept saying by keeping the educational setting settings positive ,it is easier to get rid of tension during exams. Ultimately, constructive criticism enables students to perceive assessments as chances for learning rather than as evaluations of their abilities. These ideas offer viable strategies for lowering testing anxiety and align with the survey results.

The findings from the survey and teachers' observations complement each other in the necessity for reducing anxiety through systematic preparation, a developed environment, and constructive feedback. Quantitative findings reveal that over half (e.g., 62.4% in Item 3, 57% in Item 21) of the student exhibit symptoms of

anxiety, self-comparison difficulties, or failure anxiety in speaking tests, all indicating the need for intervention. Teachers' qualitative reports complement these concerns by proposing familiarization with testing styles, warm-up exercises, and positive reinforcement as means for reducing student anxiety. Their responses, which emphasize minimizing competitiveness and focusing on individual progress, directly correlate with student struggles with self-comparison and fear of peer judgment (e.g., 51.7% in Item 7, 55.9% in Item 23). By applying these strategies, students can shift from anxiety test performance settings to a more confident and growth-oriented approach.

4. Analysis of Instructors' Suggestions on Eliminating Students' Beliefs About Mistakes

The responses from the instructors about question 4 were collected and categorized into three themes: Normalizing Mistakes, Encouraging Constructive Peer Interaction, and Offering Gentle and Supportive Feedback.

a. Normalizing mistakes

Instructors often discussed the importance of encouraging a classroom environment where mistakes are viewed as a characteristic and beneficial part of the learning journey during the interviews.

Instructor 1, "As teachers we could, for instance, show weakness by discussing instances of their errors and lessons learnt from them especially when it comes to speaking in front of others." suggested that teachers could share their own experiences with errors, this strategy humanizes the process of learning and helps students to feel less alone in their challenges.

Instructor 2, 'If they are not making mistakes, they are not learning; mistakes are vital parts of learning to see the next and better steps of what we are doing as human,' stated reframing errors. This viewpoint enables students to view mistakes as chances for growth instead of problems, helping them to deal with challenges with reduced anxiety.

Instructor 8 shared his own story about language-learning mistakes, such as saying "pain" in French and initially thinking it referred to suffering, only to later realize it actually meant bread. Laughing at his own mistakes helped the instructor

modeled adaptability and reduced the level of anxiety of mistakes for the students.

This may reveal that if we create such teaching or learning environments for education students may feel that everybody makes mistakes, they are human, we are human, and never stop trying to speak in another language. Normalizing mistakes supports a judgment-free atmosphere where students feel encouraged to take risks. When teachers share their own mistakes, it supports confidence and shows that mistakes are a natural and unavoidable part of success.

b. Encouraging constructive peer interaction

As it was already stated in other parts of the interviews responses, cooperation among classmates was the one of the most important subjects in reducing anxiety around making mistakes, as it allows students to see that everyone makes mistakes.

Instructor 2 ‘Seeing that everyone makes mistakes while speaking helps to normalize the experience and lessen its scary power, we, teachers, should focus on collaborative activities such as group projects and peer corrections.’ Instructor 5 noted that collaboration among classmates lessens anxiety, stating, ‘Feedback from another student helps in reducing the anxiety.’ This indicates that peer feedback is less threatening than instructor corrections, supporting a friendlier and encouraging learning environment. Instructor 9 highlighted the significance of peer assessment in speaking assignments, stating, ‘After a role-play, for instance, students give each other feedback using a checklist.’ This approach builds teamwork and helps students view errors as chances for growth. Constructive interaction with classmates redirects the focus from personal achievement towards collaborative progression, so that the learner comes to understand that errors are a regular and manageable part of the process. Collaborative work increases confidence by providing a secure setting in which experimentation is possible and mistakes can be learned from.

c. Providing gentle and supportive feedback

Understood from the teachers’ responses that teachers in general and mostly feel that the way teachers’ correct errors significantly influence the perception and confidence of the students. Instructor 4 suggested changes, saying, instead of saying, ‘That is wrong,’ I correct it in the right way so that they can hear how it should be said without embarrassment. This way, the anxiety of criticism among the students is

minimized and a supportive learning environment is promoted. Instructor 9 gave another viewpoint, ‘When a student does something wrong, I treat it as a chance to teach and not to criticize.’ By presenting mistakes as learning opportunities, teachers enable the students to pay more attention towards developing and less to fearing criticism.

