



Post Graduate Studies & Training

Faculty of Arts

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**The Effectiveness of Anxiety on Undergraduate Students
Achievements in English language Departments at Zawia University
(Students and Teachers' Perspectives)**

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for MA
Degree in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract

This study explores the influence of anxiety on undergraduate students' academic achievement in the English Language Department at Zawia University, of examining the perspectives of both students and teachers. Anxiety is a common emotional and psychological experience in academic settings, particularly in tasks requiring oral communication, public performance, and real-time evaluation. Using a qualitative approach, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight students and eight teachers, providing in-depth insights into the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and physiological aspects of anxiety. Thematic analysis identified key patterns, including the recognition of anxiety, its impact on academic performance, anxiety-inducing activities, and coping strategies employed by both students and teachers.

Though, the findings reveal that anxiety significantly affects students' engagement, confidence, and performance, especially in oral presentations, debates, and interactive classroom activities. Students reported experiencing mental blocks, fear of negative evaluation, physical symptoms, and lowered self-confidence, while teachers emphasized the importance of supportive teaching environments, gradual exposure to challenging tasks, positive reinforcement, and pedagogical strategies tailored to individual student needs. Coping mechanisms such as peer support, structured preparation, and mindfulness techniques were shown to reduce anxiety and enhance academic performance.

Overall, the study highlights anxiety as a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that can act as both a barrier and, in certain contexts, a motivator depending on its intensity and management. Furthermore, this study also offers implications and recommendations and opens new doors for future researchers to further explore anxiety and academic achievement in EFL contexts.

Declaration

I am, Sondos Yosuf Alattoshi, hereby declare that this research entitled:

“The Effectiveness of Anxiety on Undergraduate Students’ Achievements in English Language Departments at Zawia University: Students and Teachers’ Perspectives” is my original work .

I further declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in part or in full, to any other institution or for any other degree or qualification. All sources used in this research have been acknowledged appropriately, and all information, data, and ideas presented in this work are authentic to the best of my knowledge.

I take full responsibility for any errors or omissions contained in this thesis.

Name: Sondos Yosuf Alattoshi

Signature:

Date:

Dedication

This work is deeply dedicated to my parents.

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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background of the study, the statement of the problem, the aims of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the methodology used, and the organization of the study. It situates the research within the broader context of anxiety in English language learning and highlights the relevance of examining this phenomenon in Libyan university settings. By outlining the foundational elements of the study, this chapter establishes a clear framework that guides the subsequent chapters and clarifies the purpose and scope of the research.

1.2 Background of the Study

Anxiety is a common debilitating experience among university students, particularly those in the English Department. The existing concern over anxiety among English department university students due to its significant effects on academic performance is underscored by research findings (Smith et al., 2018). This study delves into the perspectives of both students and teachers within the English Department regarding anxiety and its implications for academic achievement. Furthermore, anxiety can significantly hinder students' ability to effectively engage with their coursework and assignments, particularly in the context of the English Department, where students are required to regularly participate in discussions, presentations, and written assignments. Therefore, the perspectives of students and teachers are crucial in understanding how anxiety affects student achievement.

Anxiety is widely acknowledged as a factor that can hinder academic achievement among university students. Studies show that anxiety leads to reduced motivation, difficulties with concentration, and hindered language acquisition, thus negatively impacting overall academic performance (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989). Furthermore, anxiety results in avoidance behaviors, causing students to avoid language-related activities and interactions, which further hinders language development and academic success. The implications of anxiety extend to the instructional domain, influencing teaching practices and strategies employed by English language educators in Libya. In response, educators identify and mitigate anxiety-related challenges by adopting learner-centered and supportive instructional approaches (Brown, 2007). The importance of addressing assessment-related anxiety is underscored by its influence on teaching practices and student performance, emphasizing the need for culturally responsive and

inclusive assessment methods within the Libyan English language classroom (Derakhshan and Kruk, 2020).

Moreover, investigating the ramifications of anxiety on academic achievement among English department university students in Libya represents a crucial research endeavor that necessitates further examination. This study aims to enrich comprehension of anxiety in language education and advocates for the creation of a more inclusive and supportive English language learning environment for Libyan university students.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Anxiety among English department university students in Libya presents a significant challenge for academic achievement and student well-being. The lack of research on the specific manifestations and impacts of anxiety in this context highlights the need for a deeper understanding. Investigating how anxiety affects academic achievement and student performance, as well as considering socio-cultural factors, is crucial. The issue is examined from both students' and teachers' perspectives for better understanding.

1.4 Aims of the Study

This study aims to:

1.explore the students' perspectives regarding the effects of anxiety on their academic achievement.

2.identify the teachers' perspectives regarding the effects of anxiety on their students' academic achievement.

1.5 Research Questions

What are the students' perspectives regarding the effects of anxiety on their academic achievement?

What are the teachers' perspectives regarding the effects of anxiety on their students' academic achievement?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies on its contribution to addressing a notable gap in the literature by exploring the experiences and perceptions of anxiety among English department university students in Libya. The research provides valuable insights for educators and administrators to enhance student support systems by elucidating the impact of anxiety on academic performance and overall well-being. Additionally, the study aims to inform teaching practices by examining how anxiety influences strategies within the English language education context. The findings pave the way for the development of tailored interventions to address anxiety and create more supportive learning environments for English language learners in Libyan universities. Moreover, the research offers a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students within this specific cultural context by investigating socio-cultural factors contributing to anxiety, ultimately guiding future research directions and interventions to improve student success and well-being.

1.7 Research Methodology

The research requires an in-depth understanding of the beliefs, opinions, and behaviors of both students and teachers towards anxiety in the context of learning English in Libya. To capture the complexity of the issue, the research employs a qualitative method, specifically semi-structured interviews, which allow participants to express their values, beliefs, experiences, and emotions related to anxiety. This approach recognizes that anxiety is a subjective phenomenon that cannot be fully captured through quantitative measures alone. By valuing the perspectives of both students and teachers, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of anxiety and inform the development of targeted interventions and support mechanisms. Furthermore, the research focuses on university students and teachers, as they are directly impacted by the issue under investigation. The selection of participants is deliberate, combining purposive and random sampling methods to ensure a diverse and representative sample for the study.

Moreover, given that the research revolves around a psycholinguistic issue, the use of open-ended interviews conducted in a tranquil and comfortable setting is selected as the most effective method for eliciting comprehensive responses. In these interviews, the interviewer aims to establish a sense of trust with the interviewees to encourage genuine and authentic answers. Therefore, some psychological plans are used to obtain

natural reactions from the interviewees, and a pilot study is conducted on a small number of samples to confirm the existence of the research problem. The thematic analysis method is used to analyze the collected data.

1.8 Organization of the Study

The study comprises six chapters, each serving a distinct purpose. Chapter One provides an introduction to establish a broad context and background for the topic under investigation. Chapter Two entails an extensive literature review, incorporating information and findings from previous studies related to the topic. Chapter Three outlines the methods employed by the researcher to collect the data. Chapter Four presents the data analysis process and the results obtained. Chapter Five offers a comprehensive discussion of the results, including their implications. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the study by summarizing the findings, discussing their significance, and providing recommendations for further research

Chapter Two
Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of anxiety, focusing on its definitions and role in psychology, particularly its implications for mental health and well-being. It identifies the cultural perspectives on Anxiety as well as the factors contributing to learning anxiety and examines the unique challenges of Foreign Language Anxiety for learners. The review highlights the prevalence of anxiety among university students, who often face significant pressure, and considers its effects on academic achievement and cognitive processes crucial for language learning. Furthermore, it addresses how anxiety affects language skills, emphasizing the connection between emotional state and linguistic performance while synthesizing research to enhance understanding and explore strategies to mitigate anxiety's negative effects.

2.2 Definitions of Anxiety

Anxiety is a complex emotional experience that encompasses feelings of apprehension, uncertainty, and nervousness, often accompanied by physiological symptoms such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, and a heightened state of arousal (American Psychological Association, 2020). It is recognized as a natural response to stress, functioning as a protective mechanism that prepares individuals to cope with perceived threats. However, when anxiety becomes excessive, it can significantly impair functioning, particularly in academic environments (Hembree, 1988).

In psychological literature, anxiety is often differentiated into various subtypes to enhance understanding of its nuanced effects. Spielberger (1983) offers a widely used distinction between state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety refers to a temporary emotional state characterized by feelings of apprehension or worry in response to specific situations, whereas trait anxiety describes a stable personality characteristic that predisposes individuals to perceive a wide range of situations as threatening. This distinction is particularly relevant in educational contexts, as learners may exhibit situational anxiety only in testing environments or specific learning situations, such as speaking in a foreign language (Sarason, 1978).

Further expanding on the nature of anxiety, researchers such as Endler and Parker (1990) have categorized anxiety into cognitive and somatic dimensions. Cognitive anxiety involves worries about performance, fear of negative evaluation, and self-doubt,

while somatic anxiety pertains to the physical symptoms that arise in response to stress. This dual perspective is essential for understanding how anxiety can manifest both mentally and physically, influencing learners' overall experiences.

In the context of language learning, Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is a specific form of anxiety that learners often encounter. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), FLA is described as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors specifically related to classroom language learning. They identify three primary components that contribute to FLA: communication apprehension, which is the fear of speaking in a foreign language; fear of negative evaluation, where learners are overly concerned about being judged by peers or instructors; and test anxiety, which is the heightened anxiety experienced in evaluative situations such as exams or quizzes.

Additionally, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) explore the broader implications of anxiety in the context of language acquisition, proposing that high levels of anxiety can inhibit language performance by affecting cognitive processes critical for learning. Their research suggests that anxiety can reduce the capacity for working memory, leading to difficulties in language production and comprehension.

Furthermore, the implications of anxiety extend beyond the immediate learning context. Research indicates that excessive anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviors where learners may disengage from academic activities altogether, further exacerbating feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem (Blascovich and Tomaka, 1991). This cycle of anxiety can create barriers to effective learning and hinder academic achievement, emphasizing the need for educators to develop supportive strategies to address anxiety in their students.

A comprehensive understanding of anxiety, its definitions, and its various dimensions is crucial for effectively addressing the challenges it poses in educational settings. By recognizing the complexities of anxiety, educators can better formulate targeted interventions to support learners, particularly those grappling with the specific anxieties associated with language acquisition.

2.3 Anxiety in Psychology

Anxiety is a multifaceted psychological construct characterized by a complex interplay of various factors and manifestations that can influence an individual's emotional and cognitive functioning. It typically encompasses both state and trait anxiety (Spielberger, 1972). State anxiety refers to temporary feelings of apprehension and

nervousness induced by specific stressors, particularly in high-pressure situations such as public speaking or exams (Spielberger, 1983). In contrast, trait anxiety is a more stable characteristic, reflecting an individual's overall tendency to experience anxiety across a range of situations and contexts (Eysenck, 1992). This distinction is crucial for understanding how anxiety influences individual behavior, performance, and overall well-being.

Cognitive anxiety comprising negative thoughts, worries, and beliefs about one's abilities can significantly impair cognitive functions, leading to challenges in concentration, decision-making, and memory retention (Zeidner, 1998). For instance, during high-stakes testing environments, students may exhibit both cognitive anxiety, stemming from fears about not meeting expectations, and somatic anxiety, characterized by physiological responses such as increased heart rate and sweating (Perry et al., 2014). These two dimensions can create a feedback loop where heightened anxiety exacerbates cognitive impairment, further diminishing performance outcomes.

Furthermore, research has consistently shown that cognitive anxiety can be particularly detrimental to learning, especially in language acquisition. A study by Kagan (1990) emphasized that students grappling with anxiety may find it challenging to focus on the material while managing their anxious thoughts, which can result in decreased performance in academic settings. Additionally, individuals with high levels of anxiety may struggle in classrooms or testing situations, showing lower levels of engagement and motivation due to fears of inadequacy. The impact of anxiety is not confined solely to academic performance; it can also affect social interactions, self-esteem, and overall mental health, leading to a broader range of consequences for the individual (Hofmann et al., 2012).

In educational contexts, studies indicate a strong correlation between higher levels of test anxiety and poorer academic performance. For instance, Putwain (2007) found that students with elevated levels of test anxiety typically exhibited lower academic achievement, attributing this to the negative effects of anxiety on cognitive functioning and self-regulation. This relationship may be further explained by the tendency of anxious individuals to engage in self-handicapping behaviors, such as procrastination or disengagement from study efforts, which creates a vicious cycle that adversely impacts learning outcomes (Martin and Marsh, 2003).

Coping strategies play a crucial role in addressing the adverse effects of anxiety. They can be categorized into two primary types: problem-focused coping and emotion-

focused coping. Problem-focused coping, which involves actively addressing the source of stress, generally correlates with lower anxiety levels (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004). On the other hand, research has indicated that emotion-focused coping can be beneficial for managing the emotional response to stressors, although it may not directly resolve the underlying issues causing anxiety (Carver et al., 1989).

Moreover, emotional regulation techniques, particularly mindfulness practices, have gained attention for their positive impact on anxiety management. (Gross, (1998). Numerous studies have shown that mindfulness, which involves focused attention and a non-judgmental awareness of the present moment, can alleviate anxiety among students, especially during performance-oriented contexts such as exams (Keng et al., 2011). Techniques like deep breathing, guided imagery, and meditation have been found to enhance emotional regulation, helping individuals cultivate a greater sense of calm and focus (Goyal et al., 2014, p.81).

Ultimately, understanding the complexities of anxiety its definitions, types, and profound effects on behavior, cognition, and performance is vital for developing effective interventions and support mechanisms in various settings, particularly educational environments. Continued research into innovative coping strategies and therapeutic approaches will further assist individuals in managing anxiety, thus enhancing their academic experience and improving their overall mental well-being. (American Psychiatric Association. 2013). By equipping students with the tools necessary to navigate anxiety, we can foster not only better academic performance but also healthier emotional development and resilience in the face of challenges (Perry et al., 2010). Addressing anxiety constructively serves to enrich individual potential and cultivate a more supportive and productive learning environment.

2.4 Cultural Perspectives on Anxiety

Anxiety disorders represent a significant mental health challenge worldwide, with their prevalence influenced not only by individual psychological factors but also by cultural context. The cultural backdrop shapes how anxiety is perceived, experienced, and treated in various societies, highlighting the importance of understanding anxiety through a culturally informed lens. This understanding can enhance mental health services, making them more accessible and relevant to diverse populations.(World Health Organization. 2017).

In many Eastern cultures, anxiety-related issues frequently carry a heavy stigma. Mental health struggles can be seen as personal failures or signs of weakness, leading individuals to feel shame and reluctance in discussing their conditions. For instance, Wong et al. (2017) highlight how many Asian Americans face distinct stressors related to cultural expectations and stigma. This cultural stigma often discourages individuals from reaching out for help, leaving them to cope with anxiety on their own. The resulting isolation can exacerbate feelings of anxiety and depression, creating a vicious cycle. As a result, developing culturally competent interventions becomes essential, as they can better address the unique experiences and barriers faced by individuals from these communities.

In contrast, Western societies tend to promote a greater awareness of mental health, emphasizing the importance of addressing psychological well-being as part of individual health. Individuals in these societies are more likely to acknowledge their mental health struggles and seek professional help. Corrigan (2004) explains that the cultural acceptance of therapy and mental health interventions in Western contexts has fostered more open discussions surrounding anxiety and mental health issues. However, the increased focus on individual mental health should not overshadow the significance of systemic factors and cultural influences that affect individuals' experiences of anxiety.

Coping mechanisms for anxiety often reflect deep cultural influences as well. In Western cultures, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is a widely accepted and practiced treatment that focuses on modifying negative thought patterns and behaviors. While CBT has shown considerable effectiveness, it may not necessarily resonate with individuals from non-Western backgrounds, where traditional practices may hold more relevance and appeal. For instance, mindfulness and meditation practices rooted in Eastern philosophies offer alternative avenues for managing anxiety. Hinton and Patel, (2017). Hinton et al. (2006) explored the experiences of Cambodian refugees in the United States, revealing how the belief in spirit possession influenced their perceptions of anxiety and depression. Many individuals attributed their symptoms to negative spiritual influences and opted for assistance from traditional healers instead of mental health professionals, reiterating the importance of integrating traditional cultural practices into mental health interventions.

Furthermore, cultural perspectives on anxiety must address the concept of intersectionality. This framework recognizes that individuals are shaped by multiple overlapping identities such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and migration status that significantly influence their experiences of anxiety. Bowleg, (2012) . Crenshaw

(1989) first introduced the notion of intersectionality to highlight the interconnectedness of social categorizations and their impact on an individual's experience of discrimination or privilege. Recent research by Barlow et al. (2017) indicates that marginalized communities often encounter compounded stressors from systemic discrimination, social exclusion, and economic disadvantage, amplifying their anxiety. This complexity emphasizes the need for mental health professionals to consider the various dimensions of cultural identity and systemic inequalities when developing treatment approaches.

The varying cultural interpretations and responses to anxiety have implications for mental health professionals seeking effective treatment modalities. It is crucial that therapeutic practices are tailored to accommodate the unique beliefs and experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. This not only fosters trust between clients and mental health providers but also ensures that therapies resonate on a deeper level with clients, ultimately leading to better therapeutic outcomes. (Sue and Zane, 2009).

