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Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English

**The Impact of Anxiety on Test Performance:  
The Case of 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL Students  
at Tlemcen University**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master in Language Studies

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## **Statement of Originality**

I declare that this dissertation is my own work and that, it contains no previous published materials or written by another person and no material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other diploma of a university or other institution. This work is the result of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Signature

## **Dedications**

To my dear parents: Khatsir Mohamed and Hasna

To my brother and sister Abdel Hafid and Khawla

To my close Friend Nawel  
and Relatives.

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## **Abstract**

Test anxiety is a phenomenon that is commonly encountered at the university. As an affective factor, test-taking anxiety has been investigated in different contexts in both psychological and educational fields, since anxiety drives learners to different performance during their test-taking. The aim of this research work was to explore the impact of anxiety on students' test performance and the importance of teachers' assessment in increasing or decreasing it. 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students, at the Department of English, Tlemcen University represented the sample population of a case study. The choice of students indicated the importance of improving test-taking for academic achievement. To carry out the present work, a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview were used as research instruments for data collection. The results were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. They revealed that high test anxiety can demotivate students and may lead to failure as well as the teachers' assessment can impact students' test-anxiety and performance.

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# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

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Second language research generally deals with learners who are in touch with an additional language at least some years after they have started to acquire their first language. When it comes to writing or speaking in second foreign language, learners frequently face some issues depending on specific situations.

Anxiety is one of the most common psychological issues in language learning especially in the EFL context. It contributes either in the success or in the failure of academic process, in particular test performance. Test anxiety is the most frequently observed problems in EFL classes. In tests, learners faced fear and worry as consequence they may fail in performance. Which is characterized by their achievement. However, when it comes to writing or sitting for a test or an exam, some difficulties could be seen.

Some learners are always updated and work hard in their homework, activities and participation in class but whenever they sit for test they fail at the level of well performance. Indeed, anxiety plays a crucial role especially for 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students due to the new setting they are confronted to, especially the methodology of teaching and the new way of testing. This study tries to identify the reasons behind test- anxiety and whether it has negative or positive impacts on students' performance using the following research questions:

1/ How does high anxiety effect test performance among 1<sup>st</sup> year English students?

2/ What is the impact of assessment on students' test anxiety?

To give insight to the problem raised in this study, some hypotheses were formulated:

1. High anxiety on tests demotivates students and leads to failure.

2. Since, Test anxiety has a negative impact on students' performance.

Teachers' assessment plays a great role in increasing or decreasing it. Moreover, special care and useful methods might encourage students' goals and self-motivation to overcome it.

This dissertation is divided into two chapters: the first one review the literature on anxiety, the second one is about the research design, data analysis and suggestions.

## **General Introduction**

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The first chapter gives some insights into what anxiety is in general. Also, it highlights the theories and sources of anxiety. Then, it presents the different types in relation to this research. In addition, to the main causes and measures of it. Also, light is shed on a special type of anxiety which is test-anxiety and its different components and causes. It ends with the relationship between test and assessment.

The second chapter is deals to the practical work in which it explains, the methodology used in this research, it also describe of the sample population in addition to the research tools. Then, it moves to the analysis of data and the discussion of the main results and their interpretation in which the researcher seeks to answer the research questions by confirming or disconfirming the proposed hypotheses. Besides, some recommendations are provided for teachers and learners.

# **Chapter one:**

## **Theoretical background on Anxiety**

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# Chapter one

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## 1.1. Introduction

Learners become nervous before they take an important test, but some of them experience an intense of fear or worry known as test anxiety. Test anxiety is a type of performance anxiety since there is a pressure to do well in a specific situation. They can experience test anxiety for a number of reasons: they may fear failure and uncertainty of the future if they do poorly in an examination, they may have procrastinated due to this fear and feel overwhelmed by cramming for a test at the last minute and they may also have experienced poor test performance in the past and worry about the incident repeating. Although there is conflicting evidence in the test anxiety literature, there is a broad agreement that test anxiety is associated with lower academic performance.

Most learners experience some levels of anxiety during tests and exams. When anxiety affects their test performance, it becomes a problem. Test anxiety can interfere with students' ability to perform adequately and prevent them from demonstrating their knowledge in examinations. Some students have the skills and knowledge to do well in testing situations, but their excessive anxiety impairs their performance.

This chapter comes first across the meaning of anxiety in general according to some definitions from different scholars. It also points out the different types of this phenomenon. Then, light is shed on a special type of anxiety which is test anxiety in which the researcher tries to define it and presents the main components and causes that effect students' performance. This work also aims to identify the main factors that lead to test anxiety and tries to point out how it can be reduced. At the end of this chapter, the researcher tries to provide some strategies given by specialists in the field to reduce and improve test performance without forgetting the close relationship between test anxiety and assessment.

## 1.2. Anxiety

Research on anxiety has been an important focus of psycholinguistics since anxiety is considered as one of the factors that affects the performance of language learners. A great number of psychologists and scholars describe anxiety in different

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ways where it is viewed by Llinas and Garau (2009:154) as a very interesting behavior that should be taken into consideration and as a phenomenon in human mental behavior which leads to a specific feeling in facing some situations and the result of language problems that learners may have during a language course.

Generally anxiety happened during an unknown situation when facing new occasion that can be either in learning or in working in general resulting some problems. In order to understand the specific type of anxiety that learners experience in a foreign language classroom, it is importance first to consider anxiety in general terms.

## **1.2.1. Definitions**

Researchers and practitioners define anxiety differently. Anxiety is the fact of worry about future events, and fear is a reaction to current ones. As Speilberger (1983:15) explains as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system”

Unlike lancer (2018:1) describes it as the fact of frequently accompanied by obsessive worry and an inability to concentrate that may affect our sleep. It can trigger a full-blown fight-flight-or-freeze response of our sympathetic nervous system that prepares us to meet a real danger. However, a big difference between fear and anxiety is that because anxiety is an emotional response to something that has not occurred, there is nothing to fight or flee. Tension, therefore, builds up inside humans' body, but there is no action we can take to release it. Instead, our mind goes round and round, replaying possibilities and scenarios. Indeed, this means that anxiety is the fact of being nervous, worry and feeling unwell when facing a specific occasion, this latter could be in learning new language or skills, facing audience, giving speech or setting for test or exams.

The anxious person may have increased heart rate, shortness of breath, dry mouth and even muscle tension, which may lead to poor academic performance, poor engagement with the others and even depression. As lancer (2018:1) declares that

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“anxiety is the apprehension of experiencing fear in the future. The danger that is feared isn’t normally imminent — it may not even be known or realistic. In contrast, typically fear is an emotional and physical reaction to a present, known threat.” Lancer in his definition states that anxiety is the fact of unwell feeling that the person experiences like fear of what is common. i.e. the fear of the unknown. Similarly, Cambridge dictionary (2017) defines anxiety as: “An uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is happening or might happen in the future, and something that causes a feeling of fear and worry”. All of these definitions state anxiety as a complex situation which people may face under specific conditions. Indeed, it can be said that anxiety in normal psychological behavior that people experience during their daily life can happen to any person when coming across different situations due to several reasons.

In relation to education, it is highly mentioned that anxiety, as perceived intuitively by many language learners, negatively influences language learning and has been found one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education (Horwitz 2001:113). This means that anxiety seeks to be an unwelcome feeling on learners’ attitude. Language anxiety may also be a result as well as a cause of insufficient command of the target language (Sparsks and Ganschow; cited in Horwitz, 2001:118). Apart of all these definitions of anxiety, some theories were built in literature in the field of anxiety.

## 1.2.2. Theories

Concerning theories related to anxiety, it was believed that Freud was the first who attempted to work on this psychological problem. He focused on the importance of anxiety, which usually means “eagerness” as worry and fear. Freud, Goldstein, and Homey (1976:237-248) state that anxiety reflects the human situation in the face of nature, death and the contingencies of life.

Fear is always directed to specific object, situation or danger and it can be rational or irrational. When this first would exist if one who was inexperienced had to inter a

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lion's cage in order to retrieve something or one had to enter a burning house to rescue its occupants the person can feel this type of anxiety during specific action like the fear of danger or fire, but he still doing it while, Irrational fear placed a type of anxiety in which there is something that is feared, but without a good reason. This includes phobias, such as fear of darkness or basements.

Freud (1976) explained that normal anxiety does not in itself constitute a pathological problem; it was called real or objective anxiety. Anxiety is a relation to an external danger and as such it is a natural, normal and useful function. It can be confronted contractively on the level of conscious awareness or can be relieved if the situation is altered. An example of a normal anxiety is a student's feeling of uneasiness and apprehension as he or she approaches an examination.

The anxious person is known by situations which are in themselves not considered to be objectively threatening. This refers to as a neurotic anxiety which means a reaction to a threat that is disproportionate to the objective danger involves repression and other forms of intrapsychic conflict.

In fact, Freud (1976) called anxiety "the fundamental problem and central problem of neurosis". His first theory, the so-called toxic theory, is more biological than psychological. He claims that "libido becomes converted into anxiety, libidinous energy is repressed and its repression becomes covert into anxiety", so this latter is repression itself which causes anxiety.