Instructor 10 emphasized the importance of the use of positive language in giving corrections, suggesting that teachers should utilize such expressions as ‘That is a good try; let us try rewriting that’ in place of marking responses as wrong. This is what is supported by the quantitative survey findings, which indicate that the students feel uneasy about their teacher being willing to comment on all their errors, thereby limiting the anxiety that is accompanied by teacher comment. Positive and encouraging comment helps the learners view mistakes as chances for improvement rather than obstacles. Through the use of positive comments and avoiding negative criticism, teachers establish a warm learning environment in order to support risk-taking and investment.

The teaching approaches in overcoming misconceptions that the students hold about mistakes emphasize the normalization of errors, peer interaction, and the giving of constructive criticism. The identification of mistakes helps the students understand that mistakes cannot be avoided in learning, while interaction with their peers creates a culture that supports collaborative learning. The teachers give motivating and constructive criticism that encourages the students to make advancements without fear of criticism. These approaches, in combination, can help in creating a more desirable learning environment that is in agreement with the survey findings and reduces anxiety about mistakes.

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A. Introduction

This part provides a general overview of the findings from the study, and the research questions about the sources of EFL speaking anxiety and EFL teachers' methods in overcoming such sources. The study used both quantitative and qualitative method to gather a holistic view on speaking anxiety.

The quantitative data was gathered using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which was administered among prep school students from a foundation university. The items were grouped four categories: self-perceived competence, self-comparison and competition, anxiety in performing in tests, and assumptions about making mistakes in the English class. The findings were described using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distributions to establish the most critical reasons for participants' speaking anxiety. In addition to quantitative findings, qualitative data were collected from ten volunteer EFL teachers using semi-structured interviews. Teachers were provided with FLCAS results and were asked for suggestions for minimizing student speaking anxiety. Teachers' responses were coded into four main themes, corresponding with the scale results' four main components of anxiety. Qualitative data were analyzed by thematic analysis, focusing on instructional approaches, pedagogic techniques, and classroom interventions designed to promote a low-anxiety learning environment. Both qualitative and quantitative results in this chapter support the literature, to establish theoretical support for the study. Findings were given with implications for teaching EFL, planning the curriculum, and training teachers. Finally, this section gives directions and suggestions to be used in the future of education.

B. Discussion of Research Question 1

Especially among EFL learners, anxiety in speaking is still in the process of discussion and research as they lack confidence, fluency, and enthusiasm in speaking. The results in this study agree with previous studies, which identified some terms such as self-perceived proficiency, comparison with others, anxiety about the test, and anxiety in making mistakes. These factors are strongly dependent and greatly affected by internal psychological factors and external learning environments. One of the most important reasons behind speaking anxiety among EFL learners is their self-perceived language capability. Results in this study show that the lower the self-perceived proficiency, the more anxiety is experienced, in agreement with previous studies (Kitano, 2001; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Learners with the idea that their speaking abilities are lacking tend to hesitate in speaking, fearing that they cannot explain themselves fluently. MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément (1997) identified that such learners tend to overestimate difficulty in speaking, and this is the reason behind their anxiety, resulting in avoidance behaviors. The self-perceived competence-anxiety link is reinforcing itself, with highly anxious students tending to give a lower profile to their language skills, resulting in a cycle of reduced active involvement and increased anxiety (Dörnyei, 2005). The findings in this study also support Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert's (1999) claim that supportive feedback can build self-efficacy among the students and lower anxiety levels.