Moreover, as global discussions surrounding mental health continue to evolve, the integration of cultural understandings is paramount in addressing anxiety disorders. Mental health initiatives should not only aim to treat anxiety but also work towards eradicating the stigma surrounding it, particularly in cultures where mental health issues remain taboo. Programs that educate communities about mental health can foster a more supportive environment for individuals experiencing anxiety, thereby encouraging them to seek help without fear of judgment. (World Health Organization. 2013).

The experience of anxiety is shaped by a multitude of factors, making it imperative that any nuanced understanding incorporates cultural beliefs, societal stigma, coping mechanisms, and the intersectionality of identities. The journey toward culturally sensitive mental health care must not lose sight of the broader socio-cultural contexts that influence anxiety disorders. As awareness of mental health issues expands globally, prioritizing the development of culturally informed interventions becomes essential for promoting effective strategies for understanding and treating anxiety.

By recognizing that the experience of anxiety is deeply rooted in cultural narratives, societal structures, and individual identities, mental health professionals can work more effectively to dismantle barriers to care and improve the overall well-being of individuals across the globe. This integration of cultural perspectives into mental health frameworks represents a promising path towards fostering a more inclusive and effective approach to addressing anxiety disorders in diverse populations. (Kirmayer, and Pedersen, 2014).

2.5 Anxiety of Learning

Anxiety has been a topic of significant interest in educational psychology, particularly in relation to its effects on learning and academic performance. A variety of studies have explored the connections between cognitive phenomena and emotional responses, Stöber (2004) noting that worry is intricately linked to affective, physiological, and interpersonal processes. Test anxiety, specifically, has been correlated with student performance, as evidenced by research from Cassady and Finch (2010), who found that dispositional test anxiety can negatively influence academic outcomes. Hembree (1988) provided a review of the correlates, causes, effects, and treatments of test anxiety, highlighting its prevalence among students and its detrimental impact on performance.

Cognitive factors play a crucial role in the experience of anxiety. Eysenck (1992) emphasized the cognitive perspective of anxiety, suggesting that cognitive distortions often exacerbate anxious feelings. In an attempt to mitigate the effects of anxiety, various coping strategies have been assessed, as outlined by Carver, Scheier, et al., (1989), who proposed a theoretically based approach to understanding coping mechanisms. Treatments for anxiety, particularly cognitive behavioral therapy, have been shown to be effective, as compiled in meta-analyses by Hofmann et al. (2012).

Moreover, mindfulness practices have emerged as a promising intervention for reducing anxiety, with research from Keng, Smoski, and Robins (2011) demonstrating positive effects on psychological health. These practices can help students manage anxiety, fostering a more conducive learning environment. Gender differences in anxiety levels have also been documented, with Meyer (2006) noting that female students often report higher levels of academic anxiety compared to their male counterparts. This is further supported by Ronen and Tatar (2013), who conducted a meta-analysis that indicated a significant relationship between test anxiety and academic performance.

Additionally, the transition to college presents unique challenges that can heighten anxiety levels. Mitchell (2010) explored how students cope with anxiety during this transition and its implication for performance. Academic emotions have a substantial influence on self-regulated learning and achievement, as articulated by Pekrun et al. (2002), who emphasized the need to consider emotional dimensions alongside cognitive factors in educational contexts. The role of motivation in self-regulated learning, as discussed by Perry, Liu, and Hattie (2014), is also critical, linking personal drive and anxiety management to academic success.

Putwain (2007) examined the role of gender and study skills on test anxiety, suggesting that effective study strategies may mitigate anxiety's adverse effects. Furthermore, Schunk and Zimmerman (2008) reviewed motivation and self-regulation, reiterating that self-regulation plays a pivotal role in managing anxiety and overall academic performance. Spielberger's (1983) development of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) has been instrumental in measuring anxiety levels, solidifying its role in educational research.

The cognitive load theory presented by Sweller (1988) adds another layer of understanding regarding how anxiety can affect learning by overwhelming cognitive resources. Ultimately, Zeidner (1998) provided a synthesis of research surrounding test anxiety, asserting the need for further exploration into its implications for teaching and learning, as well as effective interventions. Collectively, these studies highlight the intricate relationship between anxiety and learning, urging educators and researchers to develop effective strategies to support students in overcoming anxiety-related challenges.

Anxiety in educational settings is a multifaceted construct that significantly impacts learning and performance. Numerous studies define and explore various dimensions of anxiety, illustrating its complex interplay with cognitive functions and emotional responses. For example, Spielberger (1983), said that anxiety can be categorized into state anxiety, a temporary condition experienced in specific situations, and trait anxiety, a more permanent aspect of an individual's personality. This distinction is critical in understanding how students may experience anxiety differently based on their predispositions.

Further expanding on cognitive interference, Eysenck et al. (2007) proposed the processing efficiency theory, positing that anxiety consumes cognitive resources, hindering performance by reducing working memory capacity. This theory underscores the importance of addressing not just the emotional components of anxiety but also its cognitive implications. Additionally, the "Yerkes-Dodson Law" proposed by Yerkes and Dodson (1908) suggests that there is an optimal level of anxiety (or arousal) for performance, beyond which performance may decline; this research offers a nuanced perspective on the relationship between anxiety and student outcomes.

Coping strategies play an essential role in managing anxiety. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), coping can be categorized into problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping entails directly addressing the source of stress, while emotion-focused coping involves managing emotional responses.

Effective coping strategies, such as cognitive restructuring, have been shown to alleviate anxiety and improve academic performance (Zeidner & Matthews, 2005). Moreover, research by Turner and Johnson (2003) identified that students who adopt adaptive coping strategies tend to report lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of academic achievement.

Mindfulness and relaxation techniques have gained attention as effective interventions for anxiety. Keng, et al., (2011) explored the effects of mindfulness practices on psychological health, demonstrating that mindfulness training can significantly reduce anxiety and improve emotional regulation. Similarly, a study by Regehr et al. (2013) found that relaxation training and mindfulness practices helped university students cope with exam stress, leading to greater concentrations and improved performance.

In addition to individual differences, contextual factors such as academic environment and peer support can influence anxiety levels. Furr and Ellison (2014) conducted research highlighting how a supportive academic environment can buffer the effects of anxiety on performance. The role of teachers in alleviating student anxiety cannot be understated; research by Eisenberg et al. (2004) pointed out that positive teacher-student relationships foster resilience against anxiety, contributing to improved learning outcomes.

Gender differences in anxiety have also been examined. Meyer (2006) reported that female students generally experience higher levels of anxiety than male students, which can impact their academic performance. This finding is echoed by Putwain (2007), who noted that female students often report greater levels of test anxiety, leading to calls for gender-sensitive educational interventions.

Research on the academic environment has demonstrated that competitive atmospheres can increase anxiety levels among students. According to a study conducted by Ribeiro and Pereira (2012), students in highly competitive classrooms reported greater anxiety, which negatively affected their learning experiences. This raises questions about the design of educational settings and their effects on student mental health.

To sum, anxiety in educational contexts is a complex phenomenon influenced by cognitive, emotional, and contextual factors. Definitions and classifications of anxiety help elucidate its various dimensions, while empirical research emphasizes the significance of coping strategies, environmental influences, and cultural contexts in understanding and addressing anxiety's impact on learning. Moving forward, greater

attention to these factors not only enhances our comprehension of anxiety but also informs the development of effective interventions to support students' academic success.

2.5.1 The Factors of Anxiety of Learning

The anxiety of learning refers to the feelings of apprehension, fear, or unease that individuals may experience in educational settings or while engaging in the process of acquiring new knowledge or skills. (Zeidner, 1998). This form of anxiety can arise from various factors, including fear of failure, negative past experiences, low self-esteem, or societal pressures. It can lead to avoidance behaviors, difficulty concentrating, and decreased academic performance.

Furthermore, Anxiety in learning contexts is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by various cognitive, emotional, social, and contextual factors. Understanding these factors is crucial for educators and practitioners to design effective interventions that promote student well-being and academic success.

Cognitive Factors

Cognitive theories of anxiety suggest that the way students interpret their environment and their own abilities significantly influences their anxiety levels. For instance, students who possess maladaptive beliefs about their intelligence or who engage in negative self-talk may be more susceptible to anxiety (Schunk, 2003). A study conducted by Dweck (2006) highlights how a fixed mindset believing that abilities are static rather than growth-oriented can exacerbate anxiety during learning tasks. In her research, Dweck found that students with a fixed mindset experienced higher levels of anxiety and were less likely to seek help when facing challenges, leading to poorer academic performance.

Emotional Factors

Emotional responses to academic stressors are key contributors to anxiety. Test anxiety is a commonly studied form of academic anxiety that can result from the fear of poor performance and its potential implications (Putwain, 2007). Research by Hembree (1988) indicates that approximately 20% of students experience significant test anxiety, which can hinder their performance and overall learning experience. Moreover, the emotional climate of the classroom, including teacher-student relationships and peer interactions, can significantly impact students' emotional well-being. When students perceive their environment as supportive and nurturing, they tend to exhibit lower anxiety levels (Furr and Ellison, 2014).

Social Factors

Social dynamics also play a critical role in shaping students' anxiety levels. Peer relationships and social comparison can heighten anxiety, particularly in competitive academic environments. For example, Zeidner and Matthews (2005) discuss how students who engage in social comparisons tend to report increased anxiety, particularly when they perceive others as more capable. This social pressure can inhibit students' willingness to participate in classroom activities, potentially leading to a cycle of avoidance and increased anxiety. Additionally, gender differences have been observed, with girls typically reporting higher levels of anxiety than boys in educational settings, particularly in relation to social comparison and peer evaluations (Meyer, 2006).

Contextual Factors

The educational context itself including classroom environment, instructional methods, and assessment practices can either mitigate or exacerbate anxiety. A study by Pekrun et al. (2002) shows that students who perceive their classrooms as supportive and engaging tend to experience less anxiety and show better performance outcomes. On the other hand, high-stakes testing environments can significantly increase anxiety, as these assessments are often linked to critical outcomes, such as grades and future opportunities (Ribeiro and Pereira, 2012). Research by Turner and Johnson (2003) demonstrates that students in competitive academic settings exhibit higher levels of stress and anxiety, which can adversely affect their engagement and learning.

In summary, anxiety in learning is influenced by a combination of cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, social dynamics, and contextual factors. Addressing these influences requires a multifaceted approach, including fostering a growth mindset, creating supportive classroom environments, and developing effective coping strategies. By understanding and mitigating the factors that contribute to anxiety, educators can help students achieve greater academic success and overall well-being.

2.6 Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is defined as the negative emotional response that learners experience when they are required to use a foreign language. It encompasses feelings of nervousness, apprehension, and fear of negative evaluation that can hinder language performance and proficiency. According to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986),

FLA is "a type of anxiety related specifically to the use of a foreign language. It is rooted in the fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated by others" (p. 125).

Moreover Foreign language anxiety (FLA) is a prominent phenomenon experienced by individuals learning and using a foreign language, characterized by feelings of nervousness, apprehension, and fear related to speaking, listening, reading, or writing in that language. Researchers have identified several facets of FLA, which can significantly impact learners' performance and overall language acquisition. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), FLA can be broadly categorized into communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety, each of which plays a distinct role in the language learning experience. Communication apprehension pertains to the anxiety stemming from the fear of communicating with others in a foreign language, while fear of negative evaluation relates to the worry about being judged or criticized by peers or instructors.

Numerous studies have highlighted the negative effects of FLA on language proficiency and academic performance. In their exploration of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, for instance, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) found that students with higher levels of anxiety often reported lower levels of self-confidence and greater difficulties in speaking tasks. This connection between anxiety and performance is supported by Liu and Huang (2011), who discovered that FLA can significantly hinder learners' willingness to participate in class discussions, leading to limited opportunities for practice and improvement. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Cheng, et al., (1999) further underscored that high levels of anxiety are correlated with poorer speaking skills and overall lower academic achievement in foreign language learning.

Thus, the causes of foreign language anxiety are multifaceted and can vary depending on individual characteristics and contextual factors. For instance, personal traits such as introversion, perfectionism, and low self-esteem have been found to exacerbate feelings of anxiety (Gkonou, 2013). Moreover, the learning environment plays a crucial role; instructors' teaching styles and classroom dynamics can either alleviate or contribute to students' anxiety levels (Dewaele and MacIntyre, 2014). Research by Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) emphasizes the importance of supportive teacher-student interactions in mitigating anxiety, proposing that a positive classroom atmosphere where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of the learning process can empower students to engage more confidently with the language.

Coping strategies have also emerged as important factors in managing FLA. Various studies suggest that learners who employ adaptive coping strategies such as positive self-talk, relaxation techniques, and seeking social support tend to experience lower levels of anxiety and higher levels of language performance (Keller and Sapp, 2006; Tóth, 2020). Additionally, building learner autonomy and self-efficacy has been shown to help alleviate feelings of anxiety, as students who believe in their ability to succeed are more likely to take risks in their language use (Bandura, 1997).

In conclusion, foreign language anxiety is a complex and multifaceted issue that significantly influences both learners' experiences and outcomes in language acquisition. Understanding the various dimensions and contributions to FLA can help educators develop strategies to create supportive learning environments that facilitate greater language proficiency and reduce anxiety. Continued research is necessary to explore this phenomenon further, particularly concerning the effectiveness of various interventions and coping strategies in different contexts and among diverse learner populations.

2.7 Anxiety Among University Students

Anxiety among university students is a widely studied phenomenon that has significant implications for academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. Various forms of anxiety, including general anxiety, exam anxiety, and specific anxieties like foreign language anxiety, can impact students' ability to cope with the demands of higher education, (Putwain ,2009).

Cassady,.. and Johnson, (2008). Claimed that anxiety levels among university students can be influenced by several factors, including academic pressure, social expectations, and the transition to a new environment (Cognitive Test Anxiety in Education p. 120). A study by Beiter et al. (2015) highlights that students who perceive their academic workload as overwhelming are more likely to experience heightened levels of anxiety. This increase in anxiety can detrimentally affect students' academic performance, leading to a cycle of stress and poor outcomes (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

Exam anxiety is one of the most commonly reported forms of anxiety among university students, which often manifests as a fear of failure and a concern about the consequences of poor performance. According to Cassady and Johnson (2002), this type of anxiety can lead to cognitive impairment, decrease self-esteem, and hinder effective studying and test-taking strategies. They argue that high levels of exam anxiety can lead

to a self-fulfilling prophecy, where anxious students perform poorly due to their anxiety rather than a lack of knowledge or preparation.

Moreover, the social aspect of university life also plays a critical role in the development of anxiety disorders among students. Loneliness and a lack of social support are significant predictors of anxiety and depression (Lakey and Cohen, 2000). The transition to university often involves significant changes in social dynamics, and the pressure to form new relationships can exacerbate feelings of isolation and anxiety (Eisenberg et al., 2009).

Addressing anxiety among university students involves a multi-faceted approach that includes developing coping strategies, providing adequate support services, and fostering a healthy academic environment. Programs aimed at enhancing students' understanding of anxiety, as well as offering stress management techniques, can be beneficial. Furthermore, training faculty to create supportive classroom climates can alleviate the factors contributing to students' anxiety (Garrison et al., 2011).

Furthermore, anxiety among university students is a complex issue that stems from multiple sources, spanning academic pressures, social dynamics, and specific anxieties like FLA. Understanding these factors is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems that can help students navigate their university experience more successfully.

Anxiety among Libyan university students has been a subject of interest, especially in the context of the socio-political challenges faced in the region. Research has indicated that various factors contribute to heightened anxiety levels among these students, including academic pressure, socio-economic instability, and the impact of the civil conflict. Cassady, and Johnson, (2008).

A study conducted by Elhima et al. (2022) found that there is a significant prevalence of anxiety disorders among university students in Libya. The study reported that nearly 50% of the surveyed students exhibited symptoms of anxiety, highlighting the urgent need for mental health support in higher education institutions in Libya. The factors contributing to this anxiety included academic stress, fear of the future, and socio-economic difficulties (Elhima, 2022).

The instability resulting from Libya's ongoing political issues has been associated with increased levels of anxiety among students. According to Bashir and Alhashimi (2020), students report feelings of uncertainty about their futures, which exacerbate

anxiety levels. Their study emphasizes that the effects of ongoing conflicts create a challenging environment that affects students' mental health and academic performance (Bashir, and Alhashimi, 2020).

Academic expectations in Libyan universities contribute significantly to students' anxiety. A survey by Khaireldin et al. (2019) revealed that the stress associated with examinations and coursework is a major source of anxiety for students, which can lead to negative academic outcomes. Their research highlights the importance of addressing academic pressures to improve students' mental health (Khaireldin and Alageli, 2019).

Moreover, a study by Abdelkareem et al. (2021) evaluated the coping strategies used by Zawia University students facing anxiety. The research highlighted that while many students employed positive coping mechanisms, a significant number used avoidance strategies, which can exacerbate mental health issues.

2.8 The Effects of Anxiety on the Academic Achievement

The impact of anxiety on academic performance varies across different cultures and educational systems as well. Roberts (2011) found that cultural constructs of achievement and failure play significant roles in how students experience anxiety during examinations, suggesting that culturally responsive pedagogies may be necessary to mitigate anxiety in diverse classrooms. The relationship between anxiety and academic performance has garnered extensive research attention. For instance, Hembree (1988) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis that revealed a moderate negative correlation between test anxiety and performance, indicating that recall during examinations. Higher levels of anxiety typically lead to poorer academic outcomes. This finding aligns with the work of Zeidner (1998), who noted that test anxiety is associated with cognitive interference, which can diminish concentration and memory.