Freud's second theory was much less automatic and libidinous, it was ego-centered and essentially psychological. When ego sees the dangerous impulses: "it is not the repression that causes the anxiety, but the anxiety is there first and creates the repression". From the subsequent theories built upon Freud's second theory of anxiety, Adler's theory departed from Freud. He stressed on feelings of inferiority as the root causes of anxiety and neurosis, and his entire theory became more social and cultural in emphasis.

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Adler (1927:1998) describes anxiety as a nonaggressive character trait in understanding human nature. According to him, anxiety is an extraordinary widespread trait; it accompanies an individual from earliest childhood to old age. It embitters the person life to a marked degree, distances his/her from all human contacts, and destroys ones' hope of building up a peaceful life or making fruitful contributions to the world. Fear at least, can touch every human activity and a person can be afraid of the outer world or afraid of the world within himself.

Adler recognizes the importance of each person to recognize himself as a significant part of the whole world with a positive and active role in society. He confirmed the importance of feeling that one belongs to a society and has courage to be actively involved. He attributed also symptoms of anxiety; neurosis as a hesitating attitude, fear of failing, lack of social connection. There are also sources of anxiety which were discussed in literature.

## **1.2.3. Sources**

According to Skinner's definition (1945:52) of anxiety, because of the feeling of not knowing what to do, anxious people must think that there is something to be done and they should move on. There are many sources that make people anxious. Each scholar pointed his own view. According to Karson (2005: 1) there are four major sources of anxiety;

### **1.2.3.1. Life Confusion**

Humans are born with the capacity of feeling and anxiety is one of this feeling. Anxiety makes people able to live. If fear leads them to fight or run then anxiety prompts them to do something about their situation. When there is nothing to do, there is the fact of accepting life the way it is because acceptance shows the right way to figure their situation. That is to say, Anxiety makes ones figure out the situation and think of a solution. Thus, anxiety is a normal situation that happened to anyone and it is special to humans' awareness.

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### **1.2.3.2. Learning a Skill**

According to Karson (2005:2), Anxiety could happen when learning a new skill that takes effort. It is the best sign that guides to find out what can they do about something. Anxiety is a normal feeling that happens to humans in general and learners in particular when they start learning a new skill as reading or writing in a new language. It is the way to competency and the best reaction to develop learners' skill.

### **1.2.3.3. Learning a skill that requires acknowledgement that people do not already have**

Anxiety can be explained by what learners do not know what to do. They often think that they know what to do, especially when they are under perfectness control, fear of unknown could happen when a learner tries to require a skill that asks for acknowledgement and he thinks that he does not have it, when he has a low self-esteem of unsatisfying results. So, anxiety happened when the learner has a lack of self confidence and a low self-esteem.

### **1.2.3.4. Learning a skill that requiring acknowledgement**

Anxiety can be higher when what the person is going to do, what he thinks that he is not the appropriate one to do it, when self discovery and trusting abilities do not have place, when a person does not engage in gaps, when skillful person does not share his knowledge in the correct place, anxiety is there. So, anxiety is promoted by arrogance which is often disguised as passivity and sheepishness, or as freedom and obliviousness, depending on what the person is arrogant about. Anxiety stems from perfectionism, from stigmatizing mistakes and thinking answers should come easily. It is the opposite of having a skill, but skill acquisition requires humility, flexibility, and effort, the very traits that perfectionism will not tolerate. Anxiety has also different types.

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## 1.2.4. Types

Anxiety is usually not seen as a unitary factor but as a complex made up of constituents that have different types; two important anxiety distinctions are mentioned by Dörnvei (2005: 198) as trait and state anxiety in addition to facilitating and debilitating anxiety. The first one gives the different types of anxiety related to the situation, while the second categorization represents the types related to performance.

### 1.2.4.1. Trait and State Anxiety

Trait anxiety describes a personality characteristic rather than a temporary feeling. It refers also to a stable predisposition to become anxious in a cross-section of situations. It is so a response to a particular anxiety –provoking stimulus such as “an important test” (Spielberger 1983, cited in Horwitz 2001:113). In contrast, state anxiety is about learners who feel anxious and stressed during certain cases and this is likely to disappear quickly. This is exactly what makes state anxiety the transient moment to moment experience of an emotional reaction to a current situation. It is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious (Scovel 1978, cited in Ellis 1994: 479).

### 1.2.4.2. Facilitating and Debilitating Anxiety

Facilitating or debilitating anxiety has been observed when anxiety does not necessarily inhabit performance but in some cases can actually support it, in which worry is considered the cognitive component of anxiety that has a negative impact on performance. Facilitating Anxiety is associated with enhanced and proactive problem solving coping (Rafferty, Smith and Ptacek 1997: cited in Moyer 2008:6). What causes anxiety is a central question in this research work and is of interest for all language teachers and learners.

## 1.2.5. Causes

In order to find out the main solution to anxiety, it is necessary to identify its major causes in the learning process. In fact, there are two main causes that the researcher would point out; learners' self perception which deals with learners' self-esteem that

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causes anxiety and in another hand, teachers as a major cause of anxiety and their role in increasing or decreasing it.

### **1.2.5.1. Learners' Self Perception and Self-Esteem**

Language anxiety may be a result as well as a cause of insufficient command of the target language (Sparks and Garschow: cited in Hurwitz 2001:118). That is to say, it may be experienced due to linguistic difficulties learners face when learning. Self esteem is an individual's sense of the value or worth, or the extent to which a person values, approves of, appreciates, prizes, or likes himself or herself (Blascovich And Tomaka, 1991, cited in Tarkhorani 2007:2). According to Osborne (1997:59) everyone's self esteem is influenced by many factors; parents, teachers, co-workers, friends, fellow classmates and the environment were always influencing self esteem. It has been related to virtually every other psychological concept or domain including personality, task performance and similar behavior, cognitive and clinical concepts such as anxiety and depression.

Wiest et al, (1998:601) declared that a high self esteem had many positive effects and benefits, especially among college students. Students who felt positive about themselves had academic achievement and influenced by perceived competence, locus of control, autonomy. Unlike, Fite et al (1992) suggest that all research result show a reverse connection between anxiety and self-concept, indeed high anxiety is relevant with low self-concept and high self-concept is in relation with affirmative attitude toward school.

### **1.2.5.2. Teachers as the Cause of Anxiety**

Teachers maybe one of the causes of anxiety in the learning process as Merc (2015:41) declares:

In Anxiety studies regarding classroom teachers are mainly centered on general concerns and problem of teachers rather than subject matter specific concerns and problem, bearing in mind the definition and conceptualization



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of the anxiety concept, teachers are seen as distinct construct that causes anxiety.

Teachers may cause anxiety to learners in classroom activities, in giving lectures and even when giving homework. They usually stress students to well perform and for well comprehension of lectures which makes them in such a limited way to be creative. In order to improving learners' performance and reducing anxiety, one essential measure is mentioned which is the role of teachers in reducing anxiety.

### **1.2.6. Measures**

In dealing with anxiety, it is preferable to provide some measures in order to cope with this phenomenon in the learning process. These measures could be tools, methods or ways used by learners or teachers.

Teaching is the most pressure work that rises a wide educated generation so the role of teachers is important in managing the classroom and reducing anxiety, as Whitaker(2018:1) declares that teachers can help in reducing stress in classroom by allowing them social connectivity within the classroom, individuals needs, keeping humor and laughter in classes. Adding to that lessons should strive to reach that deeper learning level, authentic performance, tasks and project-based learning which actually depends on the students' understanding on both the factual and conceptual levels. If the teacher's goal is simply test preparation, students may have a difficult time applying what they have learnt to novel questions or problems. This is why, deeper learning is one of the best test preparations. A teacher can actually provide to help reduce anxiety. An understanding of test anxiety is also pertinent to the discussion of foreign language anxiety.

### **1.3. Test Anxiety**

Test anxiety explained by Horwitz et al (1986) refers to a “type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure”. In the school environment, students usually feel anxious when they are evaluated by teachers during exams or when giving public performances, especially when test anxiety is considered. This can have a remarkable

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and negative impact on the students' capability to perform well. According to Salend (2012:20-25):

Test anxiety is a physiological condition in which people experience extreme stress, anxiety, and discomfort during or before taking a test. These responses can drastically hinder an individual's ability to perform well and negatively affects their social, emotional and behavioral development and feelings about themselves and school.

That is to say, tests are known as the most uncomfortable situation people can experience, which makes them anxious to perform and could influence their social life negatively. Test anxiety is one of the most important aspects of negative motivation and has direct debilitating effects on school performance. Some definitions are stated by scholars in the literature related to test anxiety.

## **1.3.1. Definitions**

Test anxiety is often associated with other anxieties and phobias, it is difficult to provide a simple, clear cut definition. For instance, Dusek (1980:88) defines test anxiety as "an unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has physiological and behavioral concomitants, and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations." And thus it is a major predictor of academic performance and various studies have demonstrated that it has a detrimental effect.

In fact, test anxiety was first discussed in strength by Luria (1932) and the relationship between examination anxiety and examination performance was first investigated by Sarason (1958...1965) who found a negative relationship, higher test anxiety was observed to be positively correlated to lower exam performance. Early research results indicated a negative relationship between examination anxiety and examination performance.

Test anxiety is a feeling which is formed during childhood and has tolerate gradually in later years. Tight discipline at home, restricting parental attitudes,

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authoritarian educational-instructional mentality at school, negative, cold and offending teacher criticism, punishments, low grading and challenging grade passing conditions constitute the circumstances leading to test anxiety which develops at early ages. Frequent school failures, negative evaluations by adults and the sense of threat for the self which such situations revoke in individuals are crucial factors in the development of test anxiety (Öner, 1989). It is noticeable that test anxiety is one of the factors that lead to poor academic performance which happen to students under several reasons.

## **1.3.2. Components**

There are several components related to test anxiety, each one is different from one person to another. Many scholars declared that there are cognitive, emotional and psychological components which the person faces in test performance.

### **1.3.2.1 Emotionality and worry**

Emotionality and worry were originally suggested by Liebert and Morris (1967-1970); emotionality refers to self-perceived autonomic arousal, e.g., muscle tension, while emotionality would appear to be akin to autonomic arousal itself, several papers, have suggested that it may be more the attention driven to physiological arousal, rather than arousal perse, as emotionality correlates minimally with physiological arousal.

Deffenbacher *et al* (1980-1981) viewed that worry refers to cognitive concern about one's performance, consequences of failing, evaluation of one's abilities relative to others, and the like. Recent reviews have suggested that emotionality and worry are interrelated, but different constructs.

### **1.3.2.2. Psychological processes**

A variety of psychological processes have been assumed to account for anxiety performance deterioration. For example, elevated autonomic arousal has been considered as mediating factor. Heightened autonomic arousal may interfere directly

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with performance or may motivate avoidance and escape behaviors that interfere. Recent cognitive models of test anxiety suggest sources of interference that are more cognitive and intentional in nature. These models suggest that when evaluation is salient, highly test-anxious individuals tend to respond with highly personalized, self-oriented responses. (Wolpe, 1973 cited in Deffenbacher and Hazaleus 1985). These are some causes that make anxiety before or during tests which lead to poor academic performance and low self-esteem which happened to some student during their test taking.

### 1.3.3. Causes

Each student experiences test anxiety during his learning process. The question that should be asked is why do students feel anxious when they came across tests and exams and what are the causes of this anxiety? According to psychologists and scholars, in order to come up with solutions, it is important to identify the main causes. As well, all people can experience some anxiety before taking a test. However, test anxiety, which can be expressed by cognitive, emotional and physical symptoms before and during examination, might become so high to interfere with a student's performance on a test.

Fear of failure could happen to students when facing the test paper. Pressure to perform well on high-stakes tests makes them in a very limited way to think. Focusing on negative consequences of failing a test and thinking only in low marks, add to that when pasting negative experience with taking a test, will be a habit to be anxious, in addition to the lack of experience with failure, so potential failure causes anxiety.

Negative feelings are seen such as the fear of failure during the exam, sense of guilt about how student could not study sufficiently, the thought that time cannot be used efficiently and nothing will be remembered, frequently focusing on the score to be achieved, feeling worthless and unsuccessful compared to other students, and disappointing the parents as well as physiological symptoms such as nausea, hyperactivity, and hypertension. Test anxiety is felt before, during and after tests/exams. Findings of research investigating the effect of test anxiety on students

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and show that students' immune system is also influenced by anxiety (Spangler, 1997:86).

Perfectionism Exam performance related to self-esteem competitiveness and comparison with other students' scores, and lack of preparation and poor time management could be a good reason of making learners anxious in tests, and lack of sleep. "Individuals who have high level of self esteem are likely to be anxious than those with low self esteem" (Horwitz et al, 1986:192).

### **1.3.4. Effects of Test Anxiety on Students' Performance**

Anxiety is a natural human reaction, and it works as an important psychological function that is felt by many people regardless of age, According to Herrero et al (2006:150-159):

All people experience anxiety as an alarm system that is activated whenever they perceive situation as dangerous, embarrassing or stressful, in these situations anxiety can help them to better manage the events, while low and controllable level of anxiety can be beneficial, high level of anxiety may negatively impact one's social and personal relationships, and cause physical and emotional problems.

Anxiety happened when facing a situation that control the ability of performance, According to Tobias (1983:322), "In learning context anxiety can affect the ability of receiving information, its processing, and retrieving it when it's necessary". Anxious students often experience high and uncontrollable worry about events like tests, which accrued in the past or may happen in the future. They experience extreme worry about performing completely well, mean while, they are so self- conscious and often misinterpret or overstate the importance of the condition. All of these can negatively impact on the learning and information processing via its influences on working memory, leading to poorer academic performances, school dropout or underachievement in school. Finally, it can predict significant problems in child life which may do not recover easily. Emotions affect the role of motivation and the

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abilities of individuals and improve the process of learning in various fields, especially among students who have strong link with anxiety.

Heimberg *et al.*, (1993:57-73) find that people who experience high level of anxiety were less successful at encoding information and less effective at processing events. That's because lots of energy and attention wasted for managing anxiety, and fewer clues from the environment will be recognized by them. All of these will lead to losing considerable capacity of their working memory which can negatively impact their learning processes. To improve test performance, it is necessary to reduce this problem.

## **1.4. Improving Test performance by Reducing Anxiety**

It is important to set an ending for anxiety especially for learners, in order to come up with high academic performance and high level of education with good improvement. Hill (1984) proved that “as many as 10 million students in elementary and secondary schools perform more poorly on tests than they should because anxieties and deficiencies in test-taking strategies interfere with performance” (Quoted in Wigfield and Eccles, 1989:159).

Though some test anxiety can work as a positive motivator for effective success, extreme amounts can disrupt a student's ability to perform well and can lead to high levels of stress, low self-esteem, poor grades, and late achievements. So, it is important to set some recommendations for teachers for addressing student test anxiety. According to some scholars and specialists these are some tips in order to reduce test anxiety and improve test performance:

- To help prevent test anxiety, it is essential for teachers to introduce and give students some ways and strategies to improve their test performance and reducing anxiety.
- Guide them to study techniques like reading materials with questions in mind, reviewing information acquired while reading and recite it.
- Organizing and outlining the subject given.
- Teach them how to manage time.

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- Encourage sufficient time to study for the test, for instance; implement study session during class time and encourage studying outside the classroom.
- Teach students successful test-taking strategies, like reading and listening to all direction and question carefully.
- Understanding test time limits and skip difficult questions until all other questions have been answered.
- Teacher should be proactive and notice test anxiety before it became a problem.
- Helping students to cope with their test anxiety by encourage them to use positive self-talk as an alternative to negative thoughts about their perceived ability and performance prior to and during testing situation.
- Replacing negative self thoughts with positive ones.

Teachers can be a part of the healing process, and they should be informed about academic anxiety and its impact on students learning process. In addition to all of this, there is in fact a close relationship between assessment and anxiety.

## **1.5. Assessment and Anxiety**

There is a correlation between assessment and anxiety in the level of education in which teachers' assessment may lead to anxiety in test taking, low assessment can increase anxiety and high one can decrease it. Indeed, when learners face test anxiety, they may fail at the level of academic success because anxiety could interfere their performance. Sarason and Mandler (1952) were among the first to uncover a significant correlation between test score and test anxiety. In similar research, Alpert and Haber (1960:215) find that both grade point averages and examination scores are predicated by test anxiety. They found a positive correlation between facilitating anxiety grades, a negative correlation between debilitating anxiety and grades. They add that (1960:21) "the incorporation of items designed to measures facilitating anxiety into a scale which already measures debilitating anxiety can significantly increase the prediction of academic performance scores."

Learners may fear failure and think only about scores in the situation that they should think about their performance on tests. This makes them anxious in taking tests,

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and teachers can decrease the level of anxiety by level up the high anxiety and encourage them to perform and not to do well.

### 1.6. Conclusion

To conclude, the data provided above summarize a background on anxiety in general and test anxiety in particular. It can be seen as an issue especially in the learning process and it can be reduced to improve test performance. Anxiety has been studied by many researchers and scholars and from different perspectives, the majority of the researches try to see how can anxiety prevent learners to succeed in their learning through various theories. Therefore, four important sources have been conducted on anxiety as: life Confusion, learning a skill, learning a skill that require acknowledgement that people do not have it and that require acknowledgement that they need. Also, as a second half of this chapter, the researcher points the deepest point of the research which is test anxiety with its components and causes to identify the main effects on students' performance.

Add to that some steps were introduced to improve test performance by reducing anxiety and at the end as an overall, the relation between assessment and anxiety in which the role of assessment was clarified in rising or decreasing students' anxiety. The learners should be able to feel comfortable inside the language classroom to guarantee a smooth flowing of the process.



# **Chapter Two:**

## **Research Design, Data Analysis and Suggestions.**

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### 2.1 Introduction

The present research focuses on measuring anxiety in test performance, it attempts to work on two main aspects; the effect of anxiety on students test performance and the impact of assessment on students test- performance, the purpose of this study is to shed the light on these two research questions in order to come up with reliable data that seeks to clarify why 1<sup>st</sup> year students feel anxious and stressed during tests and what are the consequences of this phenomena?

This chapter deals with the research methodology and procedure, this study is conducted to identify the reasons after test-anxiety and try to find solutions so as to reduce this anxiety during tests. To achieve these objectives, two data collection instruments are used; a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview. Secondly this chapter seeks to analyse the results qualitatively and quantitatively, as they were defined as to flip of quantitative-it numerical. It shows the who, what, when, and where ,quantitative data are statistical and provides validation unlike qualitative data is non- numerical data, it shows you the why and how ?

At the end, it attempts to put forward some recommendations that might be useful to reduce test anxiety, and as first step the researcher had identify the main titles to describe the research work.

### 2.2. Situation analysis

In 2004, Algeria has adopted a new system of education in universities which is a decision that was made to implement the European educational system known as LMD: Licence, Master and Doctorate. At the University of Tlemcen, especially at the Department of English, there are different teachers, in different specialties. There are 8 professors and big number of doctors in the fields of linguistics literature, civilization, ESP, TEFL...etc. In addition, there are some doctorate students who assure some lectures. There are different modules which are taught in the licence level as grammar, phonetics, linguistics ... etc. Besides, there is a particular curriculum addressed to Master students in three specialties: Language Sciences, Didactics, Literature and Civilization.

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First year students attend 10 different modules divided into two semesters and at the end of each one, they have to pass their exams.

### **2.3. Research Design**

In this section, the researcher will deal with the research methodology followed, and the research work as a case study, in addition to two instruments used in order to achieve as more reliable results as possible, the followed step is to describe the sample used to collect data .

#### **2.3.1. Case Study**

Case studies are considered as a popular research method aiming to analyze specific issues within the boundaries of a specific environment or situation. A case study is defined by Mitchell (1983:192) as “a detailed examination of an event (or series of related events) which the analyst believes exhibits (or exhibit) the operation of some indentified general theoretical principles”. In the case study, there is a sample that includes the target population chosen to limit the scope of the research and to save time and effort.

The present case study is a case study of first year EFL students in the Department of English, at Tlemcen University. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of anxiety on test performance and to know the reasons behind this anxiety and also to provide solutions that may help to cope with this phenomenon.

#### **2.3.2 Sampling**

According to Bouklikha (2016:132), “the quality of piece of research stands not only on the appropriateness of methodology and instrumentation, but also on the suitability of the sampling strategy adopted”. In the academic year of 2018/2019, among almost 500 EFL students at Tlemcen University, Department of English, first year students, among 10 sections/groups, and due to the lack of time and large number of groups, one section was selected randomly as a research sample. These 45 informants represent 9% of the overall population of 1<sup>st</sup> year students. In fact, Field,

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(2005) describes the research sample as “a smaller (but hopefully representative) collection of units from a population used to determine truths about that population”. So, sampling must be valid and specific to gain support and logical data. In addition eight teachers from the English Department at Tlemcen University were chosen to answer the interview questions that help to collect data, it was done to benefit from their experience and to collect reliable data in which they have faced this phenomenon theoretically. The researcher dealt with two research tools to collect facts and opinions that can help in answering the research question and in the validity of the hypotheses.

### **2.3.3. Instrumentation**

In doing a research and in order to collect data two instruments of research are chosen, a teachers’ interview and a students’ questionnaire. The researcher gave 45 informants questionnaires to be answered and make eight interviews with 8 teachers to gain reliable data based on their experience and observation.

#### **2.3.3.1 Students’ Questionnaire**

Questionnaires represent the most effective data collection devices, Negel *et al*(2009:10) state that : “questionnaires are a useful option to consider when conducting a postal survey, they can be cheaper than personal interviewing and quicker if the sample is large and widely dispersed”, It is seen as an appropriate tool to collect data and save time and effort .

The questionnaire contain 11 items based on written questions, the researcher began with a small paragraph to introduce the research work and ask the student politely to reply, to begin with, Close-ended questions are used that are easy for them and get little bit excitement to reply the rest of questions. Secondly, three multiple choice questions as question 2, 3 and 4, in which the students select the most appropriate answers that suite them .Then, another close-ended question was put, in order to gain time. Indeed, three others were multiple choice questions and three others at the end to collect their opinion and suggestions about the research work. In fact, the researcher chose several types of questions to provide qualitative and quantitative data which will be explained with their purpose (see appendix A).

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### 1. Do you feel or have ever felt stressed or nervous in taking tests?

The first question was asked to students in order to know whether they felt anxious during tests, which aimed to investigate the overall number of anxious students in order to continue the research work investigation.

### 2. When do you feel stressed while taking a test?

The second question was tackled to see if 1<sup>st</sup> year students had a specific test that made them more anxious than the others. It aims at identifying the specific modules that make students anxious while being tested.

### 3. What makes you feel stressed or nervous in taking tests?

In this question several reasons that may cause stress during tests are stated and the students are supposed to identify the most appropriate one. The aim behind using such a question is to shed light on the specific reasons that make them anxious.

### 4. The stress has a positive effect on your test performance.

This statement was put to see whether the students agree or disagree on the effect of stress on their performance.

### 5. Do you think anxiety is the reason of failure?

The 5<sup>th</sup> question was asked in order to know the students' opinion about the consequences of anxiety on their studies.

### 6. How do you usually cope with this stress?

The following question was about the methods or techniques used by students in order to avoid stress and anxiety during tests. The aim behind using it is to know what are those strategies and ways that students use to cope with test anxiety.

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7. If you prepare well for a test, do you think that you will feel stressed or anxious?

Question number 7 was asked in order to know if the students were confident when being prepared for test or not. It lays down the shadow on the importance of revision and preparation for self confidence.

8. Does your self-esteem go up or down after receiving your test marks?

This question was asked in order to know the exact students' feeling after receiving test marks and if this has negative or positive effects on their self-esteem.

9. What advice would you recommend and give to other EFL learners in this context?

This question gave the opportunity to students to give their own advices to students and aimed at identifying the students' way of thinking about test anxiety.

10. What do you think is the most efficient method to cope with test-anxiety?

Adding to the previous question, the purpose behind using such a question is to know the students' opinion about the most efficient method that should be used to avoid test anxiety.

11. How do you think teachers can help students to cope with test-anxiety?

The last question was tackled in order to know if the students have suggestions or recommendations to teachers to decrease the level of anxiety and thus to identify the students' needs. The second research instrument used in this study is a teachers' interview that was addressed to English teachers.

### **2.3.3.2 Teachers' Interview**

Structure interviews were given to English teachers who work in the Department of English in Tlemcen University and who taught or are teaching 1<sup>st</sup> year students. In

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fact, the interview helps to collect facts, opinion, qualitative and quantitative data. It is also the act of having conversation between two, the interviewer and the interviewee. According to McNamara (1999: 3):

Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic. Interviews may be useful as follow-up to certain respondents to questionnaires, e.g., to further investigate their responses.

The current interview was used to see whether the teachers noticed the test-anxiety in their classes also whether they helped their students to cope with it and finally what were the methodology used during the test to make the student feels comfortable.

Eight questions were asked to different English teachers, two close-ended and six multiple choice questions. Recording and taking-notes were very helpful to complete it. Each question was asked for a particular purpose (See Appendix B).

**1. How does anxiety affect test performance among 1st year students?**

The aim behind using this question was to investigate on the impact of anxiety on students' test performance and what were the consequences behind it.

**2. Is there any difference between first year students and other students at the level of anxiety on test taking?**

The purpose behind asking this question is to know the difference of anxiety between first year students and others.

**3. Is there an impact of assessment on students' test-anxiety?**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> question was tackled in order to show if there was an impact of assessment on students' test anxiety, i.e., whether the rating would affect students or not.

**4. Can test-anxiety be a reason of failure?**

The 4<sup>th</sup> question was about examining if that phenomenon could be a reason of students' failure.



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5. Do you give another chance to your students if they fail in their tests? If yes, how?

Question 5 seeks to investigate if the teachers gave opportunity to students to try again on tests. If the answer was positive, a clarification asked to be given by teachers seeking to explore the way they deal with their students' failure in tests.

6. Do you teach your students some test taking strategies? If yes what are they?

The following question was asked in order to know strategies used by teachers to avoid test- anxiety.

7. Do you explain and clarify the questions asked in the test?

The 7<sup>th</sup> question was about whether teachers clarified and explained the students' problems during tests, and if they cared about students visions of questions to avoid failure and misunderstanding.

8. How can you help your students to cope with test-anxiety?

The last question was about the ways that teachers used to help their students to overcome that problem of anxiety. The purpose behind it, is to see if the teachers gave some advices and tips to set aside that issue and the importance of teaches' techniques and methods to simplify the test performance, and to know the role of the teachers during the exams and whether they realized the importance and the impact of test anxiety on students' performance and achievement.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Two instruments of research were used in order to provide quantitative and qualitative data and to test the research hypotheses related the prominent topic in foreign language learning.

The researcher used quantitative and qualitative analyses in order to analyse the finding of the research problem as Kothari states accordingly (2004:131):

The role of statistics in research is to function as a tool in designing research, analyzing its data and drawing conclusions, there from most

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research studies results in a large volume of raw data, which must be suitable reduced, so that the same can be read easily and be used for further analysis.

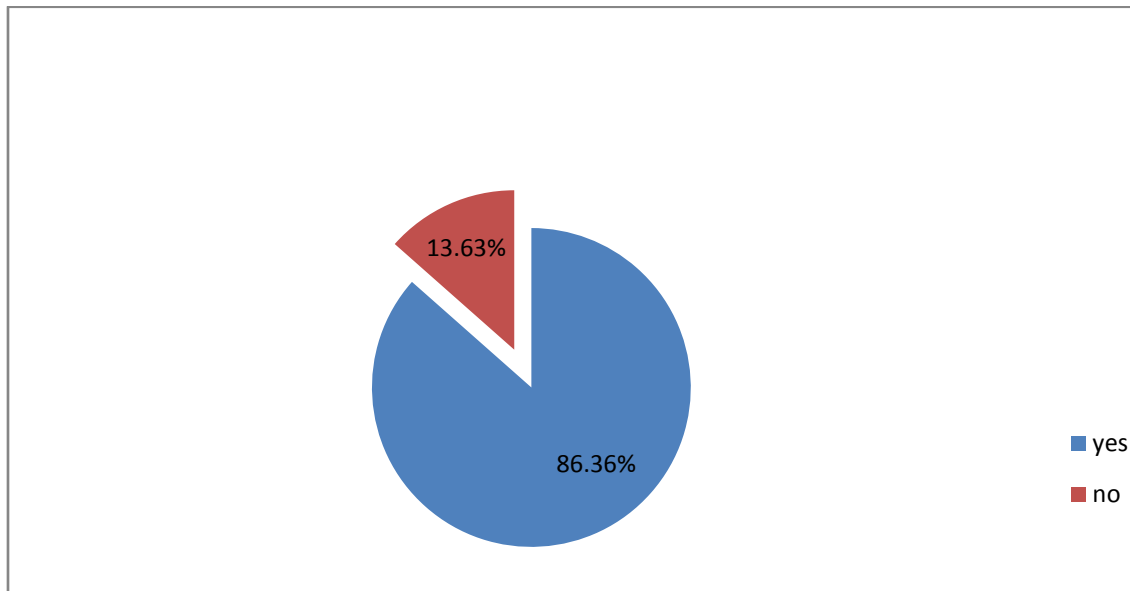
The analysis of the study was provided from the results shown in the students' questionnaire and the teachers' interview.

### 2.4.1 Students' Questionnaire

The researcher divided the questions in the questionnaires into two kinds, open-ended and close-ended questions in order to provide quantitative and qualitative analysis. The first kind of question is analyzed quantitatively whereas the second type is analyzed qualitatively.

#### Question 1: Students' Anxiety in Taking Tests.

The first question deals with whether students felt anxious or nervous when taking a test, the results obtained are shown in the figure below.



**Figure 2.1** Students' Anxiety in Taking Tests

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The findings showed that 86.36% of students felt stressed and anxious when taking tests which means the majority, while a minority 13.63% stated themselves as not anxious.

### **Questions 2: When Test Anxiety Occurs**

This question seeks to identify the modules where students felt anxious and the following table explains the answers given by the respondents.

**Table 2.1** When Test Anxiety Occurs

<b>Question two</b>	<b>AF</b>	<b>RF</b>
<b>Every test</b>	19	43.18%
<b>Oral presentation</b>	20	45.45%
<b>Some tests</b>	5	11.36%

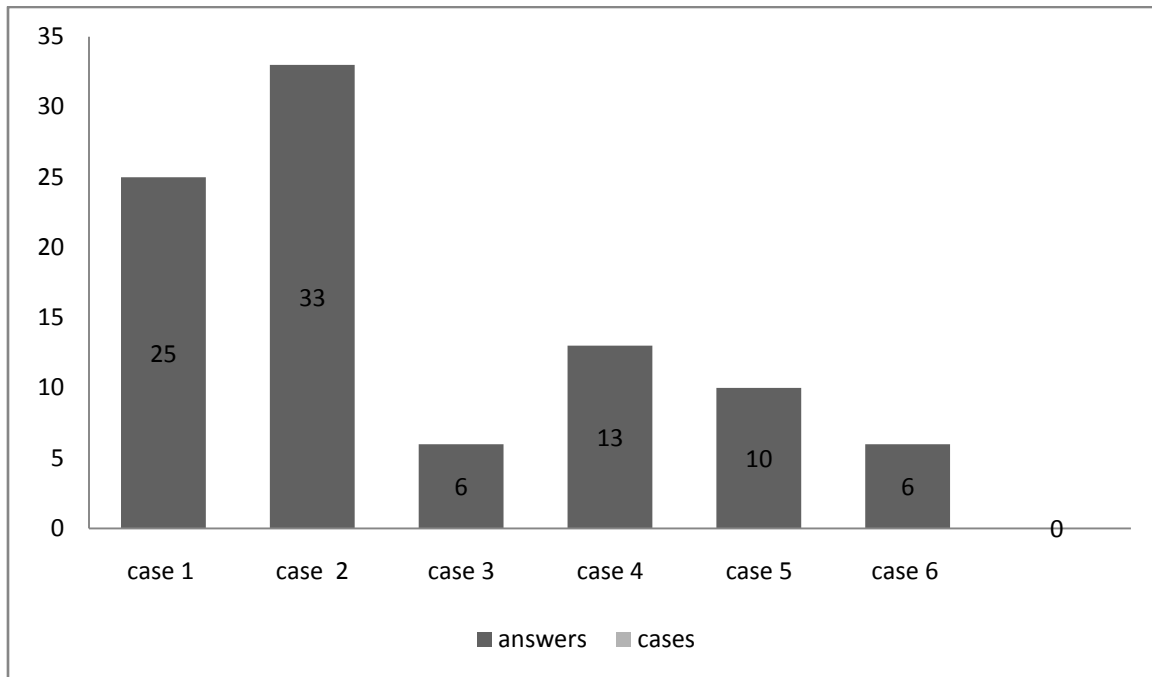
**AF: Absolute Frequency.**

**RF: Relative Frequency.**

The findings clarified that 43.18% of students felt anxious in every test, but 45.45% of them declared that oral presentation made them more stressed and nervous. In other hand, 11.36% of students focused on anxiety in some tests related to Grammar and Writing Expression modules in which they felt the most anxious.

### **Question 3: Reasons of Test Anxiety.**

This question aims at recognizing the the reasons that make students feel anxious and the diagram bellow represents the related finding.



**Figure 2.2** Reasons of Test Anxiety.

**Case 1:** When the teacher asks me a question that I am not prepared for.

**Case 2:** In oral tests.

**Case 3:** When giving answers.

**Case 4:** I remember the information that I blanked on one I get out of the testing situation.

**Case 5:** I have trouble sleeping the night before a test.

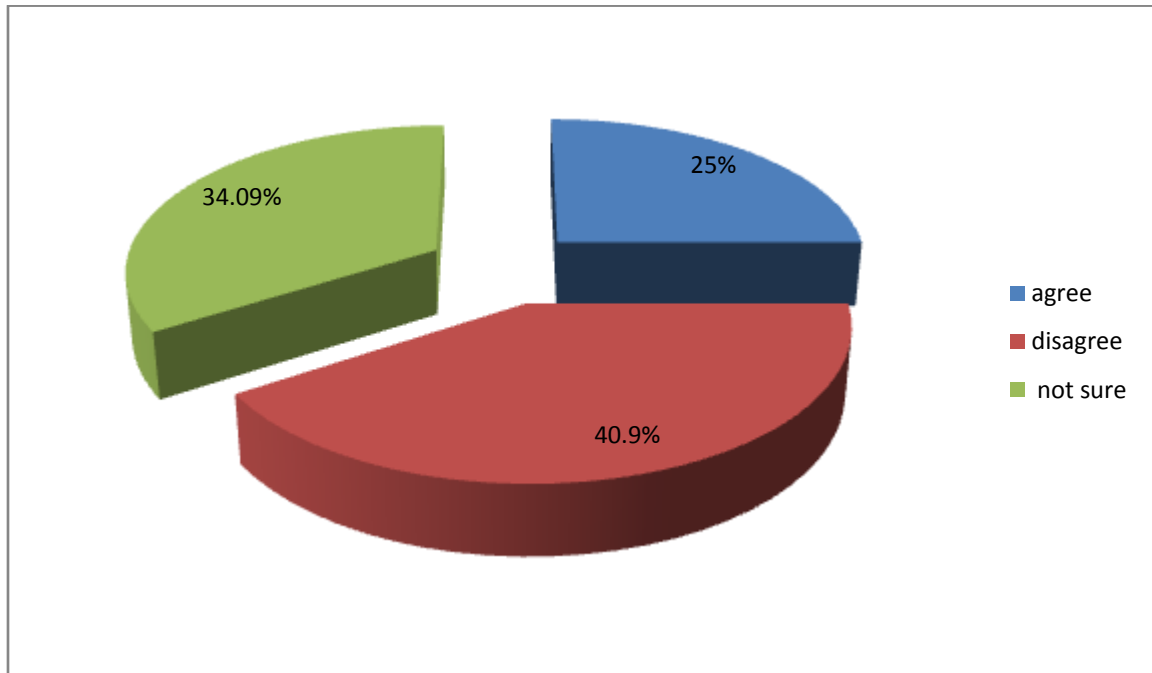
**Case 6:** When looking at my grades.

The results showed that the majority of students felt anxious during oral tests (case 2) and when the teacher asks them a question that they did not prepare before (case 1). Unlike, others claimed that they felt anxious when they remembered information when being out of tests (case 4). 10 of students said the reason was that they had trouble sleeping the night before a test. The lowest case declared that they were anxious when looking at their grades (case 6).

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### Question 4: Positive Effects of Stress on Students' Test Performance.

This question is about getting the students' opinion on the positive effects of stress on their test performance. The aim is to confirm if there was a positive effect of test anxiety on students' performance and this is clarified in the figure below:



**Figure 2.3** Positive Effects of stress on Students' Test Performance.

The results showed that the majority of students disagreed (40.9%) on the fact that stress has a positive effect on their test performance. Unlike, 25% of them said that due to stress, they can perform well in tests. On the other side, 34.09% of them do not exactly know the effect of stress on their test performance .

### Question 5: Anxiety as a Reason of Failure

This question is about whether the students considered anxiety as a reason of their failure, the results are showed in the table below.

## Chapter Two

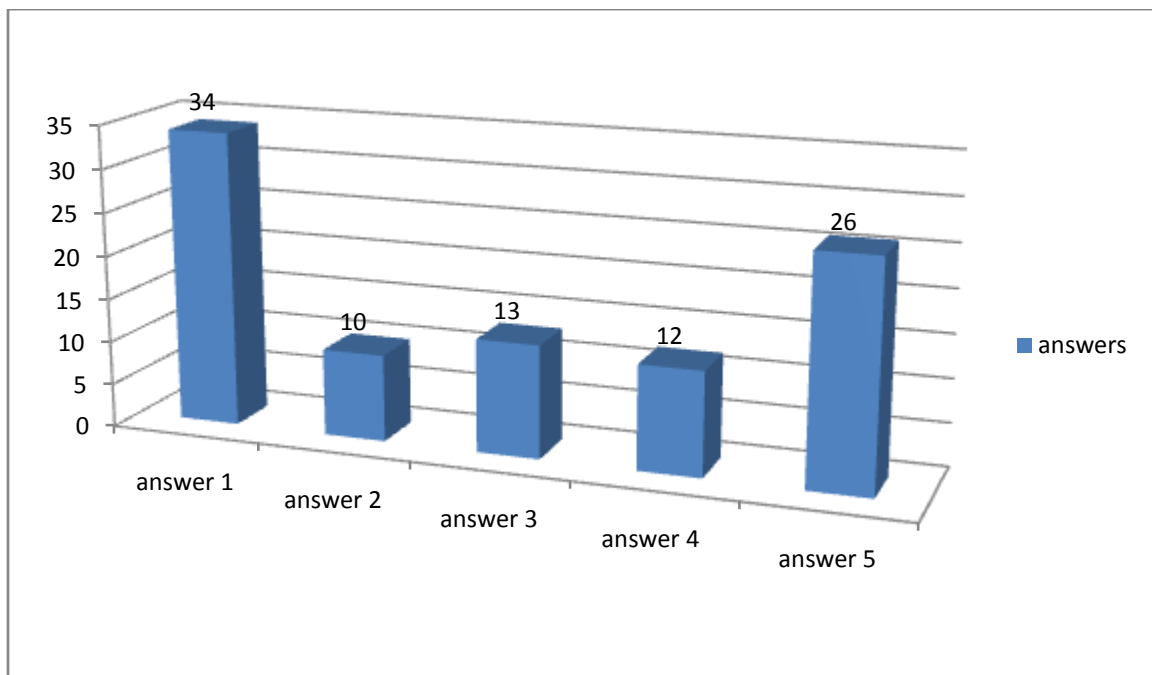
**Table 2.2 Anxiety as a Reason of Failure.**

Question 5	AF	RF
YES	30	68.18%
NO	14	31.81%

The findings showed that most of students (68.18%) agreed on the fact that anxiety was reason of failure. In the other hand 31.81% of them declared that it was not, based on their own experience.

### **Question 6: How to Cope With Stress.**

The next question was about how students usually cope with that stress, the aim behind using this question is to know the methods used by students to overcome their anxiety on tests, which is what the following diagram represents.



**Figure 2.4: How to cope with s tress.**

**Answer 1:** Prepare well before a test.

**Answer 2:** Ask for help from my teacher.

**Answer 3:** Try to deal with the trouble in expressing ideas constructively

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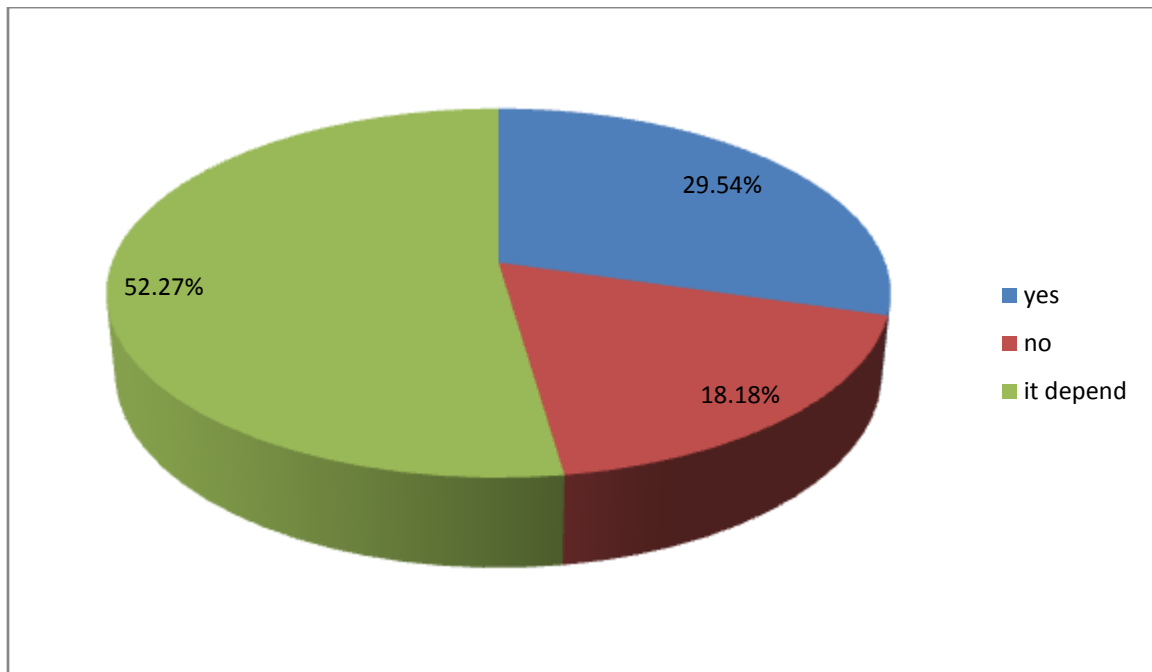
**Answer 4:** Sleep well before a test.

**Answer 5:** Keep silent thinking about answers.

The findings obtained revealed that most students cope with their test-anxiety by a well preparation before tests (Answer 1) and others took lot of time concentration on thinking about answers to avoid stress (Answer 5), 10 of them preferred to ask for teachers' help (Answer 2) and 12 of them preferred sleeping well before tests (Answer 4).finally, 13 of them replied that they tried to deal with the trouble in expressing ideas constructively (Answer 3).

### **Question 7** Students' Anxiety after Test Performance.

This question was about asking students whether being well prepared for tests made them anxious or not. The aim behind using such question is to shed light on the importance of preparation before test and the figure below represents students' opinion.



**Figure 2.5** Students' Anxiety after Test Performance.

The findings showed that 52.27% of students might felt anxious after well preparation before test but it depends on the module. 29.54% Others declared that

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they would feel anxious even if they were prepared for a test and 18.18% of them said that they would not feel anxious .

### Question 8 Students' Self-Esteem.

This question was about students' self-esteem, i.e, whether it went up or down after receiving their marks of the tests. It aims at identifying the effects of anxiety on their performance. The table below clarifies the students' answers.

**Table 2.3 Students' Self Esteem**

<b>Students/cases</b>	<b>AF</b>	<b>RF</b>
up	19	43.18%
down	12	27.27 %
Stays the same	11	25%
It depend on the mark	2	4.54%

The findings obtained showed that, **19** students declared that their self-esteem went up after receiving their marks, unlike **12** of them said that it went down. In other side, **11** students declared that it stayed the same Finally, two of them answered that it depended on the mark itself.

### Question 9 Students Advice

This questions aims at having recommendations from students in the concern of test-anxiety. The second half of the students' questionnaires was about 3 multiple-choice questions which provide long answers and that was to gain qualitative data.

In doing so, students were helpful to give instructions and advice that may help in answering the research questions. Some students (12) declared that the most helpful advice that they could provide was to prepare well before any test. Others (9)said that they should revise before tests with a positive energy and self confidence. Unlike some of them (5) said that facing the stress and organizing time from the beginning during tests was so helpful for beginners. In other hands, concentration in class, working on their language by some suggestions as listening to BBC news were put as advice.



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### **Question 10** The Most Efficient Method to Cope with Test Anxiety.

This question was asked in order to know what was the students' method when they were anxious during tests.

In analyzing this question, the researcher found out that most of the students (16) answered that the appropriate method was to be confident, in order to cope with test-anxiety. Unlike others (10) said that good preparation before at least 3 hours can be a good way to avoid it. Only 5 of them said that breathing deeply and having a good night sleep helped them to cope with this kind of anxiety.

### **Question 11** The Role of The Teacher to Cope with Students' Test Anxiety.

This question aimed at identifying the students' suggestions and methods used or adopted to make them feel better to perform well in tests.

The students answers were as follow: the teacher should begin with a piece of advice according to the answers 13 of students, and that he/she should be kind, the answer given by 9 of them. Also he/she should explain the test several times to make it easy for them and this is what only three students answered.

### 2.4.2. Teachers' Interview

The interview was established in order to collect data and teachers' opinions and thus to improve the reliability of the research work. Eight different questions were asked to different English teachers with different specialties who have already taught 1<sup>st</sup> year LMD students.

To begin with, the researcher asked for permission to do the interview with teachers, and whether they were ready to give their point of view concerning the impact of anxiety on test performance.

#### Question 1

The researcher asked this question to know the consequences of anxiety on 1<sup>st</sup> year students. Indeed, according to 8 respondents, test-anxiety had a negative effect on students' performance. In fact, most of them (6) considered test-anxiety as a negative aspect for learners and it might lead to failure because anxious students could easily forget about what they learnt and they might lose control when performing tests.

#### Question 2

The next question was about the difference between 1<sup>st</sup> year students and other students at the level of anxiety on test taking. This question was asked in order to see the level of anxious students and if it changed from one to another according to teachers' views and experience.

In analyzing this question and according to teachers, (8) of them said that there was a difference between 1<sup>st</sup> year students and other students at the level of anxiety due to the lack of experience and the new setting of the sample population. Most of them (7) assumed that 1<sup>st</sup> year students were the ones who faced this problem a lot because they had different levels proficiency and they were new in the university.

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### Question 3

This question talked the impact of assessment on students' test-anxiety performance. The aim behind using this question is to see whether the assessment affected students' performance because of test-anxiety.

Teachers' opinions were very clear in answering this question. They announced that there was an impact of assessment on test-anxiety since low marks could demotivate students' abilities and affect their performance. So, they said that assessment played an incredible role in raising students' abilities.

### Question 4

A clause-ended question was asked as follow: Can test-anxiety be a reason of failure? The teachers were supposed to confirm or reject this statement. It was asked in order to gain the teachers' opinion based on their experience, if test-anxiety could be a reason of failure. All teachers confirmed the statement.

### Question 5

The next question was whether the teachers gave another chance to their students if they failed in their test. And asked them also to justify their answer.

This question was asked in order to see if the teachers considered the students' failure as a problem and whether they helped them to perform again and the way they did so.

The answers were divided into two parts some teachers (5) declared that they gave another chance to students by counting other factors like participation, attendance of students in class or repeating the test. The other part was about the teachers who said that they would not give another chance to students if they failed on tests and they suggested them to sit for the make up exam because they were following lows.

## Chapter Two

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### **Question 6**

The next question was about whether the teachers taught their students some test-taking strategies and if yes what they were?

The aim behind asking this question is to shed light on the methodology that the teachers used in test-taking and whether they gave their students some strategies to follow during the test to avoid problems of anxiety.

The findings showed that some teachers (5) taught their students some test-taking strategies to avoid mistakes, stress, failure by doing revision, learning from previous mistakes, explaining the different questions, doing activities, and giving them some pieces of advice . Others (4) said that they did not because there had been already a specific module for such reason called study skills.

### **Question 7**

The next question was about whether the teachers explained and clarified the questions asked in the test. This question was asked in order to know if the teachers clarified the questions used in the tests aiming to reduce anxiety during tests.

In doing so, the researcher found out that all teachers clarified and explained the questions used in the test and tried to repeat to students every details in order to make it easier and thus decrease the amount of anxiety in tests.

### **Question 8**

The last question was about how the teachers could help their students to cope with test-anxiety? Aiming at identifying the main methods that the teachers used to help their students to avoid test-anxiety. The results revealed that all of them declared that they used different methods to make students feel at ease during tests, among them advising students to get enough sleep before tests, study hard, well prepare, be calm, make revisions and activities before tests, make extra tests, ask them from time to time to make them accustomed with questions.

### 2.5. Discussion and Interpretation

Test-anxiety plays a crucial role during a student's learning. For this reason, the main interest of this research is to reveal the impact of anxiety on test performance among first year students. For this purpose, the first hypothesis suggested that high anxiety on tests demotivated students and led to failure. The results of questionnaire and the interview revealed that high test anxiety could demotivate students and it might lead to failure. 40.9% of students declared that test-anxiety has a negative effect on their performance (Q4). In other hand, 30 of 44 students said that anxiety was the reason of failure. Also the teachers' interview answers revealed that high anxiety limited students' performance (Question 1, Appendix B). As a result, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

The second hypothesis declared that test anxiety had negative impact on students' performance, In addition, the teachers' assessment played a great role in increasing or decreasing test- anxiety. Moreover, special care and useful methods encouraged students' goal and self- motivation to overcome test anxiety. This means that teachers' assessment had an impact on students' test-anxiety (Appendix A, Q 1 and Appendix B, Q 1) and assessments played an incredible role in raising students' abilities and controlling students' test-anxiety in decreasing their marks (Q,3 and 8: Appendix A and Appendix B: Q, 3), good marks raised motivation and encouraged students to learn and develop their language abilities. Adding to that, useful methods encouraged students (Appendix A: Q6) .So, the second hypothesis is confirmed too.

To conclude with, the results obtained confirmed the two hypotheses. In fact, the aim to reach in this research was to make generalization and to confirm the two hypotheses. The researcher arrived to the goal of research and thought about the appropriate suggestions to solve the problem of test-anxiety.

After data collection and previous reading, 1<sup>st</sup> year students are the most concerned with test-anxiety due to their lack of experience and being face to face with the new setting, besides their previous knowledge. Indeed, the researcher found that test-anxiety led to poor academic performance under-achievement and poor engagement in

class. Consequently, the researcher thought about some suggestion that might solve and reduce the issue of test-anxiety.

### **2.6. Suggestions to overcome test-anxiety**

Most students experience some levels of anxiety during tests. However, when anxiety affects exam performance, it becomes a problem. The researcher has proposed some suggestions that could help to overcome test-anxiety especially for first year students.

#### **2.6.1. Test Preparation to Reduce Anxiety**

Most of students face anxiety when the tests come so, getting ready for tests with confidence by using whatever strategies that could personalize success like visualization, logic, talking to others, practice, team work, journaling, etc. Also, viewing the test as an opportunity shows how much the students have studied and to receive a reward for the studying that they have done as also considered as helpful.

Students should learn materials thoroughly and organize what materials they will need for the test such as using a checklist. They should also avoid thinking and struggle for a relaxed state of concentration. In fact, avoiding speaking with any fellow students who was not prepared, who expresses negativity, who will distract students' preparation can reduce anxiety.

#### **2.6.2. During Tests**

Students should read the direction carefully, budget their test taking time, and if they are facing an essay test and go blank on the whole test, it is preferable to pick a question and start writing. It may activate the answer in their mind. They should not panic and take deep breath, also using positive reinforcement for the students themselves, which means that acknowledge what they have done and will do their best.

#### **2.6.3. Teachers' Strategies**

## Chapter Two

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Although sometimes test anxiety can act as a positive motivator for effective achievement, excessive amount of anxiety can disrupt students' abilities to perform well and can cause high levels of stress, low self-esteem, poor grades, and negative views of of students in general. Teachers should consider the following recommendations for addressing students test anxiety.

Teach or review effective study and organizational skills such as, study technique, survey the material , question what they see, read the material with questions in mind, review the information acquired while reading, recite the information, also time management skills and provide or encourage sufficient time to study for the test can help to overcome test-anxiety.

Teach students successful test-taking strategies; for instance, reading or listening to all directions and questions carefully with understanding, test time limits and the importance of pacing also, do not spend too much time on one question and skip difficult questions until all the other questions have been answered.

Indeed, the teachers should encourage students to use positive self-talk as an alternative to negative thoughts about their perceived ability and performance prior to and during testing situations. Teach ways of replacing negative self-thought ("I am not smart enough to do this right") with positive self-thought ("I studied hard and am doing the best I can").

### **2.7. Conclusion**

Confidently, the research questions have been answered, and interesting results were achieved. The study terminates with some recommendations. Actually, the role of the teachers in the classroom is important to guide, continue and help the learners to feel more comfortable, especially when learning a foreign language.

## Chapter Two

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In brief, in this chapter light was shed on the research methodology and the results of the research tools. The Questionnaire and the Interview helped the investigation to come up with the conclusion that high anxious learners had often the tendency to perform badly in tests, and teachers' assessment limits their test-anxiety.



# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

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Tests are the scariest position students are worried about, especially when facing unknown questions, marks and teachers. This is what is called test-anxiety which is the fact of being afraid and worried when sitting for tests. This later has an impact on test performance and leads to failure. It is a matter of psychological feeling that could lead to returning back in place when the learners should be going forward to success.

In fact, test-anxiety plays a vital role during students' learning. In order to explain test-anxiety and discover its main impact on first year students' performance, the researcher divided her work to two chapters.

As theoretical background which defined that phenomenon of anxiety and clarified its different types. Thus it explained the effects of test-anxiety on students' performance. Adding to that, how performance should be improved when it comes to reducing anxiety and the relation between assessment and anxiety.

The second practical chapter dealt with the research instruments used the analysis and the proposed suggestions and recommendations to overcome students' test-anxiety. Thus, the investigation was expressed in the following research questions:

- 1/ How does anxiety effect test performance among 1<sup>st</sup> year students?
- 2/ What is the impact of assessment on students' test anxiety?

Indeed, the two research questions were formulated into possible answers as two hypotheses:

1. High anxiety on tests demotivates students and lead to failure.
2. Test anxiety had a negative impact on students' performance. In addition, teachers' assessment plays a great role in increasing or decreasing test anxiety. Moreover, Special care and useful methods encourage students' goal and self-motivation to overcome test anxiety.

## General Conclusion

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Through conducting a case study at Tlemcen University in the Department of English, and after the analysis of the data gathered from different sources using two research instruments (a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview) we end up with reliable data that helped in confirming the two hypotheses. The first hypothesis which suggested that high anxiety on tests demotivated students and led to failure. The results of the questionnaire and the interview revealed that high test anxiety demotivated students and led to failure. Indeed, this hypothesis was confirmed.

The second hypothesis declared that Test anxiety had a negative impact on students' performance. In addition, teachers' assessment played a great role in increasing or decreasing test anxiety. Moreover, Special care and useful methods encouraged students' goal and self-motivation to overcome test anxiety, due to the questionnaire and the interview results. Test anxiety impact students' performance in a negative way and teachers' assessments played an incredible role in raising student's abilities and controlling students' test-anxiety. Add to that special care and useful methods encourage students' goal and self motivation. This hypothesis was confirmed.

This study faced some limitations because of the institutional time limitation the current study investigate only 9% of the overall groups of first year LMD students. The study used relatively small sample (45) participants, one group, which makes it difficult to generalize the findings with all EFL learners.

Teachers role is so important is controlling students test anxiety. Some strategies like study techniques, surveying the material or time management could help in overcoming test anxiety. Students should avoid thinking and struggle for a relaxed state of concentration and avoid panic and low thinking in order to do well in tests. These were some recommendations to overcome test anxiety proposed by specialists to teachers and students.

To conclude, this work sheds light on the importance of tests taking strategies and teachers' role in progressing first year students abilities during their academic year.

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# **Appendices**

## Appendix A: Students' Questionnaire

This research is about the Impact of Anxiety on Students' test performance. Please put a tick on the correct answer and complete information if requested.

1. Do you feel or have ever felt stressed or nervous in taking a test?

Yes  No

2. When do you feel stressed while taking a test?

- Every test
- Oral tests
- Some tests (for example) .....

3. What makes you feel stressed or nervous in taking tests? You may choose more than one answer

- 1. When the teacher asks me a question that I am not prepared for.
- 2. In oral tests.
- 3. When giving answers.
- 4. I remember the information that I blanked on once I get out of the testing situation.
- 5. I have trouble sleeping the night before a test.
- 6. When looking at my grades.  
Another answer.....

4. The stress has a positive effect on your test performance.

- Agree
- Disagree
- Not sure

5. Do you think anxiety is the reason of failure?

Yes  No

**6.** How do you usually cope with this stress? You may choose more than one answer

- 1. Prepare well before a test.
- 2. Ask for help from my teacher.
- 3. Try to deal with the trouble in expressing ideas constructively
- 4. Sleep well before a test
- 5. Keep silent thinking about answers.

Other suggestions .....

.....

.....

**7.** If you prepare well for a test, do you think that you will feel stressed or anxious?

- Yes
- No
- It depends on the module

Others (please specify).....

**8.** Does your self-esteem go up or down after receiving your test marks?

- Up
- Down
- Stays the same

Others (please specify).....

**9.** What advice would you recommend and give to other EFL learners in this context?

**10.** What do you think is the most efficient method to cope with test anxiety?

**11.** How do you think teachers can help students to cope with test anxiety?

Thank you so much I appreciate it your help.

## Appendix B: Teachers' Interview

Would you please give your stand point about my research work concerning the Impact of Anxiety on Test Performance by answering these questions?

1) How does anxiety affect test performance among 1<sup>st</sup> year students?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2) Is there any difference between first year students and other students at the level of anxiety on test taking?

Yes  No

Explain

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3) Is there an impact of assessment on students' test-anxiety?

Yes  no

.....  
.....  
.....

4) Can test-anxiety be a reason of failure?

Yes  no

5) Do you give another chance to your students if they fail in their tests?

Yes  no

If yes, how .....



6) Do you teach your students some test-taking strategies?

Yes  no

If yes, what are they?

.....  
.....  
.....

7) Do you explain and clarify the questions asked in the test?

Yes  No

8) How can you help your students cope with test anxiety?

.....  
.....  
.....

Thank you so much for your collaboration.

## Summary:

Test anxiety is a phenomenon that is commonly encountered at university. As an affective factor, it has been investigated in different contexts as psychological and educational fields, since anxiety drives learners to different performance during their test-taking. The aim of this research work is to explore the impact of anxiety on students' test performance and the importance of teachers' assessment in increasing or decreasing it. 1<sup>st</sup> year EFL students, at the Department of English, Tlemcen University represented the sample population of a case study to collect data, a students' questionnaire and a teachers' interview were used as research instruments. The results were analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively and they revealed that high test anxiety could demotivate students and might lead to failure as well as the teachers' assessment which could have an impact on students' test-anxiety and thus their performance.

## ملخص

قلق الامتحان هو ظاهرة شائعة في الجامعة، حيث تم التحقيق فيها بعدة سياقات مختلفة في المجالين النفسي و التربوي. بما ان القلق يدفع الطلاب الى اداء مختلف اثناء اجراء الامتحان. الهدف من هذا البحث العلمي هو اكتشاف تأثير القلق على اداء الطلاب في الاختبار وأهمية تقييم الاساتذة في زيادته او خفضه. لقد تم اختيار طلاب السنة الاولى فرع لغة انجليزية بجامعة تلمسان كعينة لدراسة هذا الموضوع. لجمع المعلومات لقد تم استخدام استبيان للطلاب و مقابلة مع الاساتذة كأدوات للبحث. بعد التحليل الكمي و الكيفي كشفت النتائج على ان القلق في الامتحان بإمكانه التأثير على اداء الطالب في الامتحانات وقد يؤدي الى الفشل ايضا تقييم الاساتذة له دور هام في قلقه اثناء الامتحان وكذا ادائه .

## Résumé :

L'anxiété dans un test est un phénomène couramment rencontré à l'université, comme un facteur affectif, elle a été étudiée dans différents contextes, psychologique et éducatif. Puisque l'anxiété pousse les étudiants à différent pratique pendant le test. Le but de ce travail de recherche est de découvrir l'effet de l'anxiété sur les performances des étudiants pendant le test et l'importance de l'évaluation des enseignants dans l'augmentation ou la diminution de cette anxiété.

Les étudiants de la première année anglais au département d'Anglais université de Tlemcen ont été sélectionnés comme échantillon pour étudier ce sujet , Pour collecté les données, un questionnaire pour les étudiants et un entretien avec les enseignant on été utilisés comme instruments de recherche. Les résultats ont révélé que l'anxiété affectait les performances des étudiants pendant les examens et pouvait conduire à un échec. Après l'évaluation l'analyse qualitative et quantitative les enseignants jouent également un rôle important dans la performance et la motivation des étudiants.