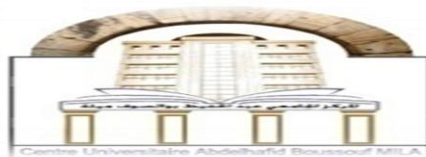**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**
MINISTRY OF HIGER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
AbdElhafid Boussouf University - Mila

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Investigating EFL Learning Students' Strategy Use to Lower Exam

Anxiety and Its Impact on Their Results

The Case of Third Year EFL Learners at University Center of Mila

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirement of the Master Degree in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Dedication I

Foremost praise is to Allah for giving me help and strength to terminate this work.

This work is dedicated to my beloved parents "Rabie" and "Ghania" who have been my support and strength,

To my kindest sisters "Hasna" "Sara" "Nouha" and "Aya" for their constant encouragement,

To my dearly nephew and niece "Ghaith" and "Djouri" may Allah bless them,

To my precious friend "Siham" for going through all of this with me,

To everyone help me one day.

Dounia

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All praise to Allah for giving me the guidance and determination to finish this work.

I would like to dedicate this work to my beautiful family,

Overall, my parents "Saleh" and "Zahra" for their permanent support and care,

To my sisters "Farida" "Soumia" "Saliha" "Nassira" and "Hamida",

To my brothers "Atef" and "Walid,

To all my nephews and nieces,

Last and not least, I would like to dedicate my gorgeous friend "Dounia", for the time we spend to gather and for the mutual support.

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Abstract

In the process of learning a foreign   language, test anxiety is a significant problem among EFL learners which is frequently accompanied by a decline in exams' performance. The present dissertation aims to examine the influence of learning strategies, studying effectively and keep positive self-talk that help EFL learners to cope with exam anxiety and it will be beneficial to enhance their performance. To reach this end, a case study research was conducted at the Department of Foreign Languages at Abdelhafid Boussouf, Mila University Center. We hypothesize that if EFL learners used appropriate learning strategies, in the period of exams, they would help them to reduce exam anxiety as well as enhance their exam results. The findings indicate that Third Year students experienced a certain level of anxiety, especially before exams and it can be considered as an obstacle that disrupts their results. Additionally, the data collected were analyzed quantitatively, relying on a questionnaire for a sample of 80 Third Year EFL learners. In this regard, learning strategies applied by the majority of students may positively influence their exam results. For the latter, some recommendations are offered to teachers and students to raise their awareness of learning strategies use to reduce anxiety and its negative impacts on exam performance.

Key words: Anxiety, Exam anxiety, Learning strategies, EFL learners, Exam results, learners' performance.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

LS: Learning Strategies

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

P: Page

Q: Question

%: Percentage

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General Introduction

1. Background to the Study

In the field of language teaching and learning, great concern has been devoted to exam investigation, more particularly, to investigate the impact of anxiety on foreign language learners' performance during exams. Previous studies dealt with anxiety as a positive aspect; for example, Zeidner and Matthews (2010) considered anxiety as a type of early alarm radar for menace that motivates learners to perform toward particular statuses effectively. Gass and Slinker (1994) assured that feeling anxious is seen as one of the most significant influential variables that affect foreign language learning. In addition, Scovel (1978) proposed that anxiety encourages learners to face incoming situations and make efforts to decline the negative effect of that feeling in which the positive aspect of anxiety can result a well performance. Hence, the relationship between anxiety and well exam performance has been the core interest of many studies.

However, recently, Sawchuk (2017) declared that test anxiety can hamper and negatively influence learners' performance and make it poor. Individuals can experience anxiety, whether learners or employees who have to take tests for career advancement. For that Sawchuk appointed a set of learning strategies which help learners lower their test anxiety. In this vein, learning strategies have been regarded as various ways, actions, tactics, techniques, approaches and devises that contribute directly to solve problems in learning or to enhance and facilitate the learning process (Hardan, 2013). Despite the fact that, learning strategies can be used to cope with and decrease the feeling of fear while testing, their effectiveness on the foreign language learners' exam results has received little attention.

2. Statement of the Problem

A significance number of EFL learners seem to be a victim of anxiety because they suffer from stress, fear and pressure during the period of exams; these feelings are looked as obstacles that might disrupt learners from performing successfully. EFL learners may decontrol their view toward exams and the fear of failure might reduce their opportunities to get the scores they look for. Hence, they are likely to face difficulties to cope with high anxiety in their exams and its negative impact on their performance. Accordingly, EFL learners should find solutions for such a problem; they have to lower their anxiety to perform well in the exam.

3. Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study is to investigate EFL learners' use of learning strategies, get enough of sleep and avoid being panic while others start submitting their papers, taking into account the effectiveness of these learning strategies on decreasing anxiety as well as on increasing learners' results during exams.

4. Research Questions and Hypotheses

In order to achieve the purpose, the following questions are raised:

1. Does learning strategies use lower learners' exam anxiety?

2. What types of strategies EFL learners' use to decrease their exam anxiety?

3. Are EFL learners aware of applying particular strategies to reduce exam anxiety?

4. To which extent may anxiety influence EFL learners' performance?

In order to achieve the aim, the next hypotheses are tested:

1. If EFL learners use learning strategies, in the period of exams, such as get attached with positive people and perform some relaxing techniques, they would help them reduce exam anxiety.

2. EFL learners would enhance their exam results if they appropriately use learning strategies to lower exam anxiety.

5. Methodology

In order to achieve the purpose of collecting data of our research, we mainly used a quantitative method and a "questionnaire" as a research tool. The students questionnaire is administrated to Third Year Learners of English at the Department of Letters and Foreign Language at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Center /Mila to know their views and attitudes toward exam anxiety and its relation to learners' performance, and whether they use learning strategies to decrease that feeling during exams or not. In addition, the collected data are statistically analyzed and presented.

6. Structure of the Study

The current research is divided into a theoretical chapter and a practical one. The theoretical work is made up of two sections, the first one is devoted to provide the reader with various and different definitions of anxiety that EFL learners suffer from during examination. It discusses the most evident theories, symptoms and causes behind that feeling. The second section, entitled "Strategies Used to Lower Exam Anxiety", presents a number of definitions concerning learning strategies and highlights the major learning strategies used by EFL before, during and after exams. At the end of the section, we show the significant role of the teacher in decreasing stress while testing and its effect on EFL learners' performance.

      The second chapter is devoted for the practical work where another two sections are presented, the methodological/research tools and the analyses/discussion of data collected from the questionnaire.

Chapter One: Anxiety and Language Learning Strategies

Section One: Anxiety

Introduction

Anxiety has a way of waving itself into each part of an individual existence. It is a noise characterized by the feeling of nervousness, worried thoughts, disability to relax and physical changes. This chapter presents anxiety in general meaning as it takes the shape of full-blown panic or chronic-worry which can interrupt people for being comfortable in their everyday activities. Then, classifies theories of anxiety to five main categories, which are Psychoanalytic theory, Learning/ behavioral theory, Physiological theory, phenomenological / existential theory and Cognitive theory. Moreover, this chapter describes the learners' suffering with anxiety during the period of exam's taking, as many researchers give different definitions of exam anxiety that takes place as a result of a set of reasons, such as the lack of time management, ineffective study skills or the negative thoughts which come to their minds.

1.1.1. Understanding Anxiety

"The study and analysis of anxiety originated in the classical Greek period, then it promoted with the development of self-awareness in western thought. The word "Anxiety" is derived from a German word that means a feeling of tightness, constriction, or choking under duress."(Tyer, 1999, as cited in Matthews & Zeidner, 2010, p.4).Anxiety is a normal reaction and a feeling that is familiar to all people as a part of their lives; such as some researchers consider anxiety as a psychological disease that needs to be treated especially with people which are more easily made anxious. Furthermore, anxiety relates to the psychological side in which a set of human senses are unstable and inconstant; as scare, uneasiness and worry, that is a general emotion of nervousness and distress about formless unspecified and uncertain manner of treat (Matthews & Zeidner, 2010).

The term anxiety is a combined feeling that may be characterized with other several terms; stress, panic, fear, edginess and uneasiness. These feelings are associated with people's experiences which depend on personality or how human beings treat things (Schab, 2008). According to Spielberger (1983), anxiety can be defined as a stimulation of the autonomic nervous organism related with a private sensation of tension, bother, fear and scare (as cited in Awan, Awher, Anwer & Naz, 2010). Aydin (2013) declared that " Anxiety is an uncomfortable emotional state in which one perceives danger, feels powerless and experiences tension when faced with an expected danger.''(p.64). Anxiety is a response to understand failure to realize a challenge or unfinished work in a favorable manner. It is the experience of feeling incapable to perform functions successfully (Sarason, 1977).