Another important factor that influences speaking anxiety is comparison with others. Some students indicated that they felt uncomfortable when they compared their speaking skills with more proficient classmates, consistent with studies by Price (1991) and Bailey (1983). Competitive classroom environments, in which the students feel pressured from their classmates, reinforce anxiety. Williams and Andrade (2008) exemplified that such environments reinforce the fear of getting bad marks among the students, which discourages them from actively participating in speaking exercises. The findings show that the more that language competence is viewed by the students as innate and not as something learned, the more anxious they become. This is in accordance with Dweck (2006) Growth Mindset Theory, which states when students see language as a process, they feel more motivated and less anxious. Using cooperative learning methods, as stated by Dörnyei and Murphey (2003), can help remove self-comparison anxiety by way of a cooperative learning

setting as compared to other competitive learning environment.

Test anxiety is another main source in EFL learners. Test anxiety was a major issue among many participants, as was determined by Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), whose study indicated that test anxiety was a main characteristic of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Phillips (1992) noted that highly anxious students do perform in speaking tests as a function of cognitive overload, which reduces fluency and clarity. The findings from this study agree with that of the study by von der Embse et al. (2018), which states that more anxious students were more possibly to display physiological symptoms such as fast heartbeat and excessive sweating, which would further impair their performance. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) found that highly stressed students avoided speaking tests as a coping mechanism, which aggravated their language difficulties. A number of researchers proposed that exposure to testing formats and low-stakes speaking exercises can lower test anxiety (Tsui, 1996). The current study agrees with this viewpoint, as the more exposure to low-pressure speaking opportunities reported by the students, the lower their level of test anxiety was. (Chan and Wu, 2004) Besides, cognitive-behavioral approaches such as relaxation techniques and cognitive restructuring were found to assist students in managing stress caused by tests more effectively.

Most of the students indicated that the fear of mistakes was a primary issue in their speaking confidence. This is in line with previous studies, which have established that perfectionism is a major source of foreign language anxiety (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002). A belief among most students that errors equal failure causes their self-consciousness and resistance towards speaking in public. Horwitz (1988) observed that highly anxious students were very sensitive to errors, particularly in public or testing contexts. Cultural contexts influence what is thought about errors. Tsui (1996) observed that high-context culture students, such as in East Asia, perceive errors as evidence that they lack competence and not as a learning process. The results from this study concur with this viewpoint, as some learners indicated having a stronger aversion towards public criticism or shame. To avoid the negative effect of perfectionism, studies suggest the creation of a learning environment that accepts mistakes as a learning process (Dörnyei, 2001). Support for a growth orientation, in which mistakes are accepted as opportunities for learning and improvement and not as failures, has been found to reduce anxiety (Gregersen

and MacIntyre, 2014).

The study also supports the hypothesis that teachers have a big part in shaping how their students view mistakes. Teachers can become more confident in class by providing helpful and corrective, rather than correctness-oriented, feedback. The results of this study demonstrate that EFL students' speaking anxiety is a product of a combination of individual and contextual factors. Self-perceived competence, self-comparison with others, test anxiety, and fear of making mistakes all give rise to increased anxiety, which deters students from speaking exercises. These results support earlier findings, confirming that speaking anxiety is a multi-faceted issue that requires special attention. To lessen such anxiety-inducing factors, teachers should work at developing positive self-perception, reducing competitive classroom settings, systematic preparation for speaking tests, and accepting mistakes as a stage in the language-acquisition process. Teachers can assist their students in overcoming their fears and developing confidence in speaking by adopting evidence-based methods such as cooperative learning, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and supportive feedback systems.