2.9 Anxiety and the Cognitive Processes of Language Learning

Horwitz., and Cope, (1986) said that Anxiety is a complex emotional response that can significantly impact various domains of human functioning, including language learning. In the context of second language acquisition (SLA), anxiety often manifests as a specific phenomenon termed "language anxiety," which is defined as the apprehension associated with speaking, writing, or engaging in social interactions in a non-native

language. This form of anxiety can impede language performance and hinder the cognitive processes essential for effective language learning.

Research indicates that language anxiety can be categorized into different types, including communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, as outlined by Horwitz et al. (1986). Communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety related to real or anticipated communication with others. Test anxiety encompasses the anxiety experienced during assessments or evaluations, while fear of negative evaluation pertains to the worry about being judged or criticized by others. These facets of anxiety can lead to reduced participation in language learning activities, ultimately detracting from the learner's ability to acquire new linguistic skills (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991).

The effects of anxiety on cognitive processes in language learning can be understood through the lens of various theoretical frameworks. A notable model is the Facilitation and Debilitation Hypothesis proposed by Yerkes and Dodson (1908), which posits that human performance is influenced by levels of arousal. Moderate anxiety may enhance performance by sharpening focus and motivation, whereas high anxiety typically results in cognitive overload and diminished performance. In language learning, high levels of anxiety can interfere with the processing and retention of new vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation, as it detracts from the cognitive resources available for information processing (MacIntyre, 1999).

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the negative correlation between anxiety and language proficiency. For example, a study by Saito and Samimy (1996) found that Japanese learners of English who reported higher levels of anxiety performed worse in measures of speaking proficiency compared to their less anxious peers. Similarly, Cheng et al. (1997) conducted a meta-analysis revealing that anxiety was a significant predictor of language achievement across various contexts and learner demographics. These findings underscore the importance of recognizing and addressing anxiety within language learning environments.

Furthermore, the impact of anxiety on cognitive processes can be exacerbated by individual differences in learner characteristics. For instance, research by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) highlighted that learners with high levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy often experience lower levels of anxiety and subsequently demonstrate better language performance. Conversely, learners with lower self-perceptions may internalize negative beliefs about their language abilities, leading to heightened anxiety and further hindering

their learning potential. This relationship illustrates the interplay between emotional factors and cognitive processes, suggesting that effective language instruction should incorporate strategies to build learner confidence alongside linguistic competence.

The role of instructional practices in mitigating anxiety is also a critical area of investigation. Various instructional approaches, such as cooperative learning and communicative language teaching, have been shown to create supportive learning environments that reduce anxiety levels (Dörnyei, 2001). Cooperative learning, in particular, fosters collaboration among students, allowing them to practice language skills in a less threatening context, thereby reducing the likelihood of negative evaluation. Additionally, providing learners with opportunities for meaningful communication and authentic language use can cultivate a sense of agency and ownership, further decreasing anxiety levels.

Recent advancements in technology have introduced additional avenues for addressing language anxiety. The use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and language-learning apps offers learners the opportunity to engage with the language in a low-stakes environment, thereby reducing the pressure associated with traditional classroom settings (Hwang, 2016). Online platforms can facilitate language practice through asynchronous interactions, allowing learners to take their time in constructing responses without the immediate pressure of face-to-face communication. This adaptability not only lessens anxiety but also encourages a greater exploration of language use without fear of negative evaluation.

Moreover, anxiety presents a significant barrier to language learning, influencing cognitive processes and overall language performance. Understanding the multifaceted nature of language anxiety and its implications for learning is essential for educators and researchers alike. By incorporating strategies that address both

Understanding the emotional and cognitive dimensions of language learning reveals opportunities to design supportive, inclusive classrooms that bolster language development, reduce anxiety, and improve learners' linguistic performance (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cooper, 1986; Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; Young, 1991). Tackling anxiety in language learning not only enhances academic results but also supports lasting language proficiency and intercultural competence (Horwitz et al., 1986; Young, 1991). As SLA research advances, it is essential to pursue innovative methods and teaching approaches that address the varied needs of language

learners while effectively lowering anxiety-related barriers (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991).

2.10 The Effects of Anxiety on the Language Skills

Language anxiety is often differentiated into two categories: foreign language anxiety (FLA), which occurs specifically in the context of foreign language learning, and general anxiety that is less tied to language but can still affect language performance (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986). FLA manifests in various contexts, including speaking in front of peers, participating in conversations with native speakers, or simply engaging in language-related tasks. Preliminary studies have indicated that this type of anxiety hinders L2 learners' performance across different domains. For instance, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found that anxious students tend to exhibit lower proficiency levels and are less likely to participate actively in classroom settings, demonstrating a correlation between anxiety levels and language acquisition outcomes.

When examining the effects of anxiety on speaking skills, research highlights a negative relationship between high anxiety levels and oral performance. According to Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999), learners who experienced elevated anxiety levels reported feeling less confident while speaking, which led to decreased fluency and accuracy. This finding aligns with the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which posits that optimal performance occurs at moderate levels of arousal, while both low and high levels can lead to poor performance (Yerkes & Dodson, 1908). Specifically, high levels of anxiety cause cognitive overload, impede information processing, and diminish the learner's ability to retrieve linguistic knowledge during high-stress speaking situations.

Anxiety also play a significant role in listening comprehension. A study by Saito and Samimy (1996) revealed that learners with high anxiety reported challenges in processing auditory information, which can lead to difficulties in understanding spoken language. This effect is particularly pronounced in situations requiring real-time comprehension, such as when engaging in conversations or active listening exercises. Listening anxiety can stem from various sources, including the fear of misunderstanding, inability to keep up with rapid speech, or concerns about making errors while responding. Consequently, such fears can exacerbate anxiety levels, creating a cycle that hinders listening skills and ultimately affects overall language proficiency.

In writing, anxiety can manifest in various ways, inhibiting the ability to express thoughts clearly and structurally. Research conducted by Chen (2007) indicated that

anxious learners often experience writer's block, fear of negative evaluation, and an overwhelming sense of pressure, which restricts their capacity to produce coherent written language. These findings suggest that anxiety can disrupt the writing process, affecting planning, drafting, and revising stages, ultimately leading to poorer writing quality. The self-regulated writing process often exacerbates anxiety, as anxious students may compare their output unfavorably to their peers, leading to lower self-esteem and increased reluctance to engage in writing tasks. (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991)

Moreover, anxiety can impact reading skills, as learners with high anxiety may find it challenging to concentrate on texts due to intrusive thoughts or worries (Dörnyei, 2001). Research by Kondo and Yang (2004) found that learners with elevated anxiety levels reported difficulties in processing information effectively while reading, which could hinder comprehension and retention. This effect is particularly concerning in academic settings, where reading proficiency is crucial for academic success and overall confidence in using a second language.

Beyond the direct impacts on individual language skills, anxiety can also influence motivation and learning behaviors in language acquisition. As illustrated by Dörnyei (2001), anxious learners often exhibit decreased intrinsic motivation and increased fear of failure, which limits their willingness to take risks in the language learning process. Engaging in language practice requires a level of vulnerability and openness; therefore, high levels of anxiety can deter learners from participating in necessary speaking, listening, or writing activities. Consequently, the interconnection between anxiety, motivation, and performance presents a comprehensive framework for understanding how emotional factors significantly shape the language learning experience.

In finding solutions to anxiety-related challenges, it is crucial to implement instructional practices that foster a supportive learning environment. Teachers can help mitigate anxiety by encouraging cooperative learning, where learners collaborate and support each other, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and fear of negative evaluation (Dörnyei, 2001). Strategies that promote a positive classroom climate, such as pair and group work, provide opportunities for learners to practice their language skills in a less threatening context. Additionally, integrating technology into language instruction, such as using language-learning applications and online communication platforms, can create low-pressure environments for learners to engage in practice activities, further reducing anxiety associated with traditional classroom settings (Hwang, 2016).

Moreover, the effects of anxiety on language skills can be profound and multifaceted, influencing speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. Understanding the intricate relationship between anxiety and language performance is essential for educators and researchers in the field of SLA. By recognizing the challenges posed by anxiety and implementing effective instructional strategies, it is possible to create environments that not only promote language acquisition but also foster the emotional well-being of learners, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency outcomes. Continued research is necessary to further explore the nuances of anxiety in language learning contexts and to develop innovative strategies for supporting learners in overcoming this common obstacle.

Anxiety can significantly hinder speaking abilities in language learners. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) found that high levels of anxiety often inhibit learners from participating in speaking activities, leading to reduced opportunities for practice. They concluded that speaking anxiety could result in a reluctance to engage in conversation, which detracts from language acquisition. Furthermore, Cheng, Horwitz, and Schallert (1999) found that learners with heightened speaking anxiety reported a fear of negative evaluation, significantly impacting their willingness to communicate in the target language.

Listening anxiety can also affect learners' comprehension and processing of spoken language. It has been shown that anxious learners may struggle to focus on the content of spoken language due to their preoccupation with their anxiety (Vogt, 2018). In a study by Liu and Liu (2016), it was observed that students with high anxiety levels performed poorer on listening comprehension tests compared to their less anxious peers. This suggests that anxiety can interfere with both the comprehension of spoken texts and the ability to respond appropriately.

Anxiety has been found to influence reading comprehension negatively. Kondo and Yang (2004) highlighted that learners with high anxiety often experience difficulties in concentrating on written texts, resulting in lower comprehension and retention. Additionally, Lee (2010) emphasized that test anxiety led to poorer performance in reading assessments, suggesting that the stress associated with evaluative situations compromises learners' ability to understand and analyze written material effectively.

Writing anxiety is particularly prominent in language learners and can result in avoidance of writing tasks. Chen (2007) found that students who reported higher levels of writing anxiety produced lower-quality written work and expressed apprehension

about their writing abilities. She noted that anxiety can lead to problems such as writer's block and reduced creativity, inhibiting self-expression and fluency in writing.

Moreover, The interplay between anxiety and the four language skills highlights the need for educators to understand and address anxiety within language learning contexts. Implementing strategies that foster a supportive learning environment can help mitigate anxiety and enhance overall language acquisition. By recognizing the impact of anxiety on speaking, listening, reading, and writing, educators can better support learners in developing their language proficiency.

2.11 Summary of the chapter

This chapter synthesizes existing research on anxiety, with a specific focus on its impact on foreign language learning. It establishes a foundational understanding of anxiety as a multifaceted psychological construct, differentiating between state and trait anxiety, as well as cognitive and somatic dimensions.

The review then narrows its scope to the educational context, examining the general Anxiety of Learning, its contributing factors (cognitive, emotional, social, and contextual), and its negative correlation with academic achievement. It highlights the unique phenomenon of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), defining it as a specific anxiety related to language learning processes, characterized by communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation, and test anxiety.

A significant portion is dedicated to the population of interest: university students, noting the high prevalence of anxiety due to academic pressure, social transitions, and, in the specific case of Libya, socio-political instability. The core argument centers on how anxiety detrimentally affects the cognitive processes essential for language acquisition (e.g., working memory, concentration) and, consequently, impedes the development of all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing), often creating a cycle of avoidance and underperformance.

In conclusion, the literature review establishes that anxiety is a significant barrier to language learning. It underscores the necessity for culturally informed, multifaceted interventions and supportive educational environments to mitigate anxiety's effects and promote both linguistic proficiency and student well-being.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology of the presented research . It describes the qualitative framework and phenomenological approach used to capture students' experiences. It also discusses the data collection tools, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups, and the purposive sampling strategy employed for diverse representation. Additionally, it addresses the pilot study conducted to refine instruments, outlines data collection procedures, and highlights the ethical considerations to protect participants. A summary emphasizes the significance of the chosen methods in enhancing understanding of anxiety's effects on academic achievement and informing targeted support for students.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the plan or framework for conducting research, specifying procedures for collecting, measuring, and analysing data (Creswell, 2014). It is a strategy for how research questions answered and includes the methods for data collection and analysis (Vogt et al., 2012). Furthermore, research design serves as the structure or blueprint of a research project that outlines the techniques for gathering and analyzing information (Bryman, 2016).

Building on this point, the research design of the study Anxiety and its effects on the progression of students' achievement follows a qualitative, phenomenological approach. This design is specifically chosen to delve deeply into the subjective experiences of students who grapple with anxiety and to understand how this anxiety impacts their academic performance and overall educational journey. Through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, to gather rich, detailed accounts of participants' experiences. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in questioning, encouraging participants to elaborate on their feelings and experiences in a natural manner. This approach enables the researchers to explore themes related to motivation, coping strategies, and personal challenges in depth. By using purposive sampling, the research seeks to include a diverse range of students with varying experiences of anxiety, ensuring comprehensive insights into the phenomenon. This qualitative, phenomenological design thus facilitates a thorough exploration of the interplay between anxiety and academic achievement, providing valuable findings that could inform supportive interventions for students.

3.3 Data Collection Tool

Data collection tools are essential instruments that enable researchers to gather information systematically from participants, supporting a thorough understanding and analysis of research questions. Bryman (2016) describes data collection tools as the methods researchers use to collect information that advances the investigation of their questions. The careful selection of these tools is critical for ensuring the validity and reliability of findings, a point Creswell (2014) emphasizes when noting that the choice of data collection tools substantially influences study validity and reliability. Moreover, in the presented study the primary data collection tool was semi-structured interviews. This qualitative method represented an effective approach to exploring complex phenomena like anxiety, permitting researchers to obtain in-depth insights into participants' lived experiences.

- **Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews combined both predetermined and open-ended questions, providing a structured framework while allowing flexibility to explore relevant themes as the conversation unfolded. This dual approach enabled participants to share their experiences in a way that felt natural, fostering a rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee that encouraged candidness and authenticity.

In this study, the interviews were designed to delve deeply into several key areas related to anxiety and academic performance. For instance, participants were asked to describe specific episodes where anxiety affected their ability to perform academically, how they coped with stress in high-pressure situations, and the support systems they relied on from peers, educators, and family. By creating a safe and open environment for discussion, the interviews allowed participants to reflect on and articulate their feelings and thoughts about their academic experiences, leading to a more nuanced understanding of the intersection between anxiety and achievement.

One of the benefits of utilizing semi-structured interviews as the sole data collection tool was the opportunity for researchers to observe non-verbal cues, such as body language and tone of voice, which enhanced the richness of the data collected. These non-verbal signals provided additional context for understanding participants' emotional states and the intensity of their experiences, further enriching the qualitative analysis. Moreover, the individual nature of interviews permitted a thorough exploration of each

student's narrative, allowing for the emergence of unique themes that may not have surfaced in group settings like focus groups.

Therefore, the researchers also paid careful attention to issues of confidentiality and trust, assuring participants that their responses would be anonymized and used strictly for research purposes. This consideration was particularly important when discussing sensitive topics such as anxiety, as participants needed to feel secure to share accurately and openly about their experiences. Establishing trust led to deeper narratives and more meaningful insights, presenting a comprehensive picture of how anxiety affected students in their academic journeys.

Additionally, the findings derived from these interviews had significant practical implications. By understanding the specific challenges that anxious students faced, educators and policymakers could design tailored interventions and support programs that addressed the needs of this population. This research informed the development of mental health resources, educational strategies, and support networks that empowered students to cope with anxiety more effectively, ultimately enhancing their academic achievements.

Moreover, the study employed semi-structured interviews as the principal data collection tool to capture the rich, qualitative experiences of students dealing with anxiety. This method allowed for a deep exploration of individual narratives, shedding light on the complexities of anxiety's impact on academic performance. The insights gained from this research contributed significantly to understanding anxiety in educational contexts, leading to informed interventions that supported student well-being and academic success. (Roberts, et al. (2021).

3.4 Pilot Study

Before the main phase of data collection, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the research instruments. According to Maxwell (2013), pilot studies play a vital role in identifying potential issues in research design, interview questions, and data collection procedures before the full implementation. In this study, the pilot phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews with three undergraduate students from Zawia University who met the inclusion criteria. The aim was to test the clarity and comprehensibility of the interview questions and to evaluate the interview process in terms of timing, participant comfort, and data richness.

Feedback from the pilot participants revealed that some questions were too broad and needed rewording for better focus. Accordingly, the researcher refined and simplified several interview questions to enhance precision and elicit more detailed responses. The pilot also confirmed the suitability of the interview duration (approximately 30–45 minutes) and the effectiveness of the researcher’s approach in creating a comfortable atmosphere that encouraged participants to share openly.

Consequently, the results of the pilot study demonstrated that the data collection instrument was well-designed to capture participants’ lived experiences and that no major modifications were necessary beyond minor linguistic adjustments. Consequently, the pilot study validated the effectiveness of the semi-structured interview guide and ensured that the research tools were reliable and appropriate for the main study.

3.5 Sampling

In the study “Anxiety and Its Effects on the Progression of Students' Achievement,” the sampling strategy was carefully designed to ensure a representative and diverse selection of participants. According to Creswell (2014, p. 208), a well-defined sampling strategy is essential for enhancing the credibility and transferability of research findings. The researchers sought to capture a wide range of experiences related to anxiety among students, which required a purposive sampling approach.