According to Cuncic (2017), human beings are exposed to experience the feeling of anxiety in their entire lives. Anxiety is a combination of factors that differ from one individual to another; Genetics, life events and specific phobia are factors that humans have little or no control over.

- Genetics are aspects of people's early growth they may engage in recreation a role in how likely an individual gets depressed or anxious. This means that anxiety maybe acquired from families; each individual is more likely to increase an anxiety disorder if he/she has a family member who already has one.

- Life events are situations that people faced in their lives such as moving relationships problems; anxious parent may have an effect on their children's behaviors in the direction of treating anxiety given that children use to acquire his/her surrounding moods and attitudes.

- A Phobia is a situation that used to make people anxious or uncomfortable of something that is evidence for little or no definite danger, it becomes a source of fear such as fear of flying, darkness …. If someone is exposed to anxiety, his/her mind

may have difficulty to look over the earlier events because feeling anxious seems to be associated with them in the future.

1.1.2. Theories of Anxiety

For the most part, there is a significant discrepancy between the various theories of anxiety; however, they can be categorized to a degree. They fell into five groups that can be most simply called psychoanalytic theory, learning/ behavioral theory, physiological theory, phenomenological/ existential theory and cognitive theory (Strongman, 1995).

1.1.2.1. Psychoanalytic Theory

The theory of psychoanalytic began with Freud but it has not taken that much interest and attention since his time. Everyday anxiety has often been referred to as fear rather than anxiety as it relates to existent objects. Freud's theory falls into two versions (1917, 1926). In the first formulation of anxiety (1917), Freud looked at anxiety as phenomenon derived from the repression or the inhabitation of sexual instincts and drives. Repression occurs when someone experiences anxiety and that feeling results from the repression of sexual instincts; for instance, if an individual is deprived, throughout repression, from implementing some sexual drives, then repression will produce anxiety which will be a result (Strongman, 1995).

Strongman (1995) affirmed that in the second formulation, Freud's theory inverted the relationship between anxiety and repression. "… in this theory anxiety is a signal from the ego about real means existing or potential danger, the unpleasantness of threat causes anxiety which in turn lead to repression as a way of getting the person out of danger" (p.4).According to him, repression occurs when individuals face anxiety; in other words, repression does not produce anxiety, rather, anxiety produces repression in the sense that it is considered as a stimulus that indicates people when an impending menace happens.

The significance of the development of what called primary anxiety (from birth) is automatic anxiety which results from the birth shock or possible loss of mother, the person is helpless and passive and the emotional experiences of anxiety follow automatically. Hence, in Freud's conceptualization, anxiety is either inherited (at birth) or learned (Strongman, 1995).

The psychoanalytic theory can be conceptualized a little in a different way. For instance, Izard (1977) proposed that anxiety can be described as being reliant on the cognitive processes that are part of human being learning, assessment and evaluation (as cited in Strongman, 1995). In addition, there has been a growing short of support for some of assumptions about the human personality in Freudian psychoanalytic theory. According to Mayers (2010), who criticized this theory because he assumed that personality treat, such as anxiety, grow during life in variant stages and not only during childhood, while Fraud considered anxiety as being inherited nativity or acquired immaturity.

1.1.2.2. Learning / Behavioral Theory

It is well known that theories of anxiety that are correlated to the area of learning derived from the work of Pavlov and Watson. The most significant theme of their work is punishment. The idea of Pavlov and Watson is that the conditioned stimulus is matching with the unconditioned one that shows the way to a conditioned reaction which is in the container of panic, worry, pressure or nervousness. "The argument is that organisms learn to avoid noxious stimuli through some or other mediating mechanism. This mediating mechanism is normally called fear or anxiety."(Strongman, 1995, p.5)

Mowrer (1953) promoted the idea of Pavlov and Watson that fear is learned since it can turn out to be closed to earlier neutral stimuli and it can be motivated and reinforced. In other words, fear is a line of attack of motivation and reinforcement, however, anxiety is a specific appearance of fear that can turn into a learned emotional behavior in case that feeling

of fear began as anxious fear than it developed to be what is called anxiety. According to Strongman (1995):

> These learning theories view neurotic conflicts as happening in childhood and setting the scene for anxiety to develop later in life although they do not say how repression occurs. In summary thoughts from this perspective, anxiety is learned and, once learned motivates maladaptive behavior (p. 5).

Stats and Eifert (1990) had the same background of Mowrer's theory and they shared similar fundamental that there is inner emotional response at the basis of anxiety, and that anxiety can be acquired out of aversive conditioning or simply throughout language. Anxiety can take place when the individual is controlled by negative thoughts. For example, words or expressions that are linked with a negative representation or image can make him/her feels anxious or stressed (Strongman, 1995).

The following figure shows how emotions, behavior, and cognition influence each other according to the behavioral theory basis. Stats and Eifert (1990) assumed that emotions were constructed cognitively based on language conditioning, the behaviors were determined emotionally and thoughts were assembled behaviorally (as cited in strongman, 1995).

Figure 1

Emotions, Behavior and Cognition (adapted from Bay area CBT Center Clinical Therapy & Counseling, 2022)
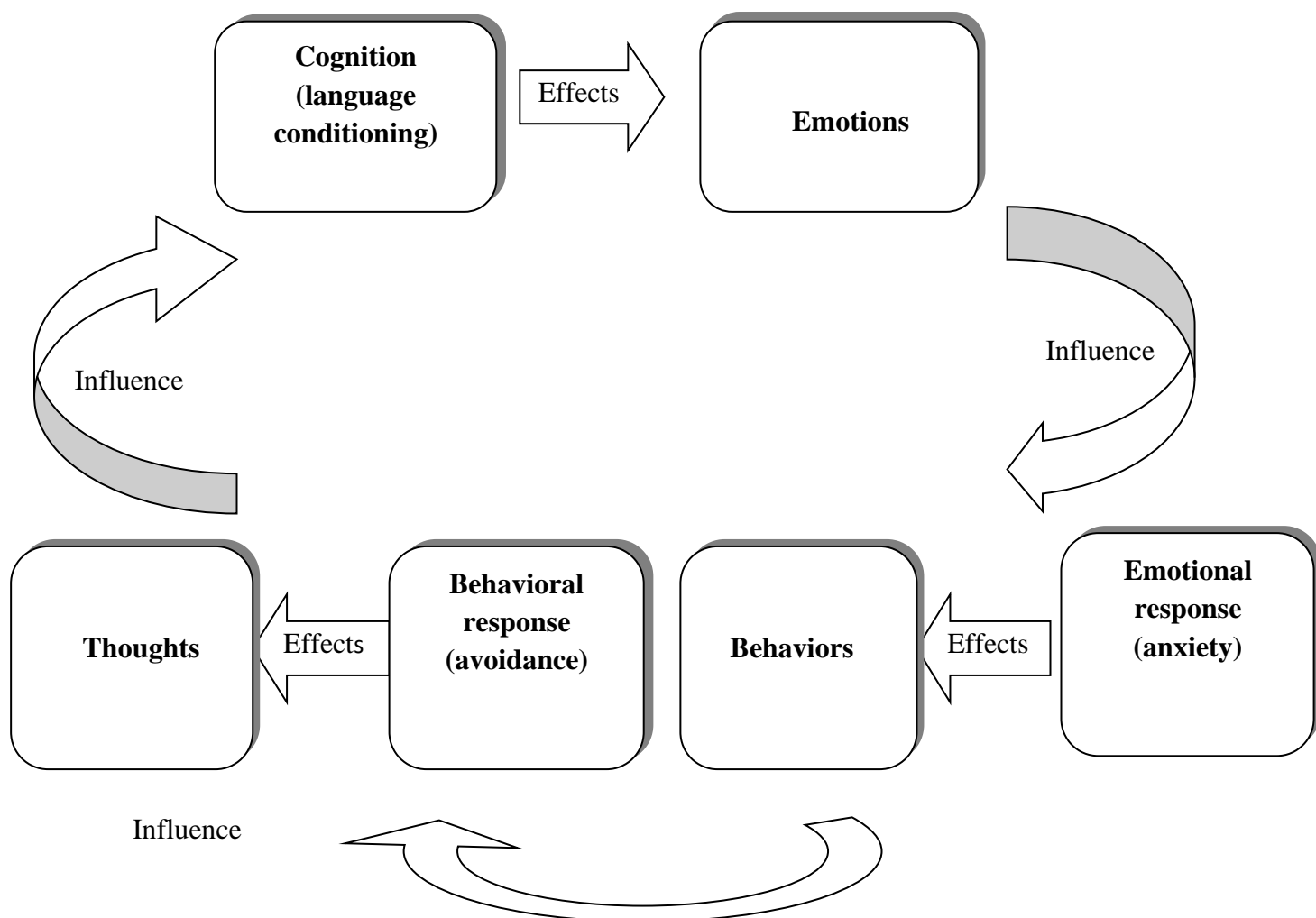
Eysenk's (1957) theory principals are dissimilar from the previous one ; his learning theory of anxiety may depend on two foremost concepts, " extroversion / introversion" and "neuroticism". From Eysenk's perspective, anxiety is partly inherited, when an individual pushes to be introverted or unsociable, then the person is more close to the feeling anxiety as well as other emotions such as guilt, and partly learned, when anxiety is viewed as conditioned fear. Fear results in new stimuli then produces the original maladaptive anxiety

responses. Therefore, the learned anxiety or the inherited one depends on conditioned fear and the position of the nervous organism (Strongman, 1995).

1.1.2.3.Physiological Theory

The physiological theory on the whole deals with an exposition or demonstration of which aspects of the inner nervous system might take apart in emotions commonly and fear/ anxiety specifically. This theory's structure depends on a model of human psychology which rests on natural science (Strongman, 1995).

Gray (1982, 1987) considered the behavioral inhibition system as underpinning anxiety; it also named the punishment system. This system is usually connected with negative emotional states such as anxiety or fear as a response to punishment and the sense of potential threat or menace. As "Gray argues that behavioral inhibition system suppresses any behavior that threatens an unwelcome outcome . So , it only does this if there is another system that is mediating the threat,"(Strongman 1995. p.6).According to him, there is a specific system that is responsible to help the brain interface between emotions and cognition. It is called the septa-hippocampus system in which this system stands by the human body either to stay and deal with the stress and fear, or to escape the situation entirely .In other words, Gray declared that what is termed septa-hippocampus system is concerned within the feeling of fear or anxiety, which is the most important direction, leads to the behavioral inhibition system.

1.1.2.4. Phenomenological/Existential Theory

Phenomenological and Existential theory refers to an approach of psychology that originated from Kirkgaard(1844), 150 years ago. The fundamental concept of this theory is that anxiety is a physically occurring position of human beings ,including that stress is independent of any object and it is inescapable from birth onwards. This approach

of analyzing things is originated from the concept that anxiety progression only occurs when people are conscious or aware about real existing possibilities. Hence, with the intention of turning out to be accurately actualizing, humans must face that feeling of anxiety and deal with it in order to move on (Strongman, 1995).It is well known that anxiety is a human condition of life that individuals have to examine or experience since it is related to all human being decisions. Anxiety merely involves after the development of self –awareness which allows individuals also to compose a self-hood. For the person to develop properly, anxiety must be faced and dealt with.

Kirkegaed (1844) assumed that there is an existence variation between fear and anxiety. Fear is of a definite object, whereas anxiety is separated and relevant of any object; a fearful person is the one who keep away from fearful objects, situations or even places while an anxious person is in conflicts and they are unsure about the source of such feeling that is mostly has no actual existence (Strongman, 1995).

Fischer (1970) made enormous efforts to bring a phenomenological or experiential approach to shed light on and to realize the appropriate significance of anxiety . From Fischer's point of view(1970), anxiety should be formulated after placing and understanding it in a real situation; in other words , it has to be experienced. Anxiety is both anxious experience and the self-recognition, it means understanding both the meaning of her/his anxious experience for him/herself and the way that others being anxious are supposed, managed, challenged and faced this experience of being anxious(Strongman, 1995).

1.1.2.5. Cognitive Theory

Cognitive theory has clarified anxiety as the direction to over stimulate the possible for risk. Stressed or anxious inhabitants tend to predicate the most terrible probable scenario and stay away from situations that raise their feeling of fear (Bhatt, 2019). Anxiety has had a point in the current theories of cognition; the major theories that have been developed are two, Michal Eysenck (1990) and Arne Ohman (1993).According to Eysenck (1990) understanding anxiety depends on two main systems, the physiological system as well as the cognitive one. He also drew the attention to self-schema theories; as this self-schemas are branch of the cognitive system which relying on the personal significance of any appointed trait of the individual(Strongman, 1995). Eysenck (1990) pointed out the idea that personality differences of the information stocked in their long-term memory show differences in the amount of anxiety that might be either high or low (Strongman, 1995).

There are two kinds of individual's reaction against anxiety, high anxious or fearful individuals seem to act anxiously in response to life situations and experiences that they are exposed to, unlike ,the ones with low anxiety who appear to be less anxious. Eysenck (1988) declared that both categories of people, those who are high or low in trait anxiety, may diverge in the construction of their cognitive system; their memory is at variance in both the nature and the amount of particular apprehension that they might have. He proposed two core reasons following people who are more anxious than those who are less, for the reason that they are supplementary attainable to store a combination of worries in long-term memory (Strongman, 1995).

In addition to the relation between cognitive and physiological system, Eysenck (1948) assumed that there are a number of inhabitants who might experience certain level of

nervousness at particular positions while they do not in others . This behavior may take

place due to the quantity of certain worries or the negative representation that might be

saved or located in long-term memory (Strongman, 1995).

The second theory was involved by Arne Ohman (1993) who constructed the

information processing model of anxiety, although, he argued that the starting place of the

information processing show the way to biological based defenses that construct the feeling of

anxiety. Ohman's theory made up of five foremost features (Strongman, 1995) as shown in

figure 2:

Figure 2

Ohman's Information Processing Model of Anxiety (Strongman, 1995, p.7).
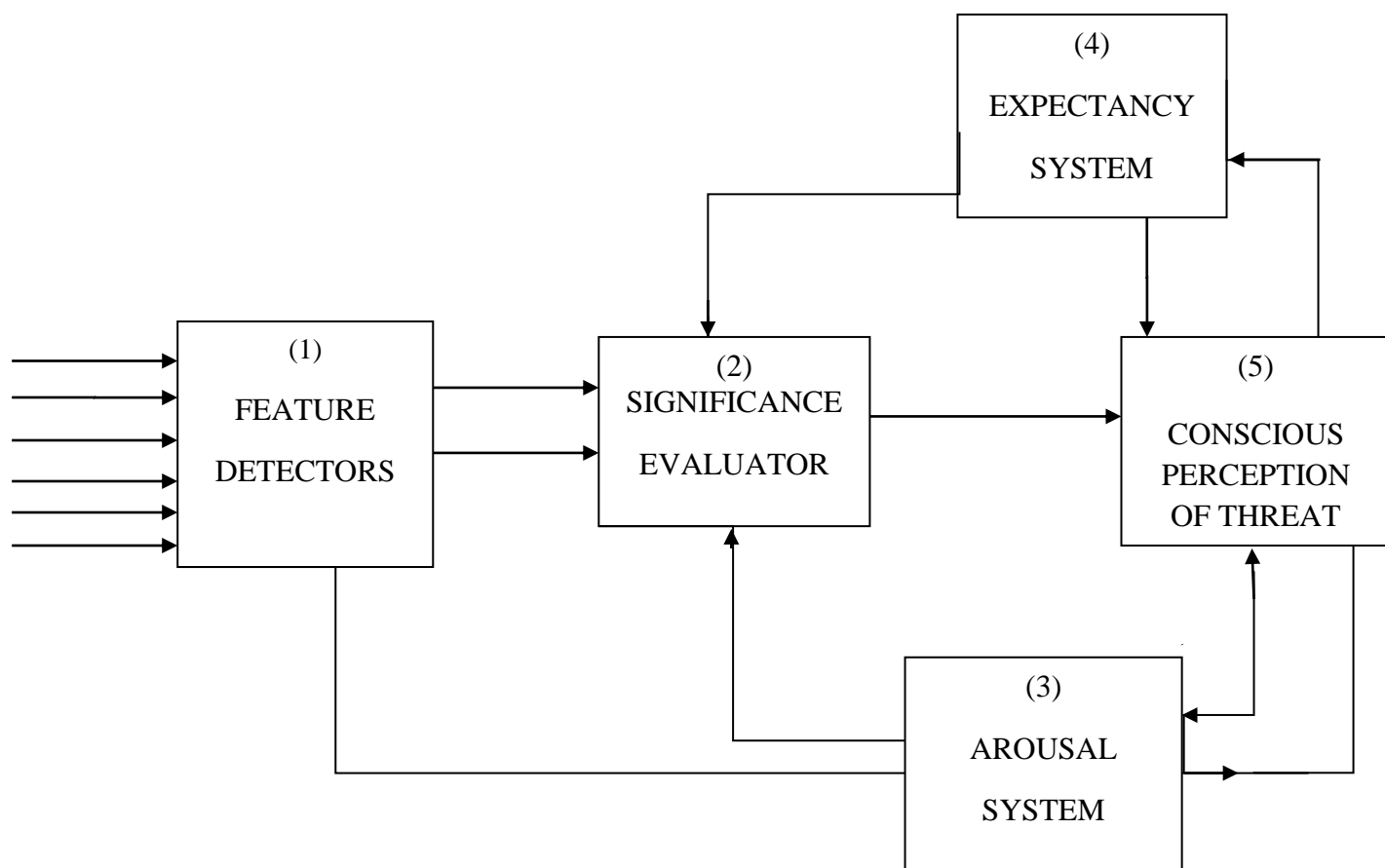
1) Starting with stimulus information goes to feature detectors, the information will also go on this level to the conscious perception system. The significance evaluators automatically access the stimuli.

2) At this stage, meaning is evaluated and memory takes part in a significant function devoid of any conscious contact to what is coming to pass. Ohman (1993) affirmed that "…the important implication for anxiety is that non-conscious discovery of potential threat through the significance evaluator does not result in activation of the arousal system unless it results in conscious perception of threat.'' (as cited in strongman, 1995, p.7).

3) The arousal system, based on emergency reaction or response of the automatic nervous system, takes delivery of information from the feature detectors and provides input to the conscious perception system (Strongman, 1995).

4) The expectancy system is formed on emotions which are arranged into memory. Information is evaluated at the level of the significance evaluator then being given to the perception system (Strongman, 1995).

5) The conscious perception system incorporates information from the arousal system, significance evaluator and the expectancy system in order to choose a large amount of suitable actions to supervise and manage supposed menace (Ohman, 1993, as cited in Strongman, 1995).

Ohman (1993) suggested that there is a distinction between anxiety and fear. Fear is an emotion being with conscious prevention, and anxiety appears to be the result whenever these responses are blocked. However, anxiety is originated from unconscious input to the conscious perception system which results in indirect anxiety. For that, fear and panic

disorders are dissimilar from anxiety in terms of the clarity of the outcomes and the roots; fear has physiological roots while anxiety comes from cognitive slandered (Strongman, 1995).

1.1.2. Definition of Exam Anxiety

Feeling nervous or being anxious before passing a test or an exam is a normal response for many students. Test anxiety is a kind of performance which is the feeling of pressure in cases where someone might do well and when students may have difficulty in learning or find it hard to focus or concentrate on questions (Hoffses, 2018). Concerning test anxiety, it is particularly developed from the fear of failure. As Mahmood zedah (2012) confirmed, anxiety is a bad and annoying feeling or emotional situational that individuals faced in official examination or other testing situations. Horwitz et al. (1986) declared that test anxiety derives from the feeling of being imperfect as "test anxious students often put unrealistic demands on themselves and feel that any things less than perfect test performance is a failure" (p.127).

Students who suffer from test anxiety are more self-dissatisfied, and they are quite responsive to high pressures. In the evaluation of learners with high test-anxiety, it is observed that they export self-oriented and negative responses which make them move forward slowly and conflict with the exam unlike students who have less test anxiety (Sarason & Stoops, 1978, as cited in Tryon, 1980). Test or exam anxiety does not mean exactly being nervous during passing the exam, but it controls the learner's behavior negatively by making him/her avoid situations that lead to stress. In addition to that, test anxiety can show an unreal image about the level of students or the grade of intelligence they have (Sab. et al, 1996, as cited in Neuderth, 2009).

Students who suffer from anxiety may experience rushes of adrenaline before and during taking their test, the adrenaline may block the brain functions. They can notice psychological and physiological disorders during the period of examination; either because of the lack of time management, procrastination, having less than effective study skills or because of the negative thoughts that interrupt their abilities and hamper the brain from thinking in a right way (Hall, n.d). Spielberger et.al (1976) supported this idea saying that "test anxiety refers to the individual's disposition to react with extensive worry, intrusive thought, mental disorganization, tension, and physiological arousal when exposed to evaluation contexts or situations" (Spielbergeret.al. ,1976 , as cited in Zeidner & Matthews , 2010, p.22).

A test anxiety can be defined as a hamper that can limit the realistic academic achievements of students. This feeling can decline their performance. The intensity of an exam anxiety can differ frequently from one student to another; some of them can have a variety of physiological disorders, for example, they have " butter flies " in their stomach or they suffer from unnatural symptoms. Generally, this feeling of stress will drop learners' behavior toward their study, in case they are very anxious (Cherry, 2019).

1.1.4. Symptoms of Test Anxiety

Test anxiety is a combination of physical symptoms and emotional reactions that interfere with learner's ability to perform well on tests, which might seem different from one student to another. Some students experience simply mild signs of test anxiety and are still competent to do well on exams. Other students are incapable because of panic attacks to well perform their tests (Hill, n.d).

Students' preparation for exams might not be familiar with singes or symptoms of stress which are characterized as a shape of physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral symptoms. First, physical symptoms of test anxiety comprise sweating, rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, headache, dry mouth …. Sometimes these symptoms can also be more serious in which students may feel like they are strangled to breathe or they have a heart attack. Second, emotional symptoms can take account of depression, low self-esteem, anger, negative taught and feeling of hopelessness, stress, fear and disappointment. Third, cognitive and behavioral symptoms can include avoiding situations that cover tests. This can engage skipping class, dropping out of school, memory problems, thinking negatively, concentration difficulties and procrastinating (Hill, n.d). These symptoms of being nervous and stressful may interrupt and break students' focusing on their exam since they may be less motivated to study or to prepare.

1.1.5. Causes of Test Anxiety

Students these days take more tests then they did in the past,the negative side of this transform is that student's test anxiety raises correlatively with the increases of testing (Wren & Benson, 2004, as cited in Zeidner &Matthews, 2010). According to Roussos (2018), test stress is a part of the learning process. Exam preparation causes anxiety and worry when learners are stressed about getting a particular level or reaching a particular stage, while too much stress can give rise to unsatisfactory test performance. Knowing the core reasons which show the way to exam anxiety may facilitate it for learners to comprehend and regulate their worries. Pressure, competition, poor test history and lack of preparation are the foremost possible causes of learners' test anxiety.

First of all, family members or teachers' expectations of well performance lead learners to be more stressed. This external pressure can increase test anxiety because learners do not let anyone down with their performance including themselves. In addition, the internal pressure of well performance does not appear only from family members and teachers, but learners can be the ones who put stress on themselves. Learners spend too much time thinking and worrying about how difficult the exam is. This may increase the feeling of anxiety. Moreover, learners may perceive themselves to be in competition with classmates and this competition may increase their test stress. Furthermore, the lack of preparation may heighten the feeling of nervousness and anxiety. Learners should study the course materials in advance, avoiding procrastination last minute studying to prepare for the test since cramming will increase stress. Ultimately, negative test history may treat learners who have a bad exam experience in the past always suffering from exam stress and pressure since they develop a negative mindset, attitude and doubt their capacities which increase the feeling of being anxious.

Anxiety is more popular at universities due to the difficulties that learners face during exam preparation because of the lack of information, work organization, learning strategies and time management. As it is known, students at universities are more self-determining then before. Hence, they may be short of the guidance from their teachers, the fact that makes them feel stressed and nervous of the idea that they will not be up to par (Schnitzer, et.al.1998, as cited in Neuderth, 2009).

Conclusion

This section highlighted the notion of anxiety in general and its impact on students' performance particularly during examination. Depending on the major theories of anxiety that

are mentioned in this section, psychoanalytic theory, learning/ behavioral theory, physiological theory, phenomenological/ existential theory, cognitive theory and according to many researchers, it seems that anxiety, as may be described with many different words. These are panic, scare, stress, fear, nervousness, worry and uneasiness exists during the period of exams because of its evidence on learners' performance and exam scores. Moreover, it is important to note that exam anxiety phenomenon is controlled by a range of causes and observed by a variety of symptoms.

Section Two: Learning Strategies and Exam Anxiety

Introduction

The previous section focused on anxiety which is a general worry mixed with other factors pressure, competition negative test history. This section provided general ideas about how learners can face test anxiety by specific strategies used in order to lower that feeling. Starting with different definitions of learning strategies proposed by different scholars and researchers, which are related to learning process in order to achieve specific goals or solve a particular problem. Then, Oxford (1990) divided language learning strategies into direct and indirect types. In addition to the classification of the strategies used to lower anxiety which is divided into three main categories: before exams, during exams and after exams. Moreover, for numerous number of teachers or caregivers, it is hard to see learners anxious, thus, the role of the teacher is very important to help learners deal with test stress. Finally, since stress management is a way to handle or deal with stress, the effects of reducing learners' exam anxiety to improve the Process of learning process and to cope with learning problems are discussed in the following section.

1.2.1. Definition of Learning Strategies

The term strategy has deferent meanings, and researchers have defined it in many ways. It comes from the ancient Greek word "strategia", which describes techniques or plans chosen for the aim of winning a war (Oxford, 1990). According to Cohen and Macaro (2007, p.10):"a strategy is therefore some form of activity that is used in response to problems when and where they arise. This problem might be found within discourse, within the social context, or inside the head of the learner or all three". Learning strategies are selected actions used to promote the learning process, since they are planned tools and self-directed

involvement which are important to improve learners' performance (Oxford, 1990). Moreover, Matkova.et.al (2014) suggested that learning strategies are a set of particular actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques consciously used or selected by learners to improve the process of learning.

There are different technical terms that have been stated to define learning strategies: mental process (O'Malley & Chamot, 2004), behaviors or actions (Oxford, 1990), skills, operations, or plans(Rubin, 1975), techniques(Stern, 1975), and thoughts (Chamot, 2004). In addition, learning strategies are individual steps or operations selected either accidently or automatically for solving a problem in the learning process (Griffiths, 2015).

There are other different types of strategies; for instance, communication strategies, teaching strategies, social strategies …etc. (Griffiths, 2015). Learning strategies refer to the series of steps or ways taken by learners in order to understand different tasks, to enhance the learning progress and to solve a problem in learning (Oxford, 1990). Learning strategies are various ways, actions, tactics, techniques, approaches, operations, and devices that participate directly to learning. Learning strategies used by learners in order to make easy learning process, to comprehend several tasks, to promote the process of obtaining and storing information, to solve problems in learning, or to enhance the learning progress. In other words, learning strategies ultimately relate to the process that learners use in performing a specific learning objective in order to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new statuses to successfully perform tasks and realize goals. For example, when learners are involved in a learning task, they have a range of resources which they may bring into play different ways and manners in the direction of finishing a task or to solve a problem in learning (Wenden, 1987; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Williams & Burden, 1997; Ghani, 2003 as cited in Hardan, 2013).

Learning strategies are active, they are what learners do or perform. For this reason, they are usually articulated as verbs. It may be supportive for learners to make a distinction between styles and strategies, which are ways chosen by learners for learning. Therefore, styles are used by dissimilar people at singular time to achieve special goal or to solve different problems in learning process. Strategies are preferred as learners have a stock of strategies from which they can select the most suitable one that meets their needs. Moreover, strategies are goal oriented. It is challenging to reflect on strategies as randomly chosen actions devoid of any specific objective or purpose. This helps learners to separate strategies from skills which are the way of using language such as to read, to write, to speak, or to listen. Therefore, the fundamental objectives of learning strategies are to facilitate learning as well as to improve the learning process (Matkova.et.al, 2014 & Griffiths, 2015).

1.2.2. Purpose of Using Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are the specific methods and techniques that learners adopt to learn. Learning strategies are conscious actions chosen by learners to accomplish particular purpose through the storage, the recall and the application of information (Cohen & Macaro, 2007).There was a general conformity that following particular learning strategies intended to improve learning process, for the reason that learners without strategies, conscious learning cannot take place. In addition, most researchers support the concept that techniques or strategies have as their objective to perform certain tasks. The selection of LS relies on the task, and a number of strategies are suitable for more than one task. Moreover, the purpose for learning strategies is to solve specific problems in the learning process as the example of how a group of exam strategies applied when learners are having complexity in managing their anxiety. Finally, there was a big agreement with the perception that LS serve to make learning easier, faster and more enjoyable. LS are seen to permit learners enhancing knowledge and learning process. Some learners pointed out that using LS into task completion takes more

time and efforts than just working on a task up to their own way. However, when learning strategies provide a great achievement on their tasks' success, learners start to discover that applying LS make learning easier and more enjoyable (Cohen & Macaro, 2007).

The effectiveness of the strategies a learner uses very much depend on the learner his/her self as age, gender, intelligence, attitude, motivation, personality, self-image, cognitive and learning style preferences (Oxford, 1990).

1.2.3. Types of Learning Strategies

Oxford (1990) classified learning strategies into two major types, direct and indirect, which are separated into six divisions; see figure 3.

Figure 3
Diagram of Learning Strategies System (Oxford, 1990, p.16)
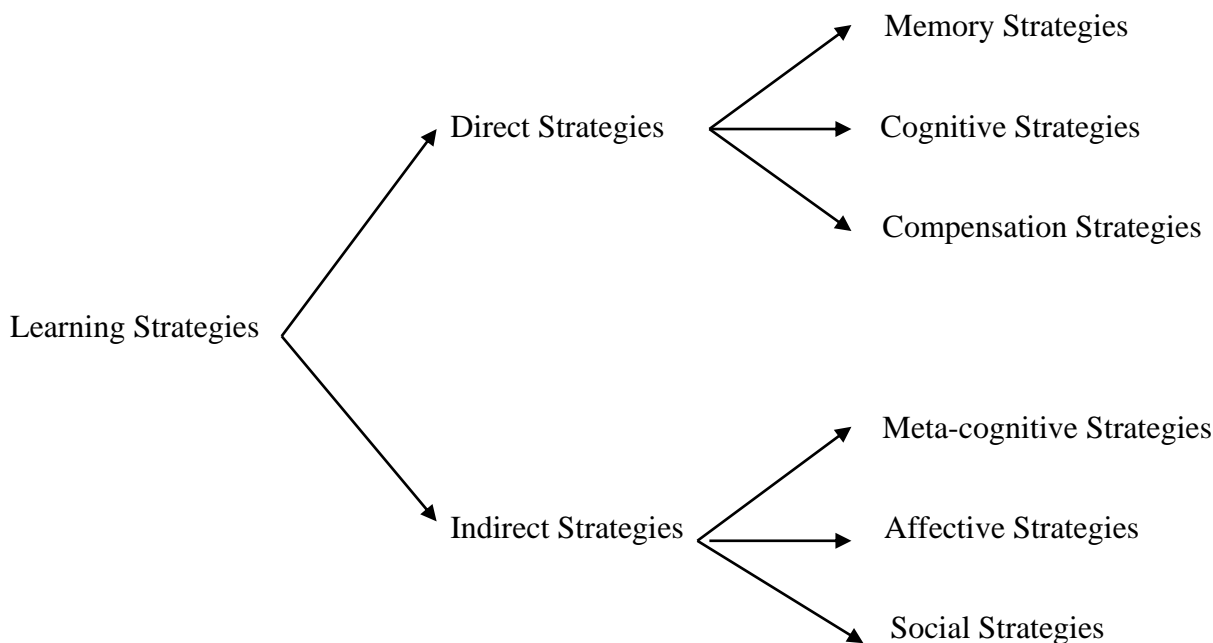
Direct strategies cover directly the mental processing of language; they entail three categories. Memory strategies have a higher particular function like using imagery which

helps learners to remember, store and retrieve specific information. Cognitive strategies aim to acquire and comprehend the content within the field studied, as well as facilitate learners to improve knowledge and language by different means like note taking, summarizing, analyses and organization, etc. Compensation strategies permit learners to apply the language regardless of their large gaps in knowledge (Oxford, 1990).

Indirect strategies supervise language learning devoid of directly encompassing the language; they can also be sectioned into three groups. Meta-cognitive strategies are based on the individual's appreciative of learning and cognition; they aid learners to organize their own cognitive capacities, and to involve planning learning abilities, monitoring the process during learning and evaluating results. Affective strategies help learners to increase control over emotions, motivation, attitudes and values. Social strategies help student gain knowledge through interaction and communication occurs between and among people (Oxford, 1990).

1.2.4. Classifications of Strategies Used to Reduce Exam Anxiety

Preparing for an exam or a test can be a worrying experience for EFL learners since considerable part of them face exam anxiety and other worries. For that, they need to follow several ways, tips and techniques that aid them study in relaxed and reduce stress in order to do well at some point in their exams. Here are some strategies used to lower learner's exam anxiety before, during and after exams.

1.2.4.1. Before exam

There are mainly ten strategies which learners may use before exams. The first strategy is studying effectively; studying and preparing for exams are two things that learners need to control when it comes to testing. This strategy builds and increases the EFL learner's confidence and peace of mind , and helps them recognize and understand particular lessons or concepts without focusing simply on memorization. Hence, EFL learners should study

smarter not harder, and the preparation for exams becomes more enjoyable and effective .This helps them to attend the examination more confidently, less anxious, or even less stressed (Sawchuk, 2017).

Studying early and in similar places is the second strategy, as Sawchuk (2017) declared, cramming all lessons just the night before exams allow EFL learner's level of stress increase since the amount of time to understand and cover everything is insufficient. In addition, studying in the same place can help learners memorize the information and the ideas much better than studying in deference locations. In the third strategy, Jeanette (2015) and Sawchuk (2017) declared that EFL learners need a good night' sleep particularly the days before exams, which assist them to carry out well in the tests. Therefore, getting enough and plenty of sleep lead to remember better what has been already learned.

Physical activities is the fourth strategy; practicing certain exercises, for instance running or swimming, helps learners keep their bodies more calm, relaxed, fresh, and energetic for a long period of time. Therefore, this strategy aids EFL learners' minds to increase more their attention and decrease stress (Jeanette, 2015).

Relaxing techniques is the fifth strategy, performing relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, helps EFL learner to relax their muscles, minds and bodies. This strategy aims to lower anxiety feeling during studying or getting exams exercises. Relaxing techniques include:

1. Sit upright in a good state or situation.

2. Close their eyes.

3. Inhale for a count of three. (1, 2, 3)

4. Exhale for a count of five. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

5. Wait a little bit then repeat.

Hence, these breading exercises help EFL learners to relax and being in a good form (Jeanette, 2015).

Eating properly is the sixth strategy, since the bad impact of specific food on the physical bodies as well as the mental health such as junk food, caffeine, much sugar and a lot of fats, learners feel heavy which let the feeling of stress increase. For that, EFL learners should, at least before the exams period, eat properly and select healthy food like: drinking water, eating fruits, vegetables and protein in order to save their bodies to function properly (Jeanette, 2015, Sawchuck, 2017).

Talk to someone is the seventh strategy, EFL learners should talk to someone who they really trust just right before exams. This may help them feel relieved and keep them think positively and to lower stress. Moreover, they have to avoid talking to negative learners or people who stress you out because other's anxiety may have an effect on their own (Jeanette, 2015).

Thinking positively is the eighth strategy, EFL learners should keep a positive attitude while studying or preparing for an exam through avoiding negative thoughts such as " I am going to fail " or " I cannot do that " . Instead, they should use encouraging affirmations. For example: "I am going to do my best", "I can do this", "I have done this before "and "I have all knowledge I need to get this done ". Therefore, positive self-talking may reduce the feeling of learner's exam anxiety (Kruger, 2018, Jeanette, 2015).

The ninth strategy is being on time, EFL learners should arrive on time to the exam classes since being late will raise their stress then they will fail to remember or forget to write significant points, make careless mistakes and center of attention takes place on the insufficient time rather than answering the questions (Kruger, 2018).

Visualization is the last strategy, EFL learners should imagine themselves relaxed and confident while they are completing the test, performing well and getting good marks. Therefore, learners who visualized themselves finishing the exam successfully would help them reduce the feeling of test worry (Kruger, 2018).

1.2.4.2. During Exams

According to Successful Strategies for Test Anxiety (2017), EFL learners should rapidly check and verify the entire test questions and read directions carefully, loudly, and more than once in order to make sure that all directions are applied and used.

Approaching each question is another strategy that may help learners reduce stress during passing the exams, they response first for the questions that are easy for answering since this will construct their self confidence in order to deal the questions followed. Therefore, they confirmed to start from the easiest to the hardest and approaching every single answer as an isolated exam (Kruger, 2018). During exams, EFL learners should impose their minds and thoughts to concentrate on the exam itself. In which they take no notice to any little thing, permit their thoughts to disappear or depart from the exams, stay in the present moment, organize their ideas and focus on questions rather than fears. Furthermore, learners should keep focused on the current task, which is to complete the test, not on how they believe it relates to their self-values (Kruger, 2018).

Learners should take pauses and breaks during exams all the way through using some breaths, and saying some encouraging declarations. This may assist them to limit their worries and to perform better (Successful Strategies for Test Anxiety, 2017).Avoid being panic, this strategy aids learners to focus on the answers; they should not be panic, or think that there is no adequate amount of time to accomplish and finish the exam, especially when the others

start submitting the exam papers. They should make sure that there are no gifts or rewards offered for concluding early (Kruger, 2018).

1.2.4.3. After Exam

When EFL learners finish tests and submit the papers, they should not be anxious about it or dwell on their mistakes because there is nothing to do more than they have already done. Instead, they focus their attention on the following test (Successful Strategies for Test Anxiety, 2017).

Once learners accomplish the tests, they should reward themselves by celebrating with friends or family members. In addition to obtaining gifts for themselves as a reward for the hard work and efforts deposit on exams regardless the consequences or scores (Successful Strategies for Test Anxiety, 2017).

According to Kruger (2018), learners should create a particular program or make an improvement plan to progress and get their studies better based on the previous clarifications and feedbacks related to their performance. For instance, use study groups and organize time schedules effectively. That helps learners to enhance their level and break stress.

1.2.5. The Role of the Teacher in Reducing Exam Anxiety

Extreme nervousness about taking a test can take place when learners have had unsatisfactory previous testing experiences, in the learning process, anxiety and other stresses are mixed with exams. Educators always worry to observe their students anxious and stressed during the period of tests, and look for the best tips and methods that can be applied in order to decrease the feeling of exam fear. The following are some techniques that teachers can use to help learners cope and deal with test anxiety (Cornelius, 2017).

First, teachers should prioritize classroom preparation efforts; they should provide learners multiple opportunities to deal with enough knowledge and skills in relation with the assessing tests. For example, learners who take an online exam, they should be familiar and closed with different technology instruments. Hence, this may help learners be more comfortable, confident and less worried. In addition, teachers should pay attention to the physical design of exams in ways that can reduce stress. They avoid tricky questions; instead the focus is on creating different types of questions to enable learners answer calm without fear. Moreover, teachers help learners to practice with the pressure off by creating opportunities where getting something wrong or making mistakes does not have a negative influence, instead helps learners feel more prepared to answer without fears. Building a friendly relationship between teacher and learners is very important to lower test stress. They feel more comfortable and less worried while learning as well as during exam; learners need to see their teacher as a friend, not only as a teacher who all the time gives orders. Furthermore, many learners are working hard, making efforts and spending nights studying to get ready for exams but they forget that the key to success is to study smarter not harder. Therefore the teacher may aid learners to create study schedule, in order to follow during the learning process including important things such as: home works, activities and time for having fun and relaxation. Also, teachers always should assist learners to think that exams or tests cannot determine the learners' future occupation as well as keep in perspective that both failure and success experiences may happen.

Last but not least, the best way to reduce learners' exam anxiety is to understand them and to know where their fear is coming from. This may help learners enhancing their emotional vocabulary since they will be able to indicate and treat the feeling of exam worry (Cornelius, 2017).

1.2.6. The Effects of Reducing Exam Anxiety on Learners

Many learners feel worried and stressed before or during a test, while others are more suffering from exam anxiety. Several learning strategies may decrease test anxiety and increase test performance. Different researchers discussed the benefits of reducing exam anxiety on learners. They approved that using learning strategies help learners to supervise and manage time and plan to effectively divide it that can answer all questions and to scan through the whole exam for discovering which questions are able to accomplish easily. For example, if the exam paper is three hours long and the overall mark division is out of 100 and you have a 10-mark question, give out 18minutes of the whole time to that question. That is lead to enhance the ability of well performing and succeed on exams since they focus their minds on the process of answering the questions rather than the end results (Paul, 2020, Robinson, et.al. 2021).

Moreover, following learning strategies may improve communication between learners by expressing their feelings and thoughts as well as create spaces between their emotions and reactions. This provides a sense of balance to their lives by helping them solve overcoming problems, understanding their weaknesses and working to enhance them (Paul, 2020, Robinson, et.al.2021).

Lowering exam anxiety can lead to increase brain functioning and better preparation for future stressful learning situations, which can positively affect learning process. If learners want to well performing during examination, anxiety reducing is essential. In addition, it may increase learners ability to think clearly, function effectively and enjoy life by breaking the hold stress have on their entire lives, they can be happier, healthier and more productive(Paul, 2020, Robinson,et.al.2021).

Conclusion

This section is an overall summary about the necessity for learners to manage high levels of stress. The latter minimizes the ability of thinking clearly, functioning effectively and enjoying life through a set of learning strategies. The latter include well preparation, sleeping well, relaxation techniques, eating properly, positive thinking, etc. Hence, learning strategies help learners to enhance the learning process, solve problems and make learning easier, faster and more enjoyable. In addition, being more aware of the importance of teacher in reducing exam anxiety during exams and its positive impact on learners' performance.

Chapter Two: Data Analysis and Research Results

Introduction

Added to the prior chapter which deals with the literature review of anxiety and learning strategies, the current chapter is devoted to investigate and analyze the data obtained from students' questionnaire, which was designed for EFL learners in order to know their perceptions and views toward the effect of using learning strategies to lower exam anxiety as well as the impact of these strategies on learners' performance and results. This chapter is assigned to describe the methodology used and the sample selected in the practical part, a description of the questionnaire with its different sections is provided, the analysis of data are presented in the form of graphs followed by discussion of the results, in addition to some pedagogical recommendations are given to both teachers and students.

2.1.1. Methodology

In order to realize the nature of the present study which investigate EFL learners' use of strategies to lower exam anxiety and its impact on their results. We decided to employ a quantitative research method using a questionnaire in order to obtain sufficient data from a large number of learners in a short period of time.

2.1.2. The Sample

The questionnaire is handed out to third year EFL students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages, Abdelhafid Boussouf, Mila University Center, because they have more experience in learning English and dealing with exams as well as they have more knowledge about learning strategies. Randomly, 80 out of students, from the total number of 211 students, answered the questionnaire.

2.1.3. The Students' Questionnaire

2.1.3.1. Description of Students' Questionnaire

The questionnaire is directed to third year EFL students at Mila university center. It consists of nineteen (19) questions divided into four sections. The first section, students' profile, made up of four multiple choice questions. It looks at personal information about the participants. The second section is anxiety, which contains five multiple choices questions. It is about students' experiences with anxiety during examination and the major reasons behind feeling anxious. Section number three is strategy use; it is made of four multiple choice questions. It seeks to know the strategies used to lower exam anxiety before, during and after exams. Section number four is, the correlation between strategies used to lower exam anxiety and its impact on students' performance, it entails five questions , one question is a multiple choice question and four questions are closed questions requiring students to choose "Yes" or "No" answers followed by brief justification. It aims at investigating EFL learners' perspectives and views toward the effectiveness of applying LS on reducing exam anxiety as well as positively influences their exam performance.

2.1.3.2. Administration of Students' Questionnaire

Administrating the students' questionnaire was an online version formed through Google Forms, https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1ZCieCsFc0FOWQb83u-ilYsDSRM6Yoqcvc8Zux-QFO7Q/edit?usp=drivesdk.It sent via Face book groups and e-mails for third year students of English, Mila University Center and the data collection took about two weeks; from April 19[th]to May 7th,2022.
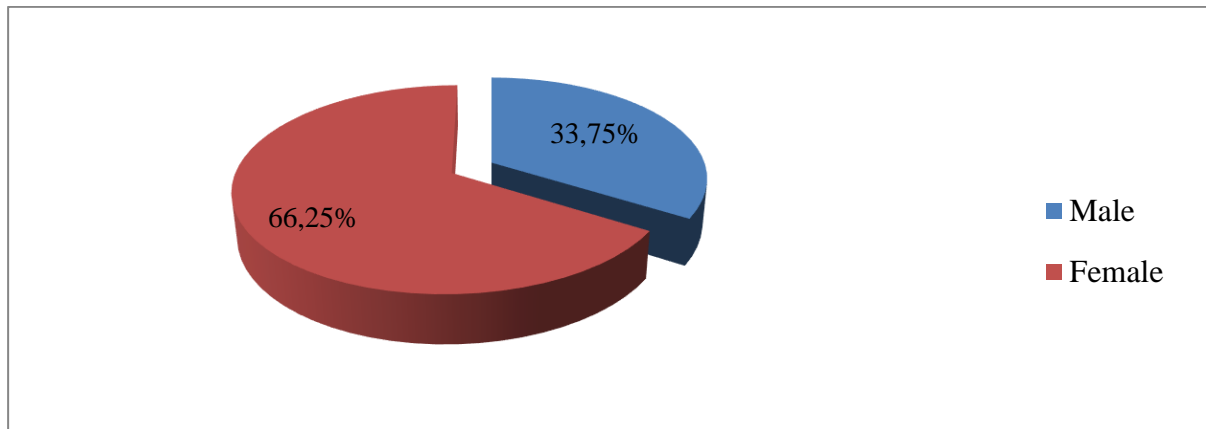
2.1.3.3. Analysis of Results

Section One: Students' Profile

Q1. Gender
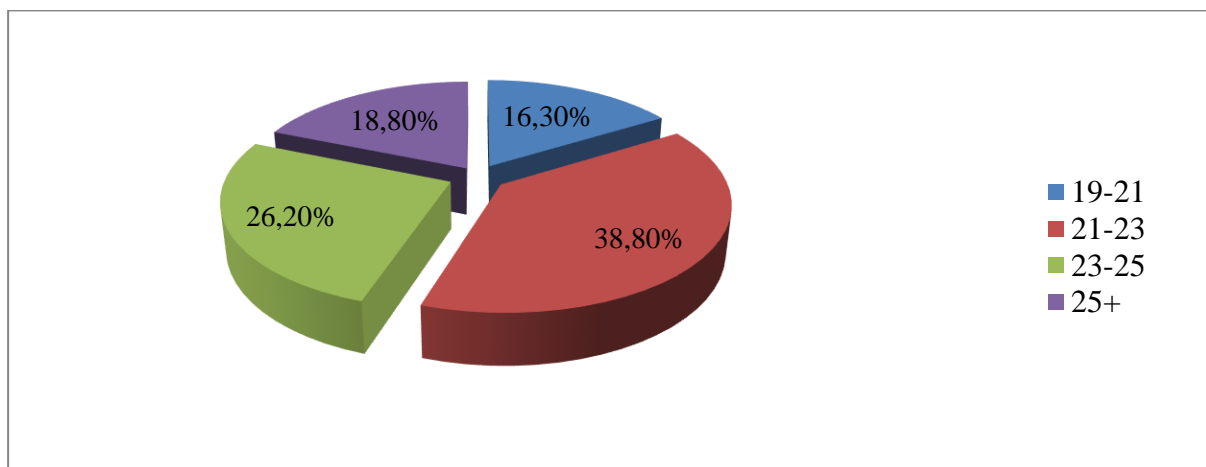
Graph 1
Students' Gender

The purpose of this question is to get an idea about the gender of our participants. It is observed that females take the large part of the total sample (66.25%) while male are just (33.75%) because the rate of females who study literature strands in the English language field is higher than males.

**Q2. Age**

Graph 2
Students'Age

The graph above demonstrates that the majority of students (38.80%) are aged from 21 to 23, (26.20%) are aged from 23 to 25, (18.80%) are aged from 25 years and more, however, (16.30%)of our participants are aged from 19 to 21 years old. This shows how varieties of respondents are in our sample and may be reflected in differences while dealing with exams.

Q3. Your choice of studying English

Graph 3
Students' Choice of Studying English
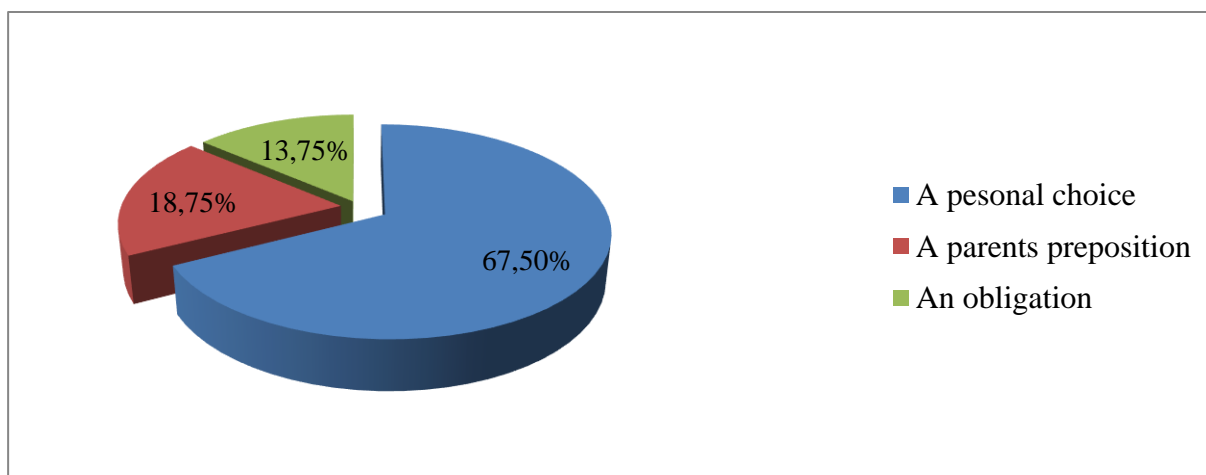
The majority of respondents (67.50%) chose studying English as a personal choice, likely, they are aware of their desires, recognized their needs and fixed their goal in the future as well as the importance of studying English at universities. No more than (18.75%) of the students select parents' preposition. We propose that parents assist their children to choose the right option according to their capacities and abilities. Only (13.75%) of the representative sample select "obligation" it may refer to their baccalaureate average.

**Q4. How do you evaluate your modules' grades?**

Graph 4
Students' Evaluation of their Modules' Grade
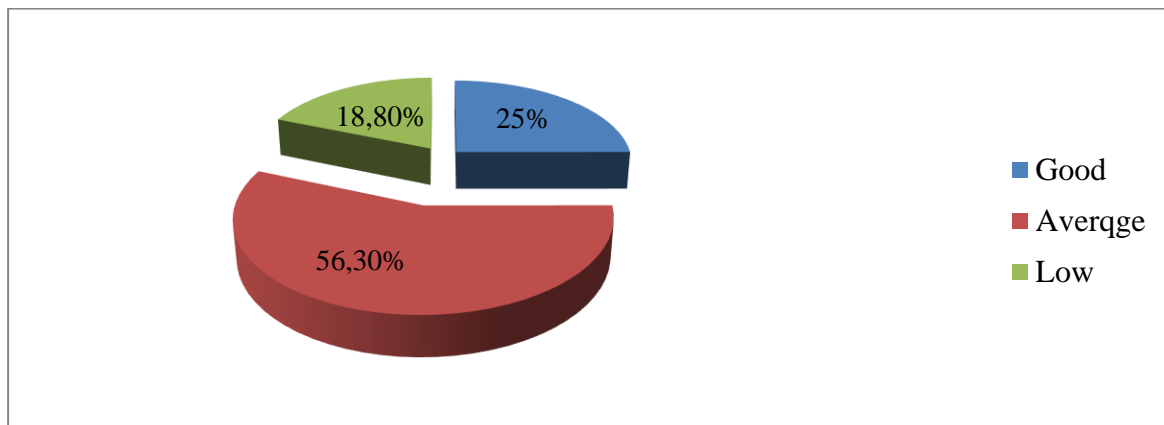
The aim of this question is to be familiar with the modules' grade of third year English students. The highest percentage of students (56.30%), signify that their modules' grade is average, and 20 students respond for "Good" with the percentage of (25%). However, the rest of students (18.80%) reported that their modules' grade is low. From this result, it can be claimed that there is variety of factors that could show unreal grade of students, and anxiety can be one of these factors.

Q5. What is your level in English?

**Graph 5**
Students' Level in English
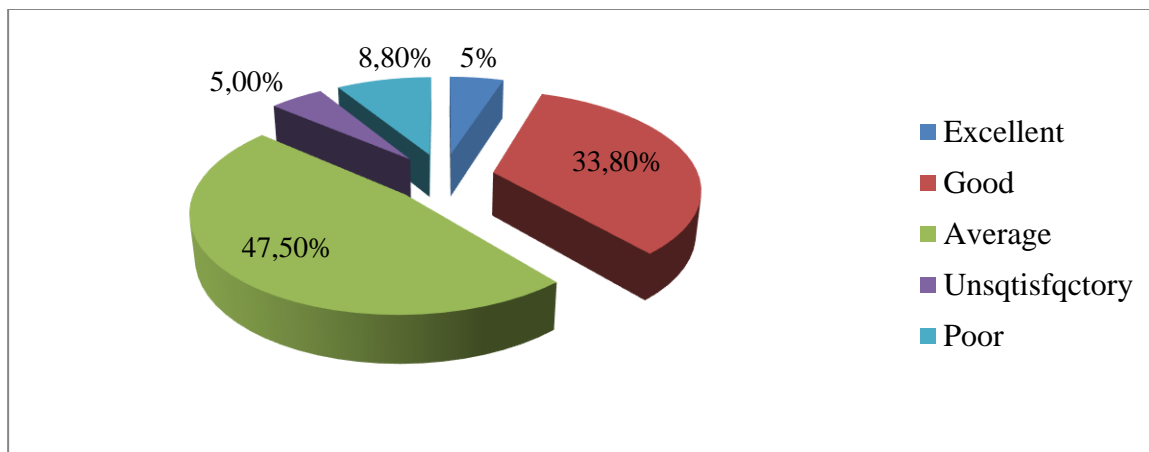
By asking this question, we aimed to know how students rate their level in English in order to notice whether the high or the low level of students related to the appropriate application of learning strategies. The graph above represents that the member of students who consider that their level in English is excellent is the same with students who have an unsatisfactory level with the percentage of (5%). We can say that these participants are the exceptions of the whole sample. (8.80%) of our sample select the option of "Poor" and the highest percentage (47.50%) is for students who have an average level, (33.80%) of students believe that they reach the good level. This shows how our population is various as we deal with all students levels.

Section Two: Anxiety

Q6. Do you experience sweating, nail biting, stomach ache and short breath while testing?
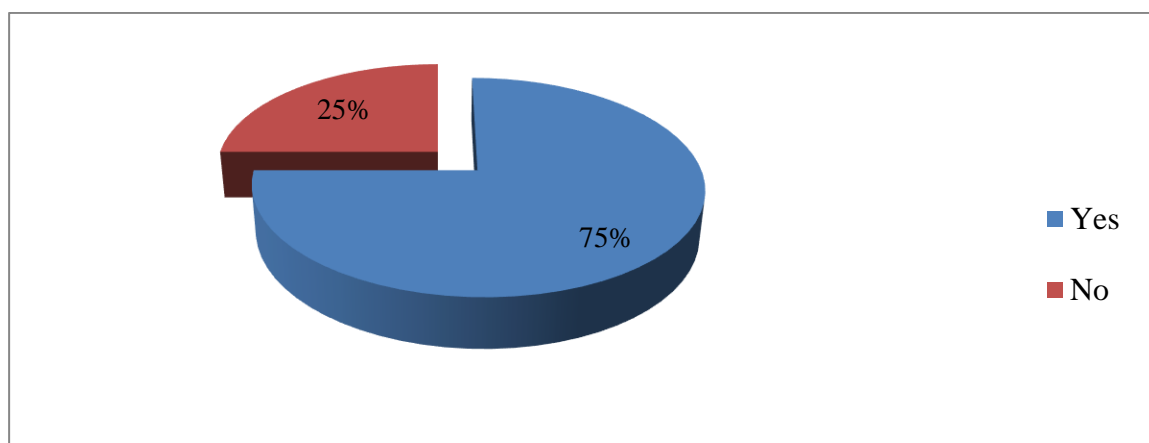
Graph 6
Students' Experience of Anxiety Symptoms
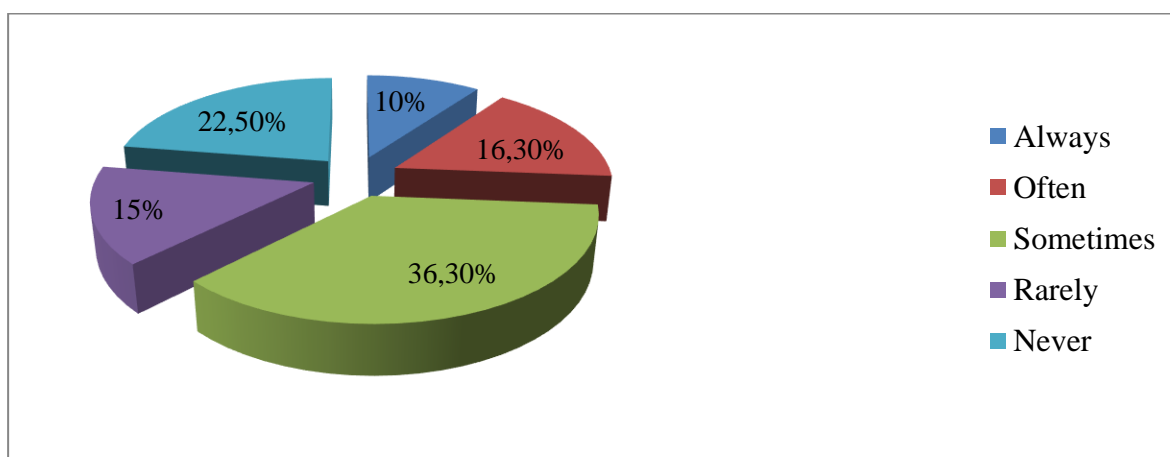
In this item, 29 of students respond "Sometimes", in which they take the highest percentage of participants with (36.30%). In addition, (22.50%) of the total number of the participants say "Never" and (16.30%) say "Often". However, the minority part is divided between (15.50%) of students who, rarely, experience sweating, nail biting, stomach ache and short breath during exams while 8 respondents with the percentage of (10%) always suffer from anxiety symptoms. This refers that the vast majority of students experience anxiety but with different degrees.

Q7. Do you consider passing an exam as an anxiety provoking situation?

Graph 7
Students' Views toward Exam as an Anxiety Provoking Situation


This question attempts to know whether students consider passing an exam as a provoking situation. The results that are represented in the graph demonstrate that (75%) of participants confirm that exams provoke their anxiety, while only (25%) say that exams do not provoke their stress. On the one hand, the majority who responded "Yes" may attribute their worry, before exams, to the insufficient time to cover everything, to the atmosphere of exams' period which makes students feel busy, uncomfortable, confused and over thoughtful about exams' questions. On the other hand, the minority of respondents declared "No", it means that passing an exam does not make them feel anxious. Those who feel comfortable,

during examination, may have high self-control in which they can manage their time, organize their thoughts and focus more on the exam rather than the result, or use some strategies or techniques to keep calm and avoid anxiety.

Q8. How often do you feel, anxious or comfortable, when you have an exam?