C. Discussion of Research Question 2

Having identified the primary causes of speaking anxiety, this study explored suggested solutions by experienced instructors. Qualitative findings from ten volunteer teachers' interviews were categorized into the primary ideas, which coincided with the primary sources of anxiety identified in the used scale. The suggested solutions aim at teaching methods, classroom environment adjustment, and psychological support in order to make the learning environment more confidence-giving for the students. The following discussion presents such solutions in light of relevant literature and previous studies.

Low self-perceived competence is a primary cause for speaking anxiety since it creates doubts in the minds of the students about their competence in speaking English. Teachers stressed the importance of gradual exposure, systematic speaking practice, and regular feedback in developing speaking self-efficacy among the students. Some teachers suggested scaffolding speaking exercises in which the students would first engage in less challenging activities (e.g., pair work, systematic dialogues) before advancing towards more challenging ones, such as presentations or

debates. This is in accordance with Young (1991), whose study concluded that gradual exposure in speaking exercises reduces anxiety and increases confidence. Similarly, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) suggest that a supportive and controlled learning environment would help lessen the anxiety of speaking by allowing the students to acquire skills in gradual steps.

Also the emphasized comment was the need for positive reinforcement. Teachers emphasized the need for rewarding the achievements made by the students, concentrating solely on their errors. This is in agreement with Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) that positive feedback increases the self-perceived competence and reduces anxiety among the students while speaking or writing. Teachers also proposed peer feedback and collaborative learning in order to normalize speaking practice in the absence of the threat of judgment (Dörnyei and Murphey, 2003). Another strongly supported method was technology usage, like as AI-based language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, ELSA Speak, Flipgrid), that allow the students to practice speaking in individual, anxiety-free settings before speaking challenges in class. Luo (2018) and Li and Hegelheimer (2013) also investigated that technology-supported practice is capable of greatly reducing anxiety in learning by providing the students with immediate feedback and self-paced learning opportunities.

Another contributing factor is the tendency by the students to compare themselves with their peers, feel inferior, or that they cannot speak as well as their peers. To solve this issue, teachers proposed that the classroom environment be made collaborative, rather than competitive. Cooperative learning methods and group work were strongly advised, in which the students were encouraged to participate in team-based speaking exercises with more emphasis placed on teamwork than individual accomplishment. This agrees with the findings by Dörnyei (2001), which show that cooperative learning settings offer safety to get rid of self-comparison anxiety.

Furthermore, teachers stressed developing a growth mindset, as proposed by Dweck's (2006) Growth Mindset Theory. Prompting the learner to think about language learning as a process, and not as a fixed ability, increases their confidence and decreases their tendency to unfavorably compare with others. Teachers encouraged self-reflection, tracking, and goal-setting activities, which support Williams and Andrade (2008), whose study concluded that students monitoring their own improvement, in contrast with comparison with others, demonstrate lower

speaking anxiety. Teachers also emphasized the need for accepting mistakes and viewing individual improvement. Creating a classroom environment that is more about improvement than perfection enables the learner to focus on their own improvement, and not competition with others (MacIntyre and Gregersen, 2012).

Another major source of stress among EFL students is test anxiety, particularly in speaking tests in which they feel pressure to perform perfectly. Teachers provided various methods for reducing anxiety in tests and enhancing student confidence in speaking tests. One widely proposed method was familiarization with exam formats through mock tests, sample tests, and systematic speaking exercises. This is in line with Tsui (1996), whose findings were that students who receive frequent simulations in tests demonstrate less anxiety and enhanced performance in real tests. Teachers also noted the advantages of low-stakes speaking exercises before formal tests. Koch and Terrell (1991) discovered that students who receive ungraded speaking exercises demonstrate less anxiety in formal tests. Teachers in this study agreed with this method, proposing peer assessment, role-playing exercises, and conversational practice in order to establish confidence before major tests.