Participants were recruited from a variety of academic settings, including different educational institutions, programs, and levels of study. This diversity was critical in obtaining a holistic view of anxiety's impact across various contexts. The criteria for inclusion in the study consisted of students who self-identified as experiencing anxiety related to their academic performance. This criterion enabled the researchers to focus on individuals who could provide valuable insights into the specific challenges and experiences associated with anxiety in academic settings.

To reach potential participants, the researchers employed multiple recruitment strategies, including the use of flyers, social media announcements, and direct outreach to student organizations focused on mental health and wellness. These strategies were aimed at maximizing visibility and encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to participate. Additionally, the researchers ensured that efforts were made to include students from varying demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and academic discipline. This comprehensive approach allowed for a richer dataset, capturing a multitude of perspectives and lived experiences related to anxiety.

The sample size consisted of 8 students and 8 teachers, which was deemed sufficient to achieve data saturation. According to Guest et al. (2006), data saturation occurs when no new data or insights emerge from additional interviews, indicating that the data collected sufficiently represents the phenomenon being studied. By aiming for this sample size, the researchers intended to strike a balance between obtaining in-depth, qualitative data and ensuring a diverse representation of student experiences.

Throughout the recruitment process, the researchers emphasized the importance of confidentiality and anonymity in participation, encouraging students to share their experiences openly without fear of judgment or repercussions. This commitment to ethical considerations helped foster a safe atmosphere for participants, making it more likely that they would share candidly about their anxiety-related challenges.

In summary, the sampling strategy utilized purposive sampling to select a diverse group of students who self-identified as experiencing anxiety in academic settings. By implementing multiple recruitment strategies and focusing on obtaining a representative sample, the researchers aimed to gain a rich and nuanced understanding of the experiences and challenges faced by anxious students, ultimately contributing to the depth and breadth of the study's findings.

Participants for this study were purposefully selected based on their experience and knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. The inclusion criteria for participants were individuals who had experienced the phenomenon being studied, and who were willing to share their experiences and perspectives through semi-structured interviews. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study. The interview guide was developed based on the research objectives and literature review, and was designed to elicit participants' experiences, perspectives, and insights related to the phenomenon under investigation. The interview guide was pilot-tested prior to the main data collection phase to refine the questions and ensure their clarity and relevance.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face, either in-person or via video conferencing, based on participants' preferences and availability. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent, and detailed notes were taken to capture contextual information and nonverbal cues.

The audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis involved identifying and coding themes and patterns in the data, and organizing them into meaningful categories. The analysis was iterative, with codes and categories refined and revised as new data were collected.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the data collection process. Participants were provided with informed consent forms that explained the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants. Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality, and were given the option to withdraw from the study at any time. The study was approved by the institutional ethics committee. Data saturation was achieved when no new themes or insights emerged from the data analysis. The sample size for the study was determined based on the principle of data saturation, ensuring that the insights gathered were comprehensive and representative of the range of experiences related to the research focus. In summary, the data collection procedure for this study involved purposefully selecting participants, conducting semi-structured interviews, analyzing the data using thematic analysis, and taking ethical considerations into account. The iterative process of data analysis ensured that the insights gathered were comprehensive and representative of the range of experiences related to the research focus.

Prior to the commencement of the data collection process, participants were provided with informed consent forms that detailed the purpose of the study, the data collection procedures, and their rights as participants. The informed consent forms highlighted the voluntary nature of participation, the assurance of confidentiality, and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before providing their consent to participate in the research.

Moreover, participants' confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained throughout the research process. All identifying information was kept separate from the research data, and participants were assigned pseudonyms to ensure their anonymity in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Audio recordings of the interviews were securely stored and accessible only to the research team, and any transcribed data were de-identified to further protect participants' privacy.

Respect for participants was paramount throughout the research process. Participants' perspectives and experiences were valued, and they were treated with dignity and respect during the interviews. The research team made efforts to create a safe and comfortable environment for participants to share their experiences, and any sensitive or distressing topics were approached with empathy and sensitivity.

Though the security and integrity of the research data were carefully maintained. Measures were taken to ensure the safe storage and handling of all data, including audio recordings, interview transcripts, and any related documents. Access to the data was restricted to authorized members of the research team, and appropriate safeguards were implemented to prevent unauthorized access or breaches of confidentiality.

The research study obtained approval from the relevant institutional ethics committee prior to the commencement of data collection. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines and standards set forth by the institutional review board, ensuring that the research design, data collection procedures, and participant interactions were ethically sound and compliant with established ethical principles.

Participants were offered the opportunity for debriefing and support following their participation in the study. They were provided with information about support services or resources that they could access if they experienced any distress or emotional discomfort as a result of their involvement in the research.

Ultimately, the ethical issues in this qualitative research study, which utilized semi-structured interviews, encompassed informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, respect for participants, data security, institutional ethics approval, and provision of debriefing and support for participants. These ethical considerations were integral to upholding the rights and well-being of the participants and ensuring the ethical integrity of the research.

3.8 Preparing Data for Analysis

After completing all interviews, the data were carefully prepared for analysis to ensure accuracy and consistency. The preparation process followed several systematic steps. First, all audio recordings from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve the authenticity of participants' responses. Each transcript was reviewed while listening to the recordings to verify accuracy and correct any transcription errors. Non-verbal cues such as pauses, tone changes, or emotional expressions were also noted in the transcripts, as they provided valuable context for interpretation. Second, all transcripts were anonymized by replacing participants' names and identifiable details

with pseudonyms. This step ensured confidentiality and complied with ethical standards. Third, the transcripts were organized and formatted consistently before being imported into qualitative data analysis software (such as NVivo) or manually coded using thematic analysis techniques. The researcher then conducted an initial reading of all transcripts to become familiar with the data and to identify preliminary themes. Finally, all files including transcripts, consent forms, and researcher notes were securely stored in password-protected folders to maintain data integrity. This systematic preparation ensured that the data were accurate, well-structured, and ready for rigorous qualitative analysis.

3.9 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodology used to investigate anxiety and its impact on academic achievement from both students' and teachers' perspectives. A phenomenological design was adopted to explore participants' lived experiences of anxiety within academic contexts. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, chosen for their flexibility and capacity to elicit detailed responses. A pilot study was conducted to refine the interview guides and ensure their clarity and relevance for both participant group. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select information-rich participants. The final sample consisted of 8 students who self-identified as experiencing academic anxiety and 8 teachers with direct classroom experience observing student anxiety. This dual-perspective design aimed to provide a holistic and triangulated understanding of the phenomenon. The sample size was determined by data saturation, with interviews continuing until no new themes emerged. Furthermore, Data analysis followed a systematic thematic analysis procedure. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded, with student and teacher data analyzed both separately and comparatively to identify convergent and divergent themes. Ethical considerations guided all stages of the research, including informed consent, confidentiality through pseudonyms, secure data storage, and attention to power dynamics between students and teachers. In summary, the phenomenological approach, combined with semi-structured interviews and comparative thematic analysis of data from students and teachers, was designed to produce a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of academic anxiety. The methodological framework provides a strong foundation for generating findings that can inform effective and context-sensitive support strategies in educational settings.

Chapter Four
Data Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data collected to explore academic anxiety among undergraduate students in the English Department at Zawia University, from both students' and teachers' perspectives. It aims to show how anxiety is experienced, expressed, and managed in English language learning. The chapter is organized into sections covering students' general perceptions of anxiety, teachers' perspectives, the integration of both views, and a summary of the main findings, highlighting the links between personal, social, and instructional factors.

Furthermore, the data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used method for identifying and organizing patterns in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017), which allows researchers to capture both explicit and deeper meanings in participants' responses. Key themes identified include cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects of anxiety, as well as task-related triggers, course-specific challenges, peer influences, and coping strategies. Comparing student and teacher perspectives enhanced the credibility of the findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of the sources, manifestations, and management of academic anxiety within the English Department.

4.2 The Analysis of the Students' Interviews Data

This section analyzes interviews with eight undergraduate students in the English Department at Zawia University, exploring their experiences of academic anxiety. It examines how anxiety is perceived, expressed, and managed, focusing on themes such as general perceptions and understandings of anxiety, the impact of anxiety on learning, personal experiences and symptoms of anxiety, anxiety-inducing academic activities, factors increasing and reducing anxiety, anxiety in English departments, differences in anxiety across courses, coping with anxiety and supporting peers, discussing anxiety with teachers, and suggestions for reducing anxiety. The analysis is guided by a psychosocial perspective, considering anxiety as shaped by personal feelings, classroom practices, peer comparison, and cultural expectations. Initial codes were grouped into cognitive, behavioural, and emotional themes, with subthemes such as task triggers, course challenges, peer influence, and coping strategies. Comparing student perspectives and collaborative review strengthened the credibility of the findings, providing a clear understanding of academic anxiety in the English Department.

4.2.1 General Perceptions and Understandings of Anxiety

The findings show that the eight students expressed diverse yet overlapping perspectives on the nature and impact of anxiety in the English Department at Zawia University. Students A and B viewed anxiety as a natural emotional response closely linked to academic pressures and expectations commonly present in Libyan universities. They emphasized that anxiety tends to arise during continuous assessments, oral participation, and the competitive academic environment within their department. While acknowledging that some level of anxiety is normal and even motivating, both students highlighted that it becomes problematic when it intensifies and begins to disrupt daily functioning. For example, Student B stated, “Anxiety isn’t just a private feeling, it’s something our classrooms amplify the fear of making mistakes, the pressure to sound fluent, and the sense that every utterance is under judgment from peers and teachers.” Moreover, A and B noted that anxiety fluctuates throughout the semester, peaking during midterms, presentations, and final exams when workloads and instructor expectations are highest. These reflections suggest that anxiety is an almost inseparable part of university life in Libya, particularly as students try to balance rigorous academic responsibilities with personal and family obligations.

In contrast, the findings also show that students C and D considered anxiety not merely a natural response but a significant barrier to academic performance. While Student C acknowledged that mild anxiety can sometimes motivate learners to study more effectively or prepare more thoroughly for high-stakes exams, both C and D stressed that when anxiety exceeds a manageable level, it becomes highly disruptive. Student D particularly emphasized its cognitive impact, explaining that anxiety can block mental processing, reduce confidence, and cause hesitation during class interactions. Both students described anxiety as a disabling force that leads to forgetfulness, diminished focus, and difficulty articulating ideas clearly. These observations highlight that anxiety is not only an emotional experience but also a cognitive impediment, especially in English-speaking contexts where accuracy and fluency are constantly evaluated.

Furthermore, Students E and F offered a perspective linking anxiety to the educational system itself. The findings indicate that the structure of the academic environment demanding teachers, unpredictable workloads, frequent quizzes, and high expectations for English proficiency—plays a major role in generating anxiety. Cultural and familial pressures to succeed further exacerbate stress. Student F explained, “Even when a student prepares well, unexpected tasks or strict evaluation styles can suddenly

trigger high stress.” Both students also pointed to the absence of systematic support mechanisms, such as counseling sessions, stress-management workshops, or flexible assessment policies, as key contributors to heightened anxiety. Their insights suggest that environmental and institutional factors, alongside individual preparation, significantly shape students’ experiences of anxiety.

Meanwhile, the findings also show that Students G and H approached anxiety from psychological and social perspectives, portraying it as a pervasive mental challenge among university students in Libya. They emphasized that anxiety is deeply embedded in academic life, particularly in English departments where students frequently perform orally in a foreign language. Fear of judgment regarding accents, pronunciation, or fluency further intensifies anxiety in classroom interactions. Additionally, G and H highlighted cultural influences, including fear of embarrassment, social comparison, and sensitivity to public criticism. These perspectives demonstrate that for many students, anxiety is not only a response to academic demands but also a socially and culturally reinforced experience that shapes engagement with the learning environment.

4.2.2 The Impact of Anxiety on Learning

The data revealed that anxiety has a substantial and generally negative impact on students’ learning within the English Department. Students A and B consistently emphasized that anxiety interferes with their ability to concentrate, particularly during lectures and complex explanations. According to their accounts, anxious thoughts often compete with academic attention, making it difficult to process information or remain mentally present in class. The findings also show that fear of being called upon, concern over making mistakes, and anticipation of peer judgment frequently distract students from listening carefully or engaging with course content. As a result, anxiety creates cognitive interference that limits comprehension and reduces the effectiveness of learning, even among students who are well prepared.

In addition, the findings indicate that anxiety restricts students’ ability to demonstrate knowledge they already possess. Students A and B reported that hesitation, self-doubt, and fear of negative evaluation often prevent them from responding to questions or participating in discussions, despite understanding the material. This difficulty was particularly evident in cognitively demanding courses such as linguistics, syntax, phonology, and literary analysis, where sustained focus, analytical thinking, and active engagement are essential. The data therefore suggest that anxiety not only weakens

comprehension and memory retention but also undermines students' confidence in applying their knowledge during classroom interaction.

However, the findings also revealed a contrasting view from Student C, who perceived mild levels of anxiety as occasionally beneficial. This student suggested that moderate anxiety before exams or deadlines can increase alertness, encourage better organization, and lead to more focused study habits. Such anxiety was described as a motivating pressure rather than a disabling force. Nevertheless, this perspective was not widely shared. Most participants emphasized that once anxiety intensifies beyond a manageable level, its effects become overwhelmingly negative rather than productive.

In contrast, Student D strongly rejected any positive role of anxiety, particularly in oral communication tasks. The findings show that anxiety frequently leads to mental blocks during class discussions and oral exams, making it difficult for students to retrieve vocabulary, structure sentences, or express ideas clearly. Even when preparation is adequate, anxiety was reported to disrupt performance at critical moments. Given the centrality of oral participation in English language studies, these experiences highlight how anxiety directly restricts students' ability to meet academic expectations.

Moreover, Students E and F drew attention to the behavioral consequences of anxiety, emphasizing how it leads to avoidance strategies that further undermine learning. The data revealed that anxious students often skip classes, delay assignments, avoid presentations, or withdraw from interactive activities. Procrastination emerged as a common response, as beginning tasks itself triggered anxiety. These avoidance patterns reduce opportunities for practice and feedback, thereby limiting language development. Over time, this behavior reinforces both anxiety and academic underperformance, creating a cycle that is difficult to break.

Finally, Students G and H highlighted the emotional and psychological impact of anxiety, particularly its effect on self-esteem and academic confidence. The findings show that anxiety discourages risk-taking, which is essential for language learning, and increases self-criticism and fear of evaluation. As a result, students tend to underestimate their abilities and over-monitor their work, leading to reduced productivity and emotional exhaustion. Collectively, the data demonstrate that anxiety significantly interferes with learning across cognitive, behavioral, and emotional dimensions, making it a critical factor influencing academic performance in the English Department at Zawia University.

4.2.3 Personal Experiences and Symptoms of Anxiety

The data revealed that students experience anxiety through a wide range of physical, cognitive, emotional, and psychological symptoms, particularly during demanding academic situations. Students A and B reported intense physiological reactions, especially in oral communication tasks conducted in English. These symptoms included trembling, sweating, rapid heartbeat, dry mouth, and unsteady voices, which became more noticeable when speaking in front of classmates or teachers. The findings show that such physical reactions often emerged immediately before presentations or class participation, making it difficult to begin speaking. Both students emphasized that their inability to control these physical symptoms increased their fear of being judged, thereby reinforcing anxiety. This cycle demonstrates how physiological responses not only reflect anxiety but also intensify it, significantly disrupting performance and confidence in language-learning tasks.

In addition, the findings indicated that anxiety extends beyond the classroom and affects students' physical well-being and daily routines. Students C and F described a combination of physical discomfort and sleep-related symptoms, particularly during examination periods. They reported experiencing stomach pain, headaches, nausea, loss of appetite, and difficulty sleeping in the days leading up to major assessments. Anxiety-related insomnia was highlighted as a recurring issue, with persistent overthinking and anticipation of failure preventing adequate rest. As a result, students entered exams physically exhausted, which further impaired concentration and cognitive performance. These experiences illustrate how academic anxiety can disrupt basic physiological needs, such as sleep and nutrition, thereby indirectly influencing academic outcomes.

Moreover, Students D and E drew attention to cognitive symptoms that severely interfered with academic functioning. The data revealed that anxiety often caused mental blocks, difficulty recalling previously learned material, and slowed thinking during stressful moments. Students reported that during oral participation or examinations, information that had been well prepared suddenly became inaccessible. In some cases, anxiety also affected comprehension, causing confusion when responding to direct questions. These cognitive difficulties were sometimes accompanied by physical symptoms such as shaky hands or difficulty writing, further complicating performance. Such findings highlight how anxiety compromises essential academic processes, including memory retrieval, comprehension, and effective communication.

Meanwhile, Students G and H emphasized the emotional and psychological dimensions of anxiety. The findings show that persistent worry, fear of negative evaluation, and emotional exhaustion were common experiences. Students reported ongoing self-doubt, heightened sensitivity to feedback, and a constant fear of failure, even before beginning academic tasks. Anxiety was described as a continuous presence rather than a temporary reaction, gradually undermining motivation, confidence, and emotional stability. These emotional symptoms often extended beyond specific tasks, affecting students' overall well-being and academic identity.

