

# ANXIETY AND SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT OF MOROCCAN EFL COLLEGE LEARNERS

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement among students of English department at the faculty of Arts and Humanities of Meknes, Morocco. This study focuses on the level of anxiety among English department students and how they can reduce anxiety inside and outside the classroom in a foreign language speaking environment without instructors' intervention. This quantitative research used two instruments; Cattle's anxiety questionnaire to test the level of anxiety and achievement test to measure their scholastic achievement. The results revealed that girls are more anxious than boys, boys achieve higher marks in scholastic achievement, and there is no relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement.

**Key words:** Anxiety, Foreign Language Anxiety, scholastic achievement, Foreign language classroom anxiety, cattle's anxiety questionnaire

## INTRODUCTION

Among the main developmental tasks facing children during the childhood years are the improvement of various intellectual and academic skills and the motivation to cope with them. Scholastic achievement has become an index of child's future in this competitive world. The results of education reveal the level of life, status and progress of the individual living in any place in the world and it is the main important force for the development of human life and society in general.

In every society, educated people are regarded as the pillar of the future economic development which is based on scholastic achievement and therefore, everyone who gets higher marks in the academic education achieves better position in life in general. Thus, scholastic achievement occupies a very important place in education as well as in the learning process. Broadly students who get higher achievement in school, creates a self-esteem and self confidence in their inner feeling. Accordingly, Redenbach (1991) confirmed that students who have higher academic achievement tend to feel more confident in contrast those who lack confidence in themselves achieve less.

On the other hand, anxiety affects negatively the performance for each individual, in the sense that fear of failure and anxiety are regarded as the main factors found common in many research pertaining to the causes of destroyed academic performance.

Anxiety is a common display found in every individual especially among students. Anxiety is a kind of fear experience in response to an anticipated threat of self-esteem. It is a feeling that one feels when he/she faces with real danger or threat. Moreover, everyone faces anxiety in greater or lesser degree from time to time as a result of specific situations. So anxiety reduces attention and distracts people to use their minds deliberately. The degree of anxiety varies from person to another depends on his or her personality.

This study was intended to investigate the relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement among students of English department at the faculty of Arts and Humanities of Meknes, Morocco. In addition, it is also to find the level of anxiety and scholastic achievement across gender differences. Besides, this study focuses on the level of anxiety among the students and how they can reduce anxiety inside and outside the classroom in a foreign language speaking environment without instructors' intervention. Furthermore, the following hypotheses were proposed, namely 1) Gender affects students' marks. 2) There is a difference between students' marks. 3) There is relationship between anxiety and

scholastic achievement. 4) There is a difference of the level of anxiety among girls and boys.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Gardner and Macintyre, (1992, 1993) claimed that foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is still considered to be a relatively new and developing area within foreign language research. Thus, it is considered to be as a situational anxiety simply because it is limited to a specific context. Fakhri (2012) said that foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is related to foreign language anxiety and language-skill-specific anxiety, and fairly recently identified as distinguished from other forms of anxiety. Likewise, Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) defined FLCA as a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the (foreign) language learning process” (p.128). Moreover, it is proved by many researchers that Horwitz et al. (1986) were considered as the co-founders of FLCA. It is a standard tool for testing an individual’s response to a specific stimulus of language learning. They mainly went through asking students questions about anxiety related to factors like reading, speaking, listening, and writing in language class, and the effect of teacher’s attitude on their performance. In Horwitz et al. (1986) conducted a research about FLCA. They based FLCA on scale to test foreign language anxiety among university students of Texas. Pilot testing with the FLCA give an opportunity to examine the scope and severity of foreign language anxiety. The result of the study revealed that anxious students feel a deep self-consciousness when asked to risk revealing themselves by speaking the foreign language in the presence of other people. When they questioned the respondents, they found that some of them have the intention that they may skip class, over study, or seek refuge in the last rows in an effort to avoid humiliation or embarrassment of being called on to speak. Thus, FLCA is a snag for FLCA learners because it impedes their learning process as well as affects their scholastic achievement.

Overcoming anxiety is not an easy task; still it depends on students' psychology and their personality as well. Students suffer a lot from language or test anxiety. When students sit for an exam, they mainly feel anxious on failing or getting bad marks. That kind of feeling drives them to a psychological anxiety which is a great barrier for their success and achieving higher scores. We have seen earlier that anxiety is not a matter of easily getting rid of it, there are many factors that are internal or external that impede students to stop anxiety. In addition to that there are many factors that influence students' performance. However, students have to reduce anxiety, to do so; there are many steps that those students have to follow so as at least to reduce it. Scientifically proved, the body and the mind are interconnected, as a result, becoming relaxed physically helps us to relax mentally, and becoming relaxed mentally helps us to relax physically. Training and preparation are the only and the best way to reduce anxiety, so training is of great importance and it helps students to take off anxiety among themselves. To be more practical here are various strategies or steps that one should follow so that they could get rid of anxiety. Tomb & Hunter (2008) stated that "Teaching coping skills to children and adolescents as early as possible may help them develop effective strategies to deal with stress and minimize anxiety" (As cited in Lindsay 2008. p. 89). Similarly, Fisak & Grills (2007) proved in their research that the role modeling play is the best way to preclude anxiety or at least to manage it. Role modeling play is when a person's behavior is a success for others and it can be emulated by others mainly by young people. Educators in general and teachers in particular have to provide to their students some basic knowledge about anxiety and why not teach it to students, in the sense that they have to teach students various strategies so as to avoid the feeling of anxiety. Lindsay (2008) claimed that "The classroom, in essence, can be used as a microcosm for everyday living experiences. Teachers can allow students to learn from experience and develop a positive sense of mental health (p.3)".