Besides, several teachers suggested alternative assessment methods, such as self-assessment and peer assessment. Horwitz (2001) and Salehi and Marefat (2014) discovered that alternative assessment methods ease the anxiety associated with traditional oral examinations so that the attention can be diverted from perfectionism towards communication. The biggest cause of public speaking anxiety is a fear of making mistakes, particularly in societies that highly emphasize academic achievement. The students avoid speaking out for being humiliated in public by their peers. In response, teachers proposed a change in classroom culture—a culture that welcomes mistakes as learning experiences. Gregersen and MacIntyre (2014) proved that the students who saw mistakes as learning opportunities felt much less anxious and were more likely to participate in speaking exercises. Besides, teachers highlighted the role played by error correction techniques in forming the attitudes that the students hold regarding mistakes. Instead of immediate corrective feedback, they proposed delaying corrective feedback, which allows the learners to internalize mistakes without embarrassment. Lyster and Ranta (1997) proved that indirect and implicit corrective procedures lower anxiety as well as improve the accuracy of the

students. Another proposed approach involved instructors' honesty, where teachers share their own language-learning mistakes and failures, making the process feel more relatable. This is in accordance with Dörnyei (2001), whose study illustrated that teachers' self-disclosing made the learning atmosphere more informal and enhanced the willingness among the students to risk in speaking activities.

The approaches proposed by EFL teachers in this research coincide with findings in previous studies in foreign language anxiety. Teachers stressed that speaking anxiety should be managed with a holistic approach that involves gradual contact to speaking activities, the creation of a collaborative learning environment, lessening of test anxiety through familiarization procedures, and the modification of error approaches. Various previous studies have confirmed the effectiveness of these methods in building speaking confidence and easing anxiety among EFL learners. Teachers can build a supportive learning environment by implementing student-centered methods such as scaffolding learning, cooperative learning, positive reinforcement, and alternative assessment, which assist the students in overcoming their fears and developing their speaking skills with confidence.

D. Conclusion

This study explored the causes of speaking anxiety among EFL students and the strategies proposed by EFL teachers to address these issues. Findings demonstrated that speaking anxiety is more than something that can be overcome by developing language skills—it is about creating a supportive environment in which students feel comfortable speaking. To illustrate, more than half the students (62.4%) said that they feel anxious when their names are called, and 57% said that the more they study for tests, the more confused they become. This shows how anxiety is more than a sensation, it has a real impact on the outcome of students' performance. At the same time, 55.9% of the students believe that their classmates speak more proficiently than they do, and that they would be laughed at if they erred, make mistake, in speaking. Therefore, so many avoid speaking, the good news is that teachers have some practical solutions, such as gradual exposure to speaking, encouraging peer support, applying easier and not stressful speaking exercises, and delivering supportive, constructive criticism.

When students feel supported rather than criticized, and they begin to be more interested in getting better than in being perfect. We can say that this study tried to find ways for students to overcome their speaking anxiety, and it also aimed to give suggestions for future educators. It is clear that many factors influence speaking anxiety. Each of these factors influences students' willingness to participate in speaking activities and overall confidence in using English. To address these issues, instructors recommended many pedagogical and psychological solutions, and they aimed to create a more welcoming and supportive learning environment.

One of the most important findings of this study is the strong link between self-perceived proficiency and speaking anxiety. Many students reported having low confidence in their speaking abilities, which led to avoidance behaviors and increased anxiety. This is consistent with a prior study, which found that students' perceptions of their skills frequently had a higher impact on anxiety than their actual proficiency levels (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). The suggested strategies, such as gradual exposure to speaking activities, organized feedback, and the use of language-learning technologies, emphasize the necessity of building confidence in learners with the help of gradual progress and positive reinforcement. To break the cycle of negative self-assessment, students were encouraged to track their progress rather than focusing on their shortcomings.

While learning a new language, students tend to compare themselves to their classmates. This is another cause of speaking anxiety, especially in competitive classrooms. Students who frequently compare their speaking abilities to their friends have higher levels of anxiety, and their participation rates are lower. (Price, 1991; Williams and Andrade, 2008). Instructors offered some cooperative practices, such as group-based speaking activities and pair work, to reduce competitive pressure and encourage students to give more importance to personal progress over comparison. This approach is consistent with Dweck's (2006) Growth Mindset Theory, which states that students who view learning as a continual developmental process have lower levels of anxiety and more motivation.

Students' fear of exams was also one common issue in speaking experiences. Many participants showed high concern over speaking assessments. This was mostly because of fear of getting negative evaluation and unfamiliarity with the test format. Previous research has repeatedly shown that test anxiety decreases cognitive

functioning, and results in poor performance on speaking tasks (Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1992). To overcome this, teachers suggested some speaking opportunities, mock speaking exams, and alternative assessment methods like self-reflection and peer review. These methods can help students become accustomed to high-pressure settings and allow them to practice speaking without fear of immediate judgment or failure.

One of the most deeply rooted causes of speaking anxiety was about making mistakes. A lot of students were hesitant to speak for fear of being publicly corrected or laughed at, resulting in a passive learning method. Instructors specifically emphasized the necessity of accepting mistakes as part of the learning process and suggested to their colleagues to remind their students that making mistakes is normal, and it is not the end of the world. If educators create a friendlier classroom setting and view mistakes as chances for progress, students may feel more confident about the fear of making mistakes. This is consistent with Gregersen and MacIntyre's (2014) research, which discovered that students who have a positive attitude toward making mistakes have much lower anxiety levels and improved fluency.

Instructors also suggested using delayed and indirect feedback approaches, in which errors are given constructively and encouragingly because they think that the opposite way discourages students' enthusiasm. They also stated that the teachers' role is the key to getting rid of this anxiety in educational environments. Instructors who showed empathy and revealed their personal language-learning experiences provided a nonjudgmental classroom environment. All these strategies were more effective at reducing students' speaking anxiety. Teachers' attitudes and behaviors have a substantial influence on students' readiness to take risks in speaking activities. Dörnyei (2001) The study's findings support the hypothesis that a teacher's capacity to provide encouragement, comfort, and motivation is critical for students' learning process.

Educators should apply more student-centered speaking activities in their classes because for some students it may be the first time for those new learners. Second, pair work and group work should be stressed to reduce self-comparison anxiety and promote supportive peer interactions. Third, assessment procedures should be changed with to alternative, low-pressure evaluations since those allow students to practice speaking in a relaxed environment. Finally, instructors should

take a more flexible and welcoming approach to error correction, and they should create a classroom environment in which students feel comfortable to take new risks and make mistakes.

E. Limitations

While this study attempts to provide useful information on EFL learners' speaking anxiety and propose practical methods of addressing its effects, some limitations need to be highlighted. This study was done by a small group of students; the sample was a small number of learners, and therefore it is not generalizable, and the year was only the 2024-2025 academic year fall term. Because the educational setting of the study was unique to this given setting, its findings are not applicable in other settings. In that respect, there would not be enough sample size learners to conclude broadly because a large enough sample size of participants is needed. The study can be conducted on a specific subgroup of EFL learners, like learners in a particular educational institution, nationality, or age group, which limits the applicability of results to more heterogeneous groups of learners. The studies' data, which were collected using questionnaires and interviews, are subjective in their own educational nature. Respondents, both teachers and students, provided answers in their comfort zone and educational environment. Further, anxiety is situational in nature, and, accordingly, responses can be varied based on situations in which data is collected. If it were collected in another educational setting, the results might be different. Also, the study was more interested in in-class methods to ease speaking anxiety and intended to overlook variables. Some variables were exposure to English outside of class, contacts with native speakers, or use of computer language learning tools. The role of technology in reducing speaking anxiety is a new investigation, and although this work is likely to address its potential applicability, it is unlikely to fully investigate its long-term effects on language learning. Lastly, while it was our intent in this study to present practical advice to educators, their application was dependent on institutional policy, instructor training, and resource distribution. Some of the proposals would require incorporation into present curriculum or instructional practices, something that is not always realistic in every school or institution of higher learning. The willingness of educators to adapt new approaches and their competency in their application can show the overall effectiveness of the strategies

outlined in this study.

F. Suggestions for Further Research

Above-mentioned restrictions and subcategories, the following suggestions for future studies can be made. Cross-cultural studies would also help discover how cultural differences impact speaking anxiety and how it is handled. It can be said that there is more anxiety concerning perfectionism in high-context cultures and more concern with fluency than correctness in low-context cultures. This can also support the studies of (Tsui, 1996) and (Cheng, 2002) on corrective feedback. For future studies, studies could be done in which EFL learners from various cultural backgrounds would be compared in terms of how their speaking anxiety is impacted by their attitudes towards errors, competition, and norms in communication. Additionally, future studies can look at the long-term effectiveness of anxiety-reduction techniques. While this study gathered teachers' and students' immediate responses, future studies can look at whether cooperative learning and technology-based practice result in long-term speaking confidence gains.

Another topic that is worth investigating is the application of technology in reducing speaking anxiety. Some technological platforms, like Duolingo and Flipgrid, virtual reality simulations can provide opportunities for students to speak in better learning settings. Additional study could be done to determine if repeated exposure to artificial intelligence or technology-driven pronunciation testing leads to increased confidence in real speaking situations. As online and blended learning environments become more common, future researchers should study how virtual classrooms' speaking activities influence student anxiety. With the increasing trend towards online learning, research that looks at how students perceive and manage anxiety in online learning environments can provide important insights into today's EFL education.

Also, it can be said this study should not be limited with one skill. When educators look into education, they see that anxiety is in all parts of education, so regardless of what is taught all skills should be taken into consideration.

Overall, speaking anxiety is a complex and difficult problem that requires ongoing study in order to improve teaching methods. It may not be possible to close

such a research gap, but finding better ways to reduce it can lead to more effective, evidence-based strategies that allow EFL learners to be willing participants of speaking classes.



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APPENDICES

Appendix A: English version of Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)
(adopted from Horwitz et al. (1986))

This questionnaire is prepared to collect information about your level of English language-speaking anxiety that you experience in a classroom atmosphere. After reading each statement, please tick (√) your position which appeals to you most on the scale provided. There are no right or wrong answers for the items in this questionnaire.

Thanks for your contribution.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English class.					
I don't worry about making mistakes in English class.					
I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in English class.					
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.					
It wouldn't bother me at all to take more English classes.					
During English class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.					
I keep thinking that the other students are better at English than I am.					
I am usually at ease during oral exams in English.					
I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English class.					
I worry about the consequences of failing English class.					
I don't understand why some people get so upset over English classes.					
In English class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in English classes.					
I wouldn't be nervous speaking English with native speakers.					
I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
Even if I am well prepared for English class, I feel anxious about them.					
I often feel like not going to English class.					
I feel confident when I speak in English class.					
I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.					
I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in English class.					
The more I study for English tests, the more confused I get.					
I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for English class.					
I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.					
I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.					
English class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.					
I feel more tense and nervous in English class than in my other classes.					
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English class.					
When I am on my way to English class, I feel very sure and relaxed.					
I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says.					
I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak English.					
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.					
I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.					
I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.					

Appendix B: Turkish version of Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)
(adopted from Dalkılıç (2001))

SINIF İÇİ YABANCI DİL KAYGI ÖLÇEĞİ

1: Kesinlikle katılmıyorum

2: Katılmıyorum

3: Kararsızım

4: Katılıyorum

5: Kesinlikle katılıyorum

SINIF İÇİ YABANCI DİL KAYGI ÖLÇEĞİ	1	2	3	4	5
1. İngilizce derslerinde konuşurken hiçbir zaman kendimden tam olarak emin olamıyorum.					
2. İngilizce derslerinde hata yaparım diye endişelenmem.					
3. İngilizce derslerinde konuşma sırasının bana geldiğini anladığımda elim ayağım titriyor.					
4. Öğretmenin İngilizce olarak söylediği şeyleri anlayamamak beni korkutuyor.					
5. İngilizce ders saatlerinin arttırılması beni rahatsız etmez.					
6. İngilizce dersleri sırasında, sık sık kendimi dersle ilgisi olmayan şeyler düşünürken buluyorum.					
7. Sürekli olarak diğer öğrencilerin İngilizce seviyelerinin benden daha iyi olduğunu düşünüp duruyorum.					
8. İngilizce sınavlarında kendimi rahat hissediyorum.					
9. İngilizce derslerinde hazırlıksız konuşmak zorunda kaldığım zaman telaşa kapılıyorum.					
10. İngilizce derslerinde başarısız olmam durumunda karşılaşılabileceğim sorunlar beni endişelendiriyor.					
11. Bazı insanların İngilizce derslerini neden bu kadar sorun yaptıklarını anlamıyorum.					
12. İngilizce derslerinde bildiğim şeyleri unutacak ölçüde gergin olabiliyorum.					
13. İngilizce derslerinde bir soruya gönüllü olarak cevap vermekten utanıyorum.					
14. Anadili İngilizce olan biriyle konuşmak beni huzursuz etmez.					
15. Öğretmenin konuşmamda ne hata bulunduğunu anlamadığım zaman üzülürüm.					
16. İngilizce derslerine iyi hazırlanmış olsam bile, yine kaygı duyuyorum.					
17. Çoğu zaman İngilizce derslerine gitmek içimden gelmiyor.					

18. İngilizce derslerinde konuşurken kendime güveniyorum.					
19. İngilizce öğretmenimin yaptığım her hatayı düzeltmek için hazır beklediği düşüncesi beni korkutuyor.					
20. İngilizce derslerinde bana söz verildiğinde kalbimin hızla çarptığını hissediyorum.					
21. Bir İngilizce sınavına ne kadar çok çalışırsam çalışayım yine de kafam karışır.					
22. İngilizce derslerine iyi hazırlanmak için üzerimde bir baskı hissetmiyorum.					
23. Her zaman diğer öğrencilerin İngilizceyi benden daha iyi konuştukları duygusuna kapılıyorum					
24. İngilizceyi diğer öğrencilerin önünde konuşmak konusunda çok çekingenim.					
25. İngilizce dersleri o kadar hızlı ilerliyor ki geride kalmaktan korkuyorum					
26. İngilizce derslerinde kendimi diğer derslerde olduğundan daha gergin ve huzursuz hissediyorum.					
27. İngilizce derslerinde konuşurken heyecanlanıyorum ve kafam karışıyor.					
28. İngilizce derslerine giderken oldukça rahat ve kendimden emin oluyorum.					
29. İngilizce öğretmenin söylediği her sözü anlamazsam endişeleniyorum.					
30. İngilizce konuşmak için öğrenilmesi gereken kuralların çokluğu altında ezildiğimi hissediyorum					
31. İngilizce konuştuğum zaman diğer öğrencilerin benimle alay edeceklerinden korkuyorum					
32. Anadili İngilizce olan yabancılar arasında bulunsam kendimi büyük bir olasılıkla rahat hissederim.					
33. İngilizce dersi öğretmeni hazırlıklı olmadığım konularda sorular sorduğunda kendimi huzursuz hissediyorum.					

Appendix C: Semi Structured Interview Questions

1. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' self-perceived proficiency anxiety?
2. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' self-comparison to others anxiety?
3. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' test anxiety?
4. What strategies can be used to eliminate the factors related to students' beliefs about making mistakes?



Appendix D: Ethics Approval Form

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 01.10.2024-132147



T.C.
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
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RESUME