Collectively, the accounts of all eight students demonstrate that academic anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon manifesting across physiological, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions. The findings also show that these symptoms frequently interact, intensifying anxiety and limiting students' ability to perform to their full potential. Anxiety was particularly heightened in contexts involving oral performance, high-stakes evaluation, and public scrutiny, which are central features of English language learning. These experiences underscore the seriousness of academic anxiety and highlight the importance of addressing both its psychological and physical effects within the university learning environment.

4.2.4 Anxiety-Inducing Academic Activities.

The findings reveal that certain academic activities consistently trigger high levels of anxiety among students in the English Department, particularly those that involve public performance and direct evaluation. Students A and B identified oral presentations and examinations as the most anxiety-provoking tasks in their academic experience. They explained that these activities require students to perform publicly, which intensifies fear of judgment from both teachers and peers. The data show that classroom practices in which mistakes are corrected openly contribute to a learning atmosphere where students associate speaking with embarrassment rather than growth. In addition, using English in public contexts was described as especially stressful, as students often feel exposed when communicating in a foreign language that may not fully represent their knowledge or abilities. The pressure to simultaneously maintain accurate pronunciation, appropriate vocabulary, and fluent delivery creates substantial psychological strain, leading some students to experience physical symptoms and mental blocks even before the activity begins. These experiences highlight how oral performance tasks generate heightened evaluative pressure in language-learning environments.

In contrast, the findings indicate that students C and D viewed group evaluations and unexpected questioning as particularly anxiety-inducing. Group evaluations were described as stressful due to the sense of responsibility students feel toward their peers, as individual performance directly affects collective outcomes. This shared accountability increases emotional pressure, especially for students with lower confidence or weaker oral skills. Furthermore, unexpected questioning by instructors was reported as a major source of anxiety, as it requires immediate responses without preparation. Such situations demand rapid thinking, linguistic accuracy, and confident delivery, which can overwhelm students. The unpredictability of these tasks often places students under intense pressure, making them feel suddenly exposed and scrutinized, thereby intensifying emotional distress within classroom interactions.

Moreover, students E and F emphasized seminars and timed writing tasks as significant anxiety triggers. Seminars were described as highly demanding because they require sustained participation, critical engagement, and fluent academic expression in front of others. The findings show that students often perceive seminars as continuous evaluation spaces, where every contribution is mentally assessed, leading to heightened self-consciousness. Timed writing tasks further contributed to stress due to strict time limits and expectations of linguistic accuracy. These tasks require students to generate ideas quickly, organize arguments effectively, and write precisely under pressure. For many students, the combination of time constraints, topic unfamiliarity, and performance expectations creates cognitive overload, which negatively affects confidence and overall performance.

Meanwhile, the data reveal that students G and H experienced the highest levels of anxiety during debates and research presentations. Debates were described as demanding activities that require quick thinking, fluent expression, and the ability to defend arguments persuasively. These requirements increase self-awareness and fear of making visible mistakes in front of an audience. Research presentations were viewed as equally stressful, as they demand advanced academic language, theoretical accuracy, and confident delivery. Students also reported heightened anxiety resulting from comparisons with high-achieving peers and concerns about facing critical questions or negative evaluations. These findings suggest that anxiety in such tasks is not solely related to language proficiency, but also to intellectual expectations and academic visibility.

Overall, the experiences of all eight students show that anxiety is most strongly triggered by academic activities that are performance-based, time-sensitive, or publicly

evaluated. The findings demonstrate that tasks involving oral communication, spontaneous response, and high academic exposure intensify emotional pressure and limit active engagement. Consequently, these anxiety-inducing activities play a significant role in shaping students' learning experiences and academic performance within the English Department at the University of Zawia.

4.2.5 Factors Increasing and Reducing Anxiety

The findings indicate that several instructional factors significantly contribute to increased anxiety among students in the English Department. Students A and B emphasized that high academic expectations, strict teaching styles, and an excessive focus on linguistic accuracy are among the strongest sources of stress. The data show that when instructors prioritize flawless pronunciation, grammar, and immediate correctness, students become overly cautious and fearful of making mistakes. Such teaching practices appear to discourage participation, as learners shift their attention from meaningful communication to error avoidance. In particular, public correction during class intensifies students' fear of negative evaluation, especially during oral activities where mistakes are highly visible. As a result, anxiety becomes closely linked to classroom participation, presentations, and examinations, where performance is directly observed and assessed.

From another perspective, students C and D highlighted peer-related factors as major contributors to anxiety. The findings reveal that frequent comparison with more fluent or confident classmates often leads to feelings of inadequacy and diminished self-confidence. Students who perceive themselves as weaker speakers tend to internalize these comparisons, which negatively affects motivation and willingness to participate. In addition, fear of judgment from peers and instructors further heightens anxiety, particularly during spontaneous speaking tasks. The anticipation of criticism appears to trigger hesitation, cognitive disruption, and avoidance behaviors. The data suggest that the combined effect of peer comparison and constant evaluation creates a persistent sense of vulnerability that overshadows students' actual language abilities.

Furthermore, students E and F drew attention to workload-related pressures as a key factor intensifying anxiety. According to the data, heavy academic demands, overlapping deadlines, and unpredictable assignments make effective planning difficult for many students. Insufficient preparation time, especially for oral tasks, was associated with increased stress and reduced confidence. The findings also show that frequent quizzes, assignments, and presentations create a continuous pressure cycle, leaving little

opportunity for recovery or reflection. This ongoing exposure to academic demands appears to contribute to chronic anxiety, preventing students from developing stable study routines and negatively affecting both learning and performance.

In addition, students G and H focused on performance pressure and time management difficulties as significant anxiety-inducing factors. The findings show that public speaking in English places simultaneous demands on cognitive processing, linguistic accuracy, and emotional control, which can overwhelm even well-prepared students. Poor time management further compounds this stress, as last-minute preparation increases uncertainty and emotional tension. The interaction between performance pressure, insufficient planning, and fear of evaluation creates a complex environment in which anxiety escalates rapidly. These findings illustrate how multiple stressors often intersect rather than operate independently.

While several factors were found to increase anxiety, the data also reveal a range of elements that help reduce its intensity. Students A and B emphasized the importance of supportive peers and empathetic, approachable teachers in creating a low-anxiety learning environment. According to the findings, classrooms characterized by encouragement, understanding, and respectful feedback allow students to participate more freely without fear of embarrassment. Collaborative activities, such as group work, were also viewed as beneficial, as they distribute responsibility and reduce individual performance pressure, particularly during speaking tasks.

Similarly, students C and D identified preparation and practice as effective strategies for managing anxiety. The data suggest that familiarity with course content and task expectations reduces uncertainty and enhances students' sense of control. Regular rehearsal, revision, and peer discussion were associated with increased confidence and more positive engagement with challenging tasks. These findings indicate that predictability and mastery experiences play a crucial role in lowering anxiety levels.

Moreover, students E and F highlighted the positive impact of constructive feedback on emotional well-being. The findings show that when instructors acknowledge effort and progress, rather than focusing solely on errors, students feel more motivated and less fearful of failure. Positive reinforcement appears to encourage participation and foster a more optimistic attitude toward learning, gradually weakening the negative effects of anxiety.

Finally, students G and H emphasized emotional regulation strategies and social support as essential coping mechanisms. The data indicate that techniques such as deep

breathing, brief breaks, and mindfulness help students manage physiological and emotional stress before high-stakes tasks. In addition, supportive interactions with friends and classmates provide reassurance and emotional relief. These strategies often work alongside preparation and instructional support, forming a holistic approach to anxiety management.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that academic anxiety is shaped by a complex interaction of instructional, social, and personal factors. At the same time, they show that supportive teaching practices, effective preparation, positive feedback, and emotional regulation strategies can substantially reduce anxiety and promote healthier learning experiences within the English Department at Zawia University.

4.2.6 Anxiety exists more in English Departments

The findings reveal that anxiety is particularly pronounced among students enrolled in English departments compared to those in other academic fields. Students A and B emphasized that pronunciation difficulties and broader linguistic challenges are key contributors to this heightened anxiety. According to the data, speaking a foreign language in public places students in a position of increased vulnerability, as every utterance becomes open to evaluation. Even minor pronunciation inaccuracies were perceived as highly noticeable, leading students to fear appearing incompetent or linguistically inadequate. Moreover, the data indicate that many students equate linguistic proficiency with intellectual ability, which intensifies pressure during oral participation. This belief amplifies self-doubt and encourages hesitation, particularly in situations where language performance is visible to peers and instructors.

Furthermore, the findings show that the public nature of English language use during discussions, presentations, and reading tasks creates a continuous sense of exposure. Students frequently feel observed and evaluated, which sustains anxiety across classroom activities. Supporting this view, students C and D highlighted that frequent demands for grammatical accuracy, oral fluency, and spontaneous responses significantly elevate stress levels. English courses often require immediate verbal contributions, structured arguments, and complex linguistic constructions under time constraints. As a result, anxiety is closely linked to the fear of linguistic errors, with many students prioritizing correctness over communicative effectiveness. The anticipation of public mistakes, particularly in peer-filled settings, discourages participation and reinforces anxiety even among academically capable learners.

In addition, students E and F drew attention to performance pressure, shyness, and heightened self-awareness as factors that further intensify anxiety within English departments. The findings suggest that English-medium instruction is cognitively demanding, as students must simultaneously retrieve vocabulary, maintain grammatical accuracy, and produce fluent speech. This mental load disproportionately affects shy or introverted students, for whom public speaking already poses a challenge. Constant exposure to English use, including informal classroom interactions, fosters excessive self-monitoring and fear of error, even in low-stakes contexts. Consequently, anxiety becomes persistent rather than situational, contributing to emotional strain and reduced confidence.

From another angle, students G and H emphasized the role of peer comparison in exacerbating anxiety. The data indicate that frequent comparisons with more fluent classmates create a pervasive sense of linguistic inadequacy. Observing peers speak confidently often magnifies students' own hesitations, making their perceived weaknesses more salient. These comparisons can lead to withdrawal behaviors, such as silence during discussions or avoidance of collaborative tasks. Collectively, the findings suggest that the English department environment while academically enriching often fosters unintentional competitiveness, intensifying students' fear of judgment and sustaining elevated anxiety levels throughout the learning process.

4.2.7 Differences in Anxiety Across Different Courses

The findings demonstrate that anxiety levels vary considerably across different courses within the English department. Students A and B reported that speaking and conversation courses generate the highest levels of anxiety. According to the data, these classes demand spontaneous language production, rapid cognitive processing, and immediate interaction, all of which intensify performance pressure. Even well-prepared students may experience anxiety due to fears of grammatical inaccuracies, pronunciation errors, or delayed responses. The requirement to speak publicly and become the focal point of classroom attention appears to amplify self-consciousness. In contrast, writing-oriented courses were perceived as less anxiety-provoking because they allow time for reflection, drafting, and revision. The opportunity to work independently and at a self-directed pace reduces fear of immediate evaluation and supports greater emotional comfort.

However, a different pattern emerged in the responses of students C and E, who identified literature, drama, and research methodology courses as particularly stressful.

The findings suggest that these subjects place heavy cognitive and analytical demands on students, requiring extensive reading, critical interpretation, and abstract reasoning in English. Literature courses were viewed as anxiety-inducing due to expectations for original insights and sophisticated discussion contributions. Similarly, drama courses increase stress by combining linguistic accuracy with emotional expression and public performance. Research methodology was also perceived as challenging, as it requires mastery of specialized terminology, academic conventions, and structured research procedures. For students still developing advanced language proficiency, these demands significantly elevate anxiety.

Conversely, students D and F indicated that grammar and linguistics courses tend to provoke lower anxiety levels. The data reveal that these subjects are more predictable and rule-governed, relying on logic, structure, and systematic analysis rather than spontaneous speech. Written exercises and problem-solving tasks allow for deliberate thinking and reduce the pressure associated with real-time performance. Additionally, the reduced emphasis on public speaking and subjective interpretation contributes to greater student confidence and perceived control.

Meanwhile, students G and H emphasized that teacher behavior often plays a decisive role in shaping anxiety, sometimes outweighing the influence of course content itself. The findings indicate that supportive, approachable instructors who normalize mistakes and encourage participation gradually help reduce anxiety, even in demanding courses. In contrast, strict or highly critical teaching styles can intensify stress, making even simple tasks appear intimidating. These insights underscore the importance of classroom emotional climate in mediating anxiety responses.

Overall, the data suggest that anxiety across courses is shaped by a dynamic interaction between course demands, linguistic requirements, teaching practices, and interpersonal factors. Courses that involve real-time language production or advanced analytical thinking tend to heighten anxiety, whereas structured subjects and empathetic instructional approaches help mitigate stress and promote learner confidence.

4.2.8 Coping with Anxiety and Supporting Peers

The data indicates that students employ a wide range of coping strategies to manage academic anxiety, reflecting differing levels of self-regulation, social reliance, and emotional awareness. Students A and C primarily relied on internal coping mechanisms, emphasizing personal control and cognitive resilience. The data show that

techniques such as controlled breathing and physiological calming were commonly used before anxiety-provoking situations, including oral presentations and examinations. In addition, positive self-dialogue played a central role in strengthening confidence and reducing anticipatory stress. These students also engaged in mental rehearsal by visualizing successful performance outcomes, which helped minimize uncertainty and fear. Advanced preparation for potential challenges was viewed as a stabilizing factor that enhanced concentration and emotional balance. Collectively, these strategies reflect a cognitive-behavioral orientation, enabling students to regulate emotions, enhance self-efficacy, and maintain composure in high-pressure academic contexts.

In contrast, a different coping pattern emerged among students B and D, who combined practical preparation with social support strategies. The data reveal that repeated rehearsal, extensive review of materials, and collaborative study sessions were essential components of their anxiety management. Practicing tasks multiple times increased predictability and reduced fear of unexpected difficulties, while peer interaction provided reassurance and emotional comfort. Importantly, awareness that classmates experienced similar anxieties fostered a sense of solidarity and reduced feelings of isolation. These findings underscore the value of shared experiences, structured preparation, and interpersonal connection in mitigating academic stress. The integration of individual effort and collective support highlights the social dimension of effective coping.

Meanwhile, students E and F emphasized restorative and relaxation-centered strategies, particularly during periods of intense workload or emotional fatigue. The findings suggest that incorporating regular breaks and calming activities into daily routines helped prevent mental exhaustion and cognitive overload. Light physical movement, listening to music, meditation, and stretching were reported as effective methods for releasing tension and restoring focus. These approaches highlight the importance of self-care as a proactive mechanism for sustaining emotional stability and academic performance. Rather than reacting to anxiety after it escalated, these students attempted to manage stress preventively, thereby reducing the risk of burnout.

From another perspective, students G and H adopted a combination of mindfulness practices and structured task management. Remaining present-focused, observing anxious thoughts without judgment, and employing grounding techniques were identified as useful strategies for emotional regulation. In addition, breaking large assignments into smaller, sequential tasks reduced perceived difficulty and enhanced a

sense of control. The data indicate that this organizational approach minimized feelings of overwhelm and panic by directing attention toward manageable goals. Such strategies reflect an understanding of cognitive organization and executive functioning, enabling students to maintain clarity and efficiency under academic pressure.

Supporting peers also emerged as a significant component of anxiety management. Students A, B, and G actively provided encouragement, organized practice sessions, and offered constructive feedback to classmates. Creating safe, non-judgmental environments for rehearsal was viewed as especially important for reducing fear associated with oral tasks. Similarly, students C and D focused on emotional reassurance, empathetic listening, and validation, helping peers recognize that anxiety is a shared and normal experience. These interactions reduced feelings of isolation and emotional intensity prior to assessments. Meanwhile, students E and H employed humor, light conversation, and calming dialogue to ease tension and restore emotional balance. Student F, on the other hand, provided practical assistance by helping peers organize materials, rehearse tasks, and establish structured study plans.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that coping with anxiety involves a multidimensional combination of internal self-regulation and external peer support. Students draw on cognitive-behavioral techniques, mindfulness, preparation, restorative practices, and collaborative engagement to manage emotional challenges. Collectively, these strategies reinforce competence, emotional resilience, and a sense of belonging, highlighting the crucial role of social and psychological resources in managing academic anxiety within English department contexts.

4.2.9 Discussing Anxiety between Students and Teachers during Classes

The findings indicate that students' experiences in discussing anxiety with teachers vary considerably, reflecting differences in teacher approachability, classroom climate, and students' willingness to seek support. Students A and E reported largely positive experiences, highlighting the role of empathetic and attentive instructors in alleviating academic stress. They explained that supportive teachers not only listened carefully but also introduced practical accommodations, such as clarifying explanations, allowing additional time for tasks, or revisiting difficult material. These actions contributed to reducing pressure and strengthening students' confidence. In particular, validation of emotional experiences helped students feel understood rather than judged, which enhanced motivation and academic engagement. Such interactions demonstrate

how emotionally responsive and flexible teaching practices can positively influence students' ability to cope with anxiety and sustain performance.

Conversely, a different pattern emerged among students B and F, who avoided discussing anxiety with teachers altogether. The data suggest that feelings of embarrassment and fear of negative labeling prevented them from initiating communication. These students expressed concern that teachers might interpret their anxiety as weakness, lack of ability, or an attempt to justify poor performance. This perception discouraged openness and reinforced silence, highlighting a critical barrier to seeking academic support. As a result, anxiety remained unaddressed, potentially intensifying stress levels and limiting opportunities for adjustment or guidance. The findings indicate that when students internalize stigma surrounding anxiety, they are more likely to cope alone, increasing emotional strain and academic vulnerability.

From another perspective, students C and D associated their reluctance to approach teachers with perceptions of instructor busyness or emotional distance. They observed that heavy workloads, strict schedules, and formal classroom demeanors often created an environment in which personal concerns felt unwelcome. Teachers who appeared rushed or unapproachable made it difficult for students to raise anxiety-related issues, even when support was needed. These observations underline the importance of classroom atmosphere and teacher demeanor in shaping communication. The data suggest that subtle changes in availability, tone, or openness could substantially improve students' willingness to seek help.

In contrast, students G and H emphasized the impact of teacher-initiated communication in addressing anxiety. They reported that when instructors noticed signs of stress such as reduced participation or declining performance and took the initiative to check in, it significantly reduced feelings of isolation. These proactive gestures encouraged students to share concerns they might otherwise withhold. The findings highlight that teacher attentiveness and early intervention play a crucial role in fostering trust and emotional safety.

Collectively, these findings show that teacher–student interaction is a decisive factor in how anxiety is managed. Supportive, empathetic, and proactive teachers encourage open dialogue, while formality, distance, or perceived lack of time can discourage communication. The data underscore the importance of emotional sensitivity and approachability in mitigating the negative academic and psychological effects of anxiety.

4.2.10 Students Suggestions for Reducing Anxiety

The collected data from the interviews show that students across the English Department offered a range of recommendations aimed at reducing academic anxiety, reflecting awareness of both systemic and individual influences. Students A, B, and C emphasized the value of creating a supportive instructional environment. They suggested that teachers adopt practices centered on encouragement, clarity, and constructive feedback rather than excessive correction or criticism. According to the data, classrooms that allow questions, tolerate mistakes, and emphasize effort contribute to increased confidence and reduced anxiety. In addition, these students proposed stress-management workshops to equip learners with practical tools such as relaxation techniques, mindfulness practices, and effective study strategies. Awareness programs were also recommended to help students identify early signs of anxiety and familiarize themselves with available institutional support services. Such initiatives were seen as essential for promoting proactive coping rather than reactive stress management.

In a related view, students D and E focused on the role of assessment structure in shaping anxiety levels. They argued that oral assessments, due to their public and evaluative nature, are particularly stress-inducing. The data suggest that reducing the weight of oral exams or offering alternative assessment formats such as written assignments or collaborative projects could significantly alleviate pressure. Furthermore, these students advocated for guided preparation, including mock presentations and low-stakes practice sessions, which allow gradual exposure to performance demands. Repeated practice in a supportive context was perceived as an effective means of building familiarity, confidence, and resilience.

Meanwhile, students F and G emphasized the importance of institutional and personal support systems. They highlighted the need for accessible counseling services to help students develop emotional regulation skills and coping strategies before anxiety becomes overwhelming. Time-management support was also identified as a crucial factor, with recommendations for workshops and mentoring sessions focused on planning, prioritization, and workload organization. According to the data, poor time management often intensifies anxiety, while structured guidance can reduce chronic stress and improve academic balance.

From a peer-oriented perspective, student H underscored the importance of peer mentoring, particularly for first-year students navigating the transition to university life.

The data indicate that structured peer support programs can ease adjustment by providing guidance, reassurance, and shared experience. Encouraging regular mentor–mentee interactions and open peer dialogue was viewed as an effective way to reduce isolation and normalize anxiety. Such networks foster a sense of belonging and complement formal institutional support.

Overall, these suggestions point to the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach to reducing academic anxiety. The findings show that effective intervention requires the integration of supportive teaching practices, skill-building initiatives, flexible assessment structures, professional counseling, and peer-based support. Addressing anxiety across these dimensions can help create an academic environment in which students are not only intellectually challenged but also emotionally supported, enabling fuller participation and sustained academic growth within the English Department at Zawia University.

4.3 The Analysis of the Teachers' Interviews Data

The analysis of the teachers' interviews focused on seven main themes, providing insights into their perspectives on student anxiety in the English Department at Zawia University. The themes included: recognition of anxiety among students during lectures, strategies used to support anxious students, impact of anxiety on academic achievement, teachers' role in addressing student anxiety, teachers' experiences with students affected by anxiety, practices to help students overcome anxiety, and causes and extent of anxiety among students. The findings revealed that teachers consistently observed behavioral, physical, and academic indicators of anxiety, applied a variety of supportive strategies, and emphasized the significant influence of anxiety on both performance and motivation. Collectively, the data highlighted that teachers perceived anxiety as a multifaceted phenomenon that required both pedagogical and emotional interventions to foster student confidence, engagement, and overall academic success.

4.3.1 Recognition of Anxiety among Students during Lectures

The data collected from teachers from the English Department at Zawia University demonstrated a deep awareness of how anxiety manifests among students and how it impacts their learning process. Indeed, the data collected revealed that across the interviews, there was a broad agreement that anxiety can be identified through a combination of behavioural, physical, and academic indicators, although each teacher

emphasized slightly different aspects based on their experiences. Teachers A and C focused on behavioural cues, highlighting that anxious student often withdraw from participation, avoid eye contact, and remain silent even when they understand the lesson content. Teacher A stated, “Anxious students often avoid eye contact and hesitate to answer questions, even when they know the correct answer,” reflecting the importance of attentive observation in identifying students’ inner struggles. Similarly, Teacher C noted, “Students sometimes forget basic vocabulary or pause excessively, showing visible nervousness during speaking tasks,” illustrating how anxiety can directly affect language production in oral activities.

On the other hand, Teachers B, D, G, and H pointed out that anxiety becomes particularly apparent during oral presentations or interactive class tasks. Teacher B remarked, “I notice anxiety mainly during oral activities when students appear tense or speak very softly,” emphasizing that anxiety is often situation-specific and may not always be evident during written work. Teacher D echoed this view, noting that students may seem calm during routine lectures but display clear signs of nervousness when required to speak publicly. Moreover, Teacher G added the physical dimension to recognition, stating, “Sweating, trembling hands, and nervous laughter are clear signs of anxiety for many students,” highlighting that anxiety can manifest in visible physiological responses. Teacher H emphasized that these physical and behavioral signs often occur alongside verbal hesitations, such as frequent pauses or stuttering, which can be mistakenly interpreted as lack of knowledge rather than anxiety.

Furthermore, Teachers E and F, while agreeing that both behavioral and physical indicators are important, highlighted academic discrepancies as a key signal of anxiety. Teacher E explained that some students perform well in written exams but struggle during oral tasks or class participation, saying, “I often see students who write excellently but freeze when they are asked to speak; it’s not that they don’t know the material they are just anxious.” Teacher F supported this perspective, pointing out that anxiety can interfere with the retrieval of language knowledge and the application of skills in real-time contexts, further demonstrating how the emotional state of the student can impact observable academic performance.

In addition, across all eight teachers, there was consensus that recognizing anxiety requires careful, holistic observation of students in different settings. While Teachers A, C, and E emphasized behavioral withdrawal and avoidance, Teachers B, D, G, and H highlighted physical symptoms and situational triggers, and Teachers F and E stressed

discrepancies between written and oral performance as a critical indicator. This diversity in perspectives underscores that student anxiety is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be identified by a single symptom but requires teachers to pay attention to a combination of behavioral, physical, and academic cues. Collectively, these insights suggest that effective recognition of anxiety involves not only noticing visible signs but also understanding the contexts in which students feel most pressured, as Teacher D summarized: “You cannot always see anxiety in a classroom; you have to observe carefully, notice patterns, and understand when students feel vulnerable.”

4.3.2 Strategies Used by Teachers to Deal with Anxious Students

The findings presented that when discussing strategies to support anxious students, teachers consistently emphasized the importance of creating a classroom environment that feels safe, supportive, and non-threatening. Indeed, Teachers A and B highlighted that giving students sufficient time to prepare answers and avoiding sudden or public questioning helps reduce immediate stress and encourages voluntary participation. Teacher A explained, “I try to create a calm environment and let students participate voluntarily rather than forcing them to speak,” while Teacher B added, “I always make sure students feel they can answer at their own pace, which helps them gradually gain confidence without feeling pressured.” Consequently, this approach, according to these teachers, allows students to engage more naturally and prevents anxiety from escalating during lessons.

Moreover, Teachers D and F focused more on the value of positive reinforcement and individualized attention. They stressed that acknowledging students’ effort, rather than solely evaluating correctness, encourages participation and builds self-esteem over time. Teacher D stated, “I make sure to praise effort and progress, not just correctness, and sometimes speak privately with students to understand their concerns,” highlighting the importance of personal interaction in helping students feel valued. Teacher F similarly noted, “By recognizing small improvements, students become more willing to take risks in speaking and gradually overcome their anxiety,” demonstrating a consistent belief that patience and encouragement are central to reducing anxiety.

In contrast, Teachers H and E emphasized interactive strategies as particularly effective, such as pair work, group discussions, and collaborative activities. Teacher H observed, “I use pair work and group activities to reduce pressure and help students gain confidence,” while Teacher E explained, “When students work together, they feel less

judged, which encourages more participation and reduces the fear of making mistakes.” Thus, these teachers suggested that peer support and collaborative learning create a social environment where students can practice without feeling the spotlight is solely on them, thus alleviating anxiety through shared experience.

Furthermore, Teachers C and G added additional perspectives that complemented these strategies. Teacher C stressed the importance of incorporating both low stress and incremental challenges, stating, “I gradually increase the difficulty of speaking tasks so students can build confidence step by step,” while Teacher G highlighted the role of classroom atmosphere and teacher demeanor, explaining, “A warm and approachable teacher can make students feel comfortable, which is just as important as the specific activities we design.” Overall, collectively, the eight teachers agreed on the necessity of patience, empathy, and consistent support, even if their approaches differed slightly. The combination of individualized attention, positive reinforcement, interactive methods, and careful pacing reflects a holistic strategy to manage and reduce student anxiety. In addition, the teachers’ narratives reveal that while methods may vary from one-on-one support to group activities the underlying principle remains the same: a supportive environment that recognizes students’ emotional needs is essential for mitigating anxiety and promoting engagement and learning. Teacher D summarized this consensus, saying, “It’s not just about teaching English; it’s about helping students feel safe and capable, so they can perform to the best of their abilities.”

4.3.3 Impact of Anxiety on Students’ Academic Achievement

All the data from the eight teachers emphasized that anxiety significantly affects students’ academic performance, particularly in the English Department, where oral communication, active participation, and timely responses are central to learning. In fact, Teachers A, B, and C consistently noted that many students underperform in oral tasks despite having a strong grasp of the material. Teacher C explained, “I have students who excel in written exams but struggle during speaking activities due to anxiety,” reflecting the idea that anxiety can inhibit students’ ability to demonstrate knowledge. Teacher A echoed this view, stating, “Some students know the answers perfectly but freeze in front of the class, and it’s clearly not a lack of ability—it’s anxiety holding them back.” Similarly, Teacher B added that even students who participate occasionally may do so hesitantly, which limits their development of oral skills over time.

Moreover, Teachers D, E, and G expanded on the cognitive aspects of anxiety, highlighting that it interferes with concentration, memory retrieval, and language processing. Teacher D noted, “Anxiety affects concentration, memory, and language retrieval, which directly impacts grades,” while Teacher G observed, “When students are anxious, they can’t focus fully on the task at hand; even simple exercises can become stressful, which affects both performance and learning.” These observations indicate that anxiety is not just an emotional reaction but a barrier that compromises essential academic functions.

Furthermore, Teacher E emphasized that the problem is compounded when students face repeated evaluation pressure, noting, “Continuous exams and oral assessments make some students dread participation, which slows their progress.” In addition, Teachers F and H highlighted the long-term and motivational consequences of persistent anxiety. Teacher F explained, “Students who consistently feel anxious lose confidence, which makes them even more nervous in future tasks, creating a negative cycle that affects their overall performance,” while Teacher H stated, “Over time, anxiety can cause students to avoid classroom activities, limit their engagement, and even affect their willingness to continue in English studies.” Consequently, these teachers suggested that anxiety can have a cumulative effect, where repeated negative experiences reinforce nervousness and lower self-efficacy, creating an ongoing barrier to achievement.

On the other hand, Teachers A and C also shared anecdotal evidence that students with high potential were particularly vulnerable. Teacher A recounted, “I had a student who always scored high in written grammar tests but would completely freeze during presentations. With support, their performance improved, but it took time and patience.” Teacher C added, “Some students are very knowledgeable, yet anxiety prevents them from demonstrating their skills in front of the class, which is frustrating for both teacher and student.” Taken together, the eight teachers agreed that the impact of anxiety is multifaceted, affecting not only performance in individual tasks but also overall academic progress and long-term motivation.

Overall, the teachers’ perspectives reveal a shared understanding that anxiety is a significant obstacle to academic achievement in the English Department. While some teachers focused on immediate performance issues, others, by contrast, emphasized cognitive interference and long-term motivational decline, illustrating the pervasive and complex effects of anxiety on students. Teacher D summarized this consensus by stating,

“Anxiety is not just about nervousness in class it affects thinking, participation, and confidence, and if we don’t address it, students cannot reach their full potential.”

4.3.4 Teachers’ Role in Addressing Student Anxiety

All eight teachers emphasized that their responsibility in managing student anxiety goes far beyond delivering English lessons. Indeed, they agreed that creating a psychologically safe and supportive classroom is critical for encouraging participation and reducing students’ stress. Teachers A, B, and C focused on the importance of handling mistakes with care, emphasizing that students often fear judgment or ridicule. Teacher A explained, “Correcting errors gently and focusing on communication rather than perfection allows students to feel safe and reduces their fear of speaking.” Similarly, Teacher B remarked, “When students feel supported and understood, they are much more willing to take risks in language learning. Anxiety disappears when they know their teacher is patient and non-judgmental.” In addition, Teacher C added that the tone and attitude of the teacher can either escalate or reduce anxiety, saying, “Even subtle cues like facial expressions or impatience can increase students’ stress levels.”

Moreover, Teachers D, E, and H emphasized recognizing and adapting to individual differences, stressing that each student experiences anxiety uniquely. Teacher D noted, “Some students panic in large class discussions, while others struggle only with oral exams. As teachers, we must notice these differences and adjust our methods accordingly.” Furthermore, Teacher E explained, “I sometimes offer private feedback or one-on-one practice to help students who are too anxious to speak publicly. This shows them they are supported and can succeed.” Teacher H highlighted that customizing tasks to match students’ readiness significantly reduces stress, saying, “Adapting activities to students’ levels and abilities is essential. If tasks are too difficult or too public, anxiety increases and performance drops.”

In addition, Teachers F and G reinforced these perspectives by highlighting the emotional and motivational dimensions of their role. Teacher F said, “Our demeanour, encouragement, and patience often have more impact than the teaching methods themselves. Students respond to empathy and support just as much as to instruction.” Teacher G explained that building trust and rapport is essential: “Students need to feel that their teacher genuinely cares about their learning and well-being. Without trust, even simple tasks can feel intimidating.”

Consequently, across all eight teachers, there was agreement that addressing anxiety involves both academic and emotional support, combining strategies such as positive reinforcement, individualized attention, patience, and a nurturing environment. Therefore, the role of the teacher is not only instructional but also deeply relational, creating the conditions for students to develop confidence and engage fully in learning.

4.3.5 Teachers' Experiences with Students Affected by Anxiety

The findings of the eight teachers shared numerous examples illustrating the direct impact of anxiety on students' academic performance. In particular, Teachers A and C emphasized cases where students demonstrated strong knowledge in written tasks but were unable to perform adequately in oral activities. Teacher A recounted, "I had a student who always scored high in written grammar tests but would completely freeze during oral presentations. With gradual encouragement, private guidance, and a supportive approach, their confidence slowly grew and their performance improved." Similarly, Teacher C added, "Some students understand the material perfectly but cannot express themselves in class due to nervousness. It is heartbreaking to see potential wasted because of anxiety."

Moreover, Teachers B, D, F, G, and H discussed how targeted interventions and supportive strategies often led to significant improvement. Teacher D explained, "Once I identified that a student's struggle was due to anxiety rather than ability, I adjusted my methods, allowed them to participate in smaller, less threatening activities, and provided consistent feedback. Their progress was remarkable." Likewise, Teacher F described similar experiences, saying, "By offering positive reinforcement, encouraging peer collaboration, and allowing incremental practice, I've seen students gradually overcome their hesitation and become more active in class." In addition, Teacher G emphasized that even students who initially resisted participation could make progress when given personalized support: "Some students would rather stay silent, but with encouragement and careful scaffolding, they begin to engage and eventually speak confidently."

Furthermore, Teachers H and E highlighted that anxiety affects students' motivation and engagement in broader ways. Teacher H stated, "When students feel anxious, they often avoid volunteering for tasks or participating in discussions, which can affect their overall learning and self-confidence." Similarly, Teacher E added, "Persistent anxiety sometimes leads students to doubt their own abilities, creating a cycle where fear

of failure prevents them from trying, which in turn confirms their fear. Breaking this cycle requires consistent support from teachers.”

Consequently, across all teachers, the consensus was clear: anxiety is often the primary barrier preventing students from reaching their full academic potential. The examples shared underscore that with recognition, empathy, tailored strategies, and consistent encouragement, teachers can help students overcome these challenges. Teacher D summarized this shared understanding, saying, “Students are not failing because they are incapable; they are often held back by fear and stress. Our role is to help them see that they are capable and to create opportunities for them to succeed.” Therefore, these experiences illustrate the importance of teacher intervention, not just for academic success but also for students’ confidence, motivation, and overall well-being.

4.3.6 Teachers’ Practices to help Students Overcome Anxiety

Teachers’ data described a wide array of practical strategies designed to gradually help students overcome anxiety and gain confidence in using English. In particular, Teachers A, C, and G emphasized the importance of step-by-step exposure to speaking activities, role-play exercises, and informal discussions as effective methods. Teacher G explained, “Starting with low-stress activities and gradually increasing difficulty builds students’ confidence and encourages participation. When students experience small successes repeatedly, they start to believe in their abilities, and the fear of speaking in class diminishes over time.” Similarly, Teacher A highlighted the benefits of starting with smaller, low-pressure interactions: “I begin with simple questions and small group discussions before moving to whole-class participation. This approach helps students feel safe and gradually more comfortable expressing themselves.” Teacher C stressed the value of informal practice, adding, “Casual conversations outside formal lessons can make a huge difference. Students practice English in a stress-free setting, which later translates into more confidence during structured classroom activities.”

Moreover, Teachers B and H highlighted peer support and collaborative learning as central to reducing anxiety. Teacher B noted, “Students feel more confident practicing English with their classmates before speaking in front of the whole class. Peer support reduces pressure and creates a safe space to learn from each other.” Teacher H added, “Group work and pair activities allow students to participate without the fear of judgment. The social support they receive from peers helps them feel more comfortable taking risks with the language.” In addition, both teachers emphasized that students often progress

faster when they practice in pairs or small groups first because the perceived threat of public evaluation is lower, and peer encouragement reinforces confidence.

On the other hand, Teachers D, E, and F reflected on the challenges of implementing these strategies, including large class sizes, time constraints, and curriculum demands. Teacher E explained, “It can be challenging to give individual attention to every student, especially in bigger classes, but even small interventions like brief pair activities or extra practice opportunities can help reduce anxiety.” Teacher F highlighted the cumulative effect of repeated low-pressure tasks, stating, “Providing small, incremental opportunities for speaking gradually allows students to gain confidence. Over time, these repeated positive experiences help students overcome fear and participate more actively in class.” Furthermore, Teacher D emphasized that deliberate, structured, and patient interventions are crucial: “Teachers must recognize that progress can be slow, but consistent encouragement, tailored activities, and sensitivity to student needs can make a real difference in overcoming anxiety.”

Consequently, teachers collectively agreed that their conscious efforts to address anxiety through thoughtful pacing, supportive interactions, and varied teaching strategies have a meaningful impact on engagement, participation, and performance. The narratives from all eight teachers reflect a shared understanding that practical, structured strategies combined with emotional support are essential to help students gradually overcome anxiety and achieve their academic potential.

4.3.7 Causes of Anxiety among Students

The findings of the teachers show that all the teachers agreed that anxiety is a widespread and persistent issue among English Department students at Zawia University, arising from a complex interaction of internal and external factors. Specifically, Teachers A and C identified fear of making mistakes, lack of self-confidence, and embarrassment in front of peers as primary contributors. Teacher C explained, “Many students worry about being embarrassed in front of their classmates. Even when they know the material, they hesitate to speak, and this fear of judgment causes anxiety during oral activities.” Teacher A added, “Some students avoid participating entirely because they fear being wrong. They know the answers but doubt themselves, which limits their academic growth.” Thus, both teachers emphasized that internal fears, such as self-doubt and perfectionism, often trigger visible anxiety symptoms like hesitation, stammering, and withdrawal from class activities.

On the other hand, Teachers B, D, and F focused on external pressures, including exam demands, limited practice opportunities outside the classroom, and social comparison. Teacher B remarked, “Many students do not have the opportunity to practice English outside of lessons. When they are required to speak in class, anxiety spikes because they feel unprepared.” Teacher D observed, “Continuous assessment and the pressure to perform during oral exams make some students extremely nervous. This stress often leads them to avoid participation or freeze when asked to speak.” Teacher F added, “Students frequently compare themselves to more confident classmates. When they perceive themselves as ‘behind,’ anxiety increases, and their willingness to take risks diminishes.” Consequently, these teachers highlighted that environmental and social pressures exacerbate internal fears, creating a cycle that undermines academic performance.

Furthermore, Teachers E, G, and H reinforced the idea that anxiety is influenced by personality traits, past negative experiences, and cultural expectations. Teacher H noted, “Anxiety is shaped by multiple factors, not just fear of mistakes. Students’ personalities, previous failures, and expectations from family and teachers all contribute to their stress levels.” Teacher G observed, “Even capable students can underperform if they feel they are being judged constantly. Social comparison and the fear of embarrassment are significant contributors to anxiety in our classes.” Teacher E emphasized the combined effect of these factors, stating, “Students are anxious because of a mix of internal doubts and external pressures. Without proper support, these factors can prevent them from showing their true abilities.”

Overall, across all eight teachers, there was consensus that anxiety is pervasive among English Department students and significantly affects both oral performance and overall learning experience. Teachers agreed that unless this issue is addressed, many students remain unable to fully demonstrate their knowledge, which can hinder academic achievement and reduce confidence over time. Therefore, collectively, these perspectives suggest that anxiety is a multifaceted problem that requires both emotional and pedagogical interventions, highlighting the critical role of teachers in creating a supportive environment that mitigates fear, builds confidence, and encourages engagement in the learning process.

4.4 Summary of Chapter

This chapter explored the experiences of students and teachers regarding anxiety in the English Department at Zawia University, revealing its complex and multifaceted nature. Anxiety was found to affect learning, participation, and overall well-being, especially during oral tasks such as presentations, debates, and exams. Students reported that anxiety stems from academic pressure, fear of mistakes, cultural expectations, and language-related challenges, while teachers observed behavioural, physical, and academic signs, including withdrawal, nervousness, and underperformance. Furthermore, the study showed that anxiety extends beyond emotions, impacting cognition, social interactions, and physiological responses, which can hinder concentration, memory, and performance. While mild anxiety was sometimes motivating, most students experienced it as a barrier to confidence and skill development. Teachers highlighted that supportive classroom practices, individualized attention, positive reinforcement, and structured learning could help reduce anxiety. Although coping strategies varied, students used self-regulation techniques such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, and peer collaboration, while teachers created safe learning environments, promoted group work, guided practice, and offered constructive feedback. Importantly, the findings emphasized the reciprocal relationship between students and teachers, where supportive interactions and peer collaboration enhance resilience and confidence. In conclusion, academic anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by personal, social, and educational factors, but it is manageable. Practical interventions such as mindfulness, peer support, assessment adjustments, and emotional guidance can effectively mitigate anxiety, highlighting the need for a holistic approach that integrates pedagogical, emotional, and social strategies to promote student well-being and academic success.

Chapter Five
Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings of the present study in relation to existing literature on academic and foreign language anxiety. Drawing on the thematic analysis of students' and teachers' interview data, the chapter aims to interpret the results rather than merely restating them. In particular, the discussion examines how anxiety is experienced, perceived, and managed by both students and teachers in the English Department at Zawia University. The findings are interpreted in light of relevant theories and previous empirical studies on foreign language anxiety, academic stress, and learner affect. Accordingly, this chapter is divided into four main sections. First, students' perspectives of anxiety are discussed based on the themes that emerged from their interviews. Second, teachers' perspectives of student anxiety are examined using the themes identified in the teachers' data. Third, the chapter integrates both students' and teachers' perspectives to highlight areas of convergence and divergence. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the main points discussed.

5.2 Students' Perspectives of Anxiety

The findings from the students' interviews revealed that anxiety was a central and recurring aspect of their academic experience in the English Department. Students described anxiety as a multifaceted phenomenon that affected their emotions, cognition, behavior, and academic performance. The themes identified in the data analysis reflect how students understood anxiety, the situations in which it emerged, its effects on learning, and the strategies they used to cope with it. These findings are discussed below in relation to relevant literature.

The findings indicated that students generally perceived anxiety as a natural but often overwhelming emotional response to academic demands. Many students described anxiety as closely linked to fear, nervousness, and pressure, especially in learning situations that required public performance. This perception aligns with Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's (1986) conceptualization of foreign language anxiety as a situation-specific form of anxiety associated with language learning contexts.

Moreover, students' descriptions suggest that anxiety was not always viewed as entirely negative. Some students acknowledged that mild anxiety could increase alertness and motivation, particularly before exams or important tasks. This finding supports previous studies which argue that low levels of anxiety can sometimes have a facilitative effect on performance (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Scovel, 1978). However, most students in

the current study emphasized that anxiety frequently exceeded manageable levels, becoming a source of distress rather than motivation.

Importantly, students perceived anxiety as deeply personal, shaped by individual confidence, past experiences, and perceived language competence. This confirms MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) view that language anxiety is influenced by learners' self-perceptions and previous encounters with success or failure. Thus, students' understanding of anxiety reflected both emotional awareness and lived academic realities.

The data also showed that anxiety was particularly triggered in situations involving oral communication, such as speaking in front of classmates, presentations, debates, and oral examinations. Students consistently described these tasks as the most stressful aspects of their studies. This finding strongly corresponds with existing research that identifies speaking as the most anxiety-provoking skill in foreign language learning (Young, 1991; Woodrow, 2006).

Additionally, students associated anxiety with fear of negative evaluation, especially when speaking publicly or making mistakes in front of peers and teachers. This supports Horwitz et al.'s (1986) assertion that fear of negative evaluation is one of the core components of foreign language classroom anxiety. In the Libyan university context, students appeared to feel heightened pressure due to cultural expectations surrounding public performance, respect, and fear of embarrassment, which further intensified anxiety.

Furthermore, time pressure and high-stakes assessments emerged as significant anxiety triggers. Students reported feeling stressed when required to respond quickly or perform under evaluative conditions. This aligns with research indicating that test anxiety and performance anxiety often overlap in language learning contexts (Cassady & Johnson, 2002), particularly where continuous assessment and oral evaluation are emphasized. Thus

the findings demonstrated that anxiety had a clear negative impact on students' academic performance and classroom participation. Students reported difficulties with concentration, memory retrieval, and language production when feeling anxious. These experiences reflect cognitive-interference theories of anxiety, which suggest that anxiety consumes attentional resources needed for task performance (Eysenck et al., 2007). Therefore students described avoiding participation as a common behavioral response to anxiety. Rather than risking mistakes or embarrassment, many students chose silence, even when they understood the lesson content. This behavior has been widely

documented in foreign language anxiety research, where anxious learners tend to withdraw and limit their engagement (MacIntyre, 1995). This informs that anxiety negatively affected students' self-confidence and willingness to communicate. Over time, repeated experiences of anxiety led some students to doubt their abilities and view themselves as weak language learners. This finding supports the work of Dörnyei (2005), who emphasizes the role of affective factors in shaping learner motivation and self-concept. Consequently, anxiety not only influenced immediate performance but also had longer-term effects on students' academic identity and persistence.

From the students' point of view, anxiety was caused by a combination of internal and external factors. Internally, students identified lack of confidence, fear of making mistakes, and self-comparison with peers as major sources of anxiety. These findings are consistent with research suggesting that learners' self-efficacy beliefs play a central role in anxiety development (Bandura, 1997).

Externally, students pointed to teaching practices, assessment methods, and classroom atmosphere as contributing factors. Strict correction, emphasis on accuracy over communication, and public evaluation were perceived as increasing anxiety. These findings echo previous studies which argue that teacher behavior and classroom climate significantly influence learners' anxiety levels (Young, 1991; Gregersen, 2003).

In addition, linguistic challenges, such as limited vocabulary and pronunciation difficulties, were seen as anxiety-provoking, particularly in English-medium instruction contexts. This supports findings by Cheng (2004), who noted that linguistic insecurity often intensifies anxiety in EFL learners, especially at the university level.

The analysis revealed that students employed a range of coping strategies to manage their anxiety. Some students relied on self-regulated strategies such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, and mental preparation before speaking tasks. These strategies reflect emotion-focused coping mechanisms commonly identified in anxiety literature (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Other students emphasized the importance of peer support and collaborative learning. Working with classmates helped reduce feelings of isolation and fear of judgment, making participation less intimidating. This aligns with sociocultural perspectives that highlight the role of social interaction in reducing affective barriers and supporting learning (Vygotsky, 1978).

However, the findings also indicated that not all students possessed effective coping strategies, and some relied on avoidance rather than active regulation. This

suggests a need for explicit instructional support to help students develop adaptive coping mechanisms, a point widely emphasized in recent EFL anxiety research (Oxford, 2017).

Overall, the discussion of students' perspectives reveals that anxiety was a pervasive and influential factor in their academic experience. It affected how students perceived themselves, interacted in class, and demonstrated their knowledge. Consistent with previous research, anxiety was most intense in oral and evaluative situations and was shaped by both individual and contextual factors. While students attempted to cope with anxiety in various ways, the effectiveness of these strategies depended largely on the learning environment and the level of support provided.

5.3 Teachers' Perspectives of Student Anxiety

The teachers' interview data revealed a nuanced and experience-based understanding of student anxiety within the English Department at Zawia University. Teachers consistently viewed anxiety as a significant barrier to effective learning, particularly in language-focused and performance-oriented tasks. Their perspectives reflected both pedagogical awareness and emotional sensitivity, emphasizing the complex role teachers play in recognizing, managing, and alleviating anxiety. The discussion below aligns the teachers' themes with relevant theoretical and empirical literature.

The data of the teachers demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the indicators of anxiety in the classroom. Anxiety was commonly recognized through behavioral signs such as withdrawal, avoidance of eye contact, and reluctance to participate, especially during oral activities. These observations correspond with Horwitz et al.'s (1986) identification of avoidance behavior as a core manifestation of foreign language anxiety.

In addition, teachers noted physical indicators such as nervous movements, trembling, and visible tension, particularly during presentations and speaking tasks. These findings are consistent with Spielberger's (1983) description of anxiety as involving physiological arousal alongside emotional discomfort. Importantly, teachers emphasized that anxiety was not always immediately visible during routine activities but became more apparent in evaluative or communicative situations.

Moreover, teachers observed discrepancies between students' written and oral performance, with many students excelling in written tasks but struggling to demonstrate their knowledge orally. This supports MacIntyre's (1995) processing model, which suggests that anxiety interferes with language retrieval during real-time communication.

Collectively, teachers' perceptions highlight the importance of contextual and holistic observation in identifying anxiety, reinforcing the idea that anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon rather than a single, easily detectable trait.

The findings showed that teachers employed a variety of strategies to support anxious students, reflecting a learner-centered and empathetic approach to instruction. One commonly emphasized strategy was creating a supportive and non-threatening classroom atmosphere. Teachers believed that allowing voluntary participation and reducing pressure during speaking activities helped students feel safer and more willing to engage. This aligns with Young's (1991) assertion that low-anxiety classrooms promote communicative risk-taking.

Furthermore, positive reinforcement and individualized attention were highlighted as effective tools in reducing anxiety. Teachers reported that acknowledging effort and improvement, rather than focusing solely on accuracy, increased students' confidence and willingness to participate. This approach is supported by Dörnyei's (2001) motivational framework, which emphasizes the importance of encouragement and positive feedback in sustaining learner engagement.

Additionally, collaborative activities such as pair and group work were viewed as particularly effective in reducing performance pressure. This finding aligns with sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes learning through social interaction. By sharing responsibility with peers, students experienced reduced fear of judgment and increased communicative confidence. Overall, teachers' strategies reflected an integrated approach that combined emotional support with pedagogical adaptability. Therefore, teachers consistently agreed that anxiety had a detrimental impact on students' academic achievement. They observed that anxious students often underperformed in oral tasks despite possessing adequate knowledge. This observation supports cognitive-interference theory, which suggests that anxiety consumes attentional resources needed for effective task execution (Eysenck et al., 2007).

In addition to immediate performance issues, teachers noted that anxiety affected concentration, memory retrieval, and language fluency. These cognitive effects are well-documented in language anxiety research, where anxious learners struggle to access linguistic knowledge under pressure (Tobias, 1986). Teachers also emphasized that repeated exposure to anxiety-inducing tasks could lead to long-term academic disengagement.

Moreover, anxiety was seen as affecting students' motivation and self-confidence over time. Persistent anxiety often resulted in avoidance behaviors, reduced participation, and diminished willingness to take linguistic risks. This finding aligns with Bandura's (1997) concept of self-efficacy, suggesting that repeated negative experiences undermine learners' belief in their capabilities and, consequently, their performance.

Teachers perceived their role as extending beyond instruction to include emotional guidance and psychological support. They emphasized that careful error correction, patience, and teacher demeanor significantly influence students' anxiety levels. This finding supports Gregersen's (2003) claim that harsh correction and negative feedback can heighten anxiety, whereas supportive interaction fosters confidence.

Furthermore, teachers highlighted the importance of adapting teaching practices to individual differences. Recognizing that students experience anxiety in different ways, teachers adjusted task difficulty, participation formats, and feedback methods accordingly. This reflects learner-centered pedagogical principles, which advocate tailoring instruction to students' needs and emotional readiness (Nunan, 1999).

Teachers also stressed the importance of building trust and rapport with students. When students perceived their teachers as approachable and empathetic, they were more likely to communicate openly and take risks. This aligns with humanistic approaches to language teaching, which emphasize respect, understanding, and emotional safety as prerequisites for effective learning (Rogers, 1969).

Furthermore, teachers' experiences provided concrete evidence of how anxiety directly affects students' academic trajectories. Many teachers recounted cases where students with strong written abilities struggled significantly with oral expression due to anxiety. These experiences reinforce the distinction between competence and performance, a concept widely discussed in applied linguistics (Chomsky, 1965), where emotional factors can prevent learners from demonstrating their true ability.

Importantly, teachers noted that targeted interventions often led to noticeable improvement. With gradual exposure, consistent encouragement, and personalized support, students were able to overcome hesitation and participate more actively. This supports MacIntyre and Gardner's (1994) claim that anxiety is not fixed and can be reduced through supportive instructional practices.

Teachers also observed that unaddressed anxiety could create a self-perpetuating cycle of fear, avoidance, and declining confidence. Breaking this cycle required sustained

teacher involvement and emotional sensitivity, highlighting the long-term role teachers play in shaping students' academic confidence and resilience.

The data revealed a strong emphasis on structured, gradual, and supportive practices aimed at reducing anxiety. Incremental exposure to speaking tasks, beginning with low-pressure activities and progressing to more demanding ones, was considered especially effective. This approach aligns with exposure-based principles in anxiety management, which emphasize gradual desensitization (Ellis, 1994).

As peer collaboration was also viewed as a crucial component of anxiety reduction. Teachers believed that practicing in pairs or small groups lowered the perceived risk of failure and encouraged experimentation with language. This supports cooperative learning research, which highlights reduced anxiety and increased engagement in collaborative environments (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). However, teachers also acknowledged practical challenges such as large class sizes and limited time. Despite these constraints, they emphasized that even small adjustments—such as brief pair work or informal discussions—could have a positive impact. This reflects the belief that anxiety reduction does not require radical curricular change but thoughtful, consistent pedagogical choices.

Findings identified anxiety as a widespread issue resulting from both internal and external factors. Internally, students' lack of confidence, fear of mistakes, and perfectionist tendencies were frequently mentioned. These findings align with personality-based explanations of anxiety, which link emotional vulnerability to self-expectations (Spielberger, 1983).

Externally, teachers emphasized assessment pressure, limited exposure to English outside the classroom, and social comparison as significant contributors. Such environmental factors have been widely cited in EFL contexts, particularly in settings where English is primarily confined to academic environments (Littlewood, 2004).

Cultural expectations also played a role, as fear of embarrassment and judgment intensified anxiety in public speaking situations. This supports research indicating that cultural norms surrounding face-saving and public performance can amplify language anxiety (Oxford, 1999). Overall, teachers viewed anxiety as a multifactorial phenomenon requiring comprehensive pedagogical and emotional intervention.

5.4 Integration of Students' and Teachers' Perspectives on Anxiety

Integrating students' and teachers' perspectives provides a comprehensive understanding of academic anxiety within the English Department at Zawia University. While students described anxiety primarily through their internal emotional experiences, teachers interpreted anxiety through observable behaviors, academic outcomes, and classroom interactions. Together, these perspectives reveal anxiety as a shared, relational, and context-dependent phenomenon shaped by individual emotions, instructional practices, and institutional expectations.

Both students and teachers acknowledged that anxiety is particularly pronounced during oral and interactive language tasks. Students reported heightened nervousness when speaking in front of peers, fearing mistakes, embarrassment, and negative evaluation. Teachers, in turn, observed hesitation, withdrawal, and visible nervousness in similar contexts. This convergence highlights oral communication as a central anxiety-triggering domain in EFL learning, reinforcing Horwitz et al.'s (1986) classification of communication apprehension as a core component of foreign language anxiety.

Furthermore, both groups recognized that anxiety does not necessarily reflect linguistic incompetence. Students often perceived themselves as capable yet unable to perform under pressure, while teachers noticed discrepancies between written and oral performance. This shared understanding supports MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) argument that anxiety disrupts language performance rather than underlying proficiency, particularly during time-constrained or evaluative tasks.

A key point of integration lies in how students' internal emotional experiences align with teachers' external observations. Students described anxiety as a combination of fear, tension, self-doubt, and mental blockage, especially when required to respond spontaneously. Correspondingly, teachers observed physical signs such as trembling and cognitive difficulties such as forgetting familiar vocabulary. These complementary viewpoints illustrate the interaction between emotional states and cognitive functioning, consistent with Tobias's (1986) interference model, which posits that anxiety disrupts information processing at multiple stages.

Moreover, students' reports of difficulty concentrating and recalling information under stress were mirrored by teachers' observations of reduced fluency and delayed responses. This alignment underscores anxiety's dual emotional and cognitive nature, reinforcing the theoretical position that anxiety impairs working memory and attentional resources necessary for language processing (Eysenck et al., 2007).

Thus, both students and teachers agreed that anxiety negatively influences academic achievement. Students described anxiety as a barrier to participation and confidence, while teachers associated it with underperformance and disengagement. This mutual recognition highlights anxiety as a significant academic concern rather than a purely emotional issue.

Additionally, the interaction between anxiety and self-confidence emerged as a shared theme. Students reported that repeated anxious experiences diminished their belief in their abilities, leading to avoidance behaviors. Teachers observed similar patterns, noting that anxious students became increasingly reluctant to participate over time. This convergence aligns with Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, which suggests that negative experiences undermine learners' confidence and reinforce avoidance, thereby limiting opportunities for skill development.

Students and teachers both emphasized the importance of the classroom environment in shaping anxiety levels. Students indicated that supportive teachers, understanding peers, and a calm atmosphere helped reduce nervousness. Teachers similarly emphasized creating psychologically safe classrooms through patience, encouragement, and gentle correction. This alignment reflects humanistic and learner-centered approaches to language teaching, which stress the importance of emotional safety in learning (Rogers, 1969; Nunan, 1999). When teachers foster trust and reduce fear of judgment, students feel more comfortable taking risks, which is essential for language acquisition. The integrated findings thus reinforce the view that anxiety is not solely an individual issue but a product of classroom dynamics and teacher-student relationships.

Another area of convergence is the recognition that anxiety can be managed through effective coping strategies and instructional support. Students reported using self-regulated strategies such as preparation, positive self-talk, and relaxation techniques. Teachers, on the other hand, described implementing gradual exposure, collaborative activities, and individualized feedback to support anxious learners.

Together, these perspectives illustrate a reciprocal process in which students' coping efforts are most effective when reinforced by supportive pedagogical practices. This interaction supports Dörnyei's (2001) motivational framework, which emphasizes the interplay between learner autonomy and teacher support. Anxiety reduction, therefore, emerges as a shared responsibility rather than a one-sided effort.

Moreover, both students and teachers acknowledged that anxiety is influenced by broader contextual and cultural factors. Students expressed concern about making mistakes publicly and facing social judgment, while teachers recognized cultural expectations and fear of embarrassment as significant contributors to anxiety. This mutual awareness supports Oxford's (1999) argument that cultural norms related to face-saving and public performance can intensify anxiety in EFL contexts. Furthermore, the limited opportunities for English use outside the classroom were recognized by both groups as exacerbating anxiety. Students felt unprepared for spontaneous communication, and teachers observed increased stress during oral tasks. This finding aligns with Littlewood's (2004) claim that restricted exposure to authentic language use heightens performance pressure in classroom settings.

The integration of perspectives highlights a reciprocal relationship in which students' emotional responses influence classroom dynamics, and teachers' practices shape students' anxiety levels. Students reported feeling more confident when teachers were empathetic and patient, while teachers observed greater engagement when students felt supported. This mutual influence reinforces the social nature of learning, consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. Importantly, both groups recognized that anxiety is manageable rather than permanent. Through sustained support, trust-building, and adaptive teaching practices, students can gradually overcome anxiety and engage more actively in learning. This shared belief underscores the potential for meaningful intervention within the existing educational framework.

5.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has discussed the findings of the study by examining students' and teachers' perspectives on academic anxiety in the English Department at Zawia University. Guided by the research questions and informed by the literature review, the discussion focused on explaining the patterns identified in the data analysis rather than restating the results. The integration of both perspectives allowed for a deeper understanding of how academic anxiety is experienced, observed, and addressed within the classroom context. The discussion showed that academic anxiety is not a single or isolated experience but a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by cognitive, emotional, social, and instructional factors. Students' accounts of anxiety during oral tasks, assessment situations, and classroom interaction were consistent with teachers' observations of anxious behaviors and performance difficulties. These shared

perspectives highlight the interaction between internal emotional responses and external classroom demands, confirming that anxiety emerges through the learning environment rather than from individual ability alone. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrated that teacher practices and classroom climate play a central role in either intensifying or reducing anxiety. Supportive instruction, gradual task progression, and collaborative learning were associated with increased student participation, while high evaluative pressure and public performance heightened anxiety. At the same time, students' coping strategies, such as preparation and emotional regulation, were most effective when supported by empathetic teaching practices. In summary, this chapter bridged the empirical findings with existing theory, showing how academic anxiety operates within the English language learning context at Zawia University. The discussion provides a clear foundation for the following chapter, which presents the study's conclusions, implications, and recommendations based on the interpreted findings.

Chapter Six
Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the overall conclusions of the study, reflecting on the experiences of Libyan university students and teachers regarding anxiety in English language learning. It draws together the findings from the previous chapters, highlighting the causes, manifestations, and management strategies of anxiety while integrating insights from both student and teacher perspectives. The chapter also explores the implications of these findings for teaching practice, curriculum design, and theoretical understanding, acknowledges the limitations of the study, suggests directions for future research, and concludes with a summary that ties together the chapter's main points. This structure ensures that the chapter provides a comprehensive reflection on the study while situating its findings within broader educational and scholarly contexts.

6.2 Conclusion of the Study

The findings of this research indicate that anxiety is a pervasive, multidimensional phenomenon in English language learning, particularly in contexts requiring oral performance, public presentations, and high-stakes assessments. Students experience anxiety as a result of fear of mistakes, perceived judgment, peer comparison, and academic pressure. These experiences confirm theoretical perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) and the role of self-efficacy in learning (Bandura, 1997), showing that anxiety arises from the interaction of internal cognitive and emotional processes with external environmental pressures. Teachers' observations reinforced students' reports, noting that anxiety negatively affects participation, motivation, concentration, and language production, particularly during oral tasks where evaluative scrutiny is high.

The study also demonstrates that anxiety is influenced by both personal and situational factors. Internal coping strategies, such as mindfulness, self-regulation, and systematic preparation, interact with external supports, including empathetic teaching, structured tasks, and collaborative peer environments, to mitigate stress and enhance performance. This interplay underscores the importance of addressing both the cognitive-emotional and social dimensions of anxiety, suggesting that effective interventions must consider the learner holistically. Overall, the study confirms that anxiety is not a transient emotion but a complex phenomenon shaped by multiple interrelated factors that influence learning outcomes and engagement in EFL contexts.

6.3 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have important implications for teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in Libyan universities. Classroom practices significantly influence students' anxiety levels, with high expectations, public correction, and an excessive focus on grammatical accuracy often intensifying stress. Therefore, teachers play a critical role in shaping the learning environment, and adopting strategies that reduce fear of negative evaluation is essential. Gradual exposure to oral tasks, collaborative learning activities, and the creation of psychologically safe classrooms can help students engage more confidently.

Moreover, the study suggests that university curricula should account for both the cognitive and emotional demands placed on students by high-stakes assessments. Providing sufficient preparation time, structured support, and opportunities for low-pressure practice can help students manage their anxiety effectively and improve academic outcomes.

On a broader theoretical level, the research demonstrates that EFL anxiety is a multifaceted phenomenon shaped by an interplay of cognitive, social, and instructional factors. By integrating students' experiences with teachers' perspectives, the study highlights the interaction between internal emotional responses and external pedagogical conditions. Consequently, addressing academic anxiety requires more than a single strategy; effective management must balance learner-centered approaches, emotional support, and instructional design tailored to individual differences in confidence, language proficiency, and coping abilities.

6.4 Recommendation of the Study

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Supportive Classroom Practices:** Teachers should foster a non-threatening learning environment by providing positive reinforcement, encouraging participation, and addressing mistakes constructively. Such practices reduce fear of judgment and enhance engagement in oral and interactive activities.
- **Individualized Attention:** Educators are encouraged to recognize the unique needs of each student by adapting tasks and participation requirements according to confidence levels and language proficiency. Small group activities or one-on-one support can be particularly effective for anxious learners.

- **Structured Preparation and Incremental Exposure:** Gradually increasing the difficulty of speaking tasks, starting with low-pressure exercises, and incorporating informal practice opportunities can help students build confidence and reduce anxiety over time.
- **Peer Support and Collaborative Learning:** Group work, pair activities, and peer-assisted learning create a supportive social environment in which students feel less judged, promoting risk-taking and active engagement with the language.
- **Coping Strategies and Mindfulness Techniques:** Integrating stress management approaches, such as deep breathing, positive self-talk, task segmentation, and mindfulness exercises, can equip students with tools to manage anxiety effectively.
- **Teacher Training and Awareness:** Professional development programs should enhance teachers' understanding of academic anxiety, strengthen their ability to recognize symptoms, and improve strategies for providing empathetic and effective support.

Institutional Support: Universities should offer mental health resources, counseling services, and workshops that address academic stress and anxiety, ensuring students have access to guidance and support beyond the classroom.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, the study has some limitations that must be acknowledged. The research relied on a relatively small sample of eight students and eight teachers from a single university, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the context-specific focus on the English departments at Zawia University may not fully represent experiences in other universities, academic disciplines, or regional contexts in Libya. Another limitation concerns the reliance on self-reported data from students, which may be influenced by social desirability, recall bias, or reluctance to disclose feelings of anxiety fully. Finally, while the study explored major causes and coping strategies, certain factors—such as cultural beliefs, family expectations, and technological learning environments—were not examined in depth, leaving space for further investigation.

6.6 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research could build on this study by including larger and more diverse samples across multiple universities and disciplines, which would enhance the generalizability of the findings and allow for comparative analyses. Investigating the impact of cultural, social, and institutional factors on language learning anxiety in Libya could also provide deeper insights into context-specific influences. Longitudinal studies or mixed-method designs may capture the development and fluctuation of anxiety over time, revealing how repeated exposure to oral tasks, feedback, and teaching practices shapes students' confidence and coping mechanisms. Research could also explore the effectiveness of targeted interventions, such as mindfulness programs, peer mentoring, or teacher training initiatives, in alleviating anxiety and enhancing student performance in EFL contexts.

6.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has presented a comprehensive reflection on the study, emphasizing that anxiety in English language learning is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon shaped by personal, social, and instructional factors. It has summarized the main findings regarding the causes, manifestations, and coping strategies of anxiety, integrating both student and teacher perspectives. The chapter has also discussed the practical and theoretical implications of these findings, highlighted the study's limitations, and proposed directions for future research. Overall, the chapter reinforces the importance of adopting a holistic, learner-centered approach to address anxiety in EFL contexts, ensuring that both cognitive and emotional dimensions are considered to enhance student engagement, confidence, and learning outcomes.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|------|------------------------------------|
| APA | American Psychological Association |
| CBT | Cognitive Behavioural Therapy |
| CMC | Computer-Mediated Communication |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| FLA | Foreign Language Anxiety |
| L2 | Second Language |
| SLA | Second Language Acquisition |
| STAI | State-Trait Anxiety Inventory |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

Appendices

Appendix A: Students' Semi-Structured Interview Questions

This interview guide was designed to explore undergraduate students' perceptions, experiences, and understanding of anxiety and its impact on academic achievement in the English Language Department at Zawia University. Open-ended questions were used to encourage detailed responses.

Students' Interview Questions :

1. How do you understand anxiety in relation to your university studies?
2. In what ways does anxiety affect your learning of English?
3. What physical, emotional, or psychological symptoms do you experience when you feel anxious?
4. Which academic activities cause you the highest level of anxiety, and why?
5. What factors increase your anxiety, and what factors help to reduce it?
6. Do you think anxiety is more common among students in English departments?

Please explain.

7. Are there differences in anxiety levels across English courses (e.g., speaking, grammar, literature)?
8. How do you cope with anxiety, and how do you support classmates who experience it?
9. Have you ever discussed anxiety with your teachers? Why or why not?
10. What suggestions do you have for reducing anxiety among students at Zawia University?

Appendix B: Teachers' Semi-Structured Interview Questions

This interview guide aimed to investigate teachers' perspectives on student anxiety, its impact on academic achievement, and strategies employed to address it in the English Language Department at Zawia University.

Teachers' Interview Questions :

1. How do you recognize anxiety among students during lectures?
2. How do you deal with anxious students in your classes?
3. In your opinion, does anxiety affect students' academic achievement in the English department? How?
4. What is the role of the teacher in addressing student anxiety?
5. Have you encountered students whose academic performance could improve in the absence of anxiety? Please share your experiences.
6. Do you believe teachers should help students practice strategies to overcome anxiety? Have you tried this? If yes, how? If no, why?
7. From your perspective, what are the main causes of anxiety among English department students at Zawia University, and how widespread is this issue?