## **METHOD**

This is a secondary research in nature; but it is also primary research because it deals with Moroccan students in which English is regarded as a foreign language. It is a secondary research because in the review of literature, many previous studies are conducted in the same field, bearing in mind that Dana (2010) defined primary research as research that is firsthand collection rather than found in a book, database, or journal. She also added that it is the process of collecting the data by the researcher himself or herself. On the other hand, Dana (2010) defined secondary research as collecting hard data that already exists about a community or communities targeted for a study. This research is quantitative, simply because the instruments that are used yield quantitative data.

Test is regarded as the main tool by which educationalists examine students' abilities and skills. But Students suffer a lot from anxiety and fear of sitting for exams. Thus, this research aims to look for the relationship between Anxiety and scholastic achievement broadly and particularly among students at the faculty of letters in Meknes. In this study, Cattell's (1963) anxiety questionnaire was used to test students' anxiety, and a final exam mark of the course of American culture was used for scholastic achievement.

This research used two types of statistics, descriptive and inferential. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, means, and standard deviation shall be used to produce percentages of the participants (males and females and their age). Inferential statistics used for correlation and linear regression in addition to independent sample test.

The inferential statistics are used to answer the research questions and also to confirm or disconfirm the research hypotheses. More precisely they are used to test the relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The following is the findings and analysis of the data from this study. First, it elaborates the effect of anxiety on students across gender. Then, it elaborates the testing effect of the students' anxiety and the relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement. The detailed will be presented on table 1-5.

Table 1 The effect of anxiety on students

Sign (2tailed)	
F	Sig.
Marks	0.858

The significance P value is 0.639; it is greater than the typical level significance 0.05 so we accept the hypothesis which says that gender claim that gender does not affect students' marks.

Table 2 Statistic of anxiety by gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. deviation
Anxiety male	22	52.04	4.83
Female	38	52.55	5.09

This table which represents group statistics shows that the mean of Male is 52.04 versus 52.55 for female. Concerning standard deviation, in male column it is 4. 83 and in female column is 5.09. So we can say that there is a difference in Means about .51. Concerning the standard deviation, it is about 1 of the difference. Thus, females are more anxious than males.

Table 3 Testing the effect of anxiety on students

Significance P value (2-tailed)	
Anxiety equal variance	Sig .774

The result in this table shows that significance P value is 0.774 so it is greater than the typical level of significance 0.05, therefore, we accept the hypothesis which says that there is no effect of anxiety on

student's achievement and claims that there is no effect of anxiety on students

Table 4 Relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement

	Anxiety	Marks
Sig. (2 tailed)		0.247
	60	60
	60	60

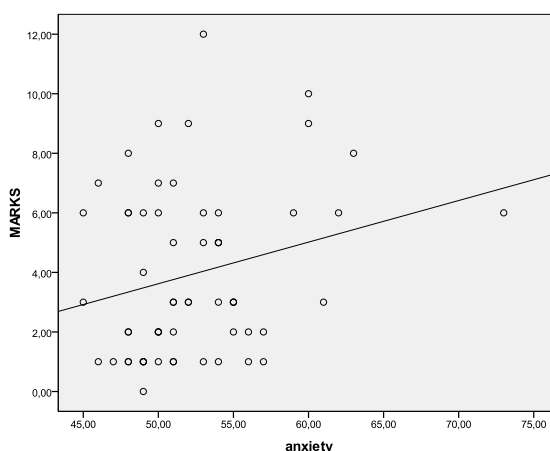


Figure 1 Scatter dot for showing the linear of the correlation

The previous table and the graph show that the significance P value is .058, hence it is greater than the typical level significance .005. Thus, we reject the hypothesis and claim that there is no relationship between the two variables. As far as Pearson correlation is concerned, it is .247 so there is a positive and weak correlation. Therefore, there is no correlation between anxiety and achievement among students of English department at the faculty of arts and humanities in Meknes.

## CONCLUSION

It could be concluded that the majority of the respondents felt a degree of anxiety. More precisely, girls were more anxious than boys. As far as scholastic achievement is concerned boys got better

marks than girls. So, boys seemed to achieve scholastically higher than girls. Therefore, anxiety does not affect scholastic achievement, which means that anxiety is not a factor that may affect students to achieve better in scholastic achievement, but if one feels a degree of anxiety it may or may not affect their scholastic achievement; As a result, it could become a barrier not to reach the level attained or there could be other factors like lack of preparation or lack of interest. Noteworthy is that anxiety is an external feeling that in some cases impedes students to achieve good marks or it may not. Finally, it is found in this study that there is no relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement.

### **Limitation and Future Research**

Several limitations to this study must be noted. The findings of this piece of research cannot be over generalized, because of the convenient sampling which was chosen, and also due to diverse feeling of each participant toward anxiety. Furthermore, there are many other external factors that may lead to suffer from anxiety and could be an open door for future research. Also, the questionnaire and the test were administered only to 60 students. Seeking opinion from just one institution is not enough. Indeed, every single person from different region or institution may have different opinions about the feeling of anxiety. With time constraints I could not evaluate students in other school subjects, and that could enrich more this research and the results might give an added value; still the findings of this research are of great importance and should be taken into account.

Therefore, this research is open to other researchers to tackle other research on the same issue. I suggest tackling research on factors that may suffer from anxiety. So, it is researchable to go in this process. Moreover, it is preferable to ask teachers to provide various strategies that could help students overcome this feeling. Furthermore, it is better to deal with the relationship between anxiety and scholastic achievement in different universities. Last but not least,



it is suggested to conduct research on the influence of anxiety on scholastic achievement in different level groups.

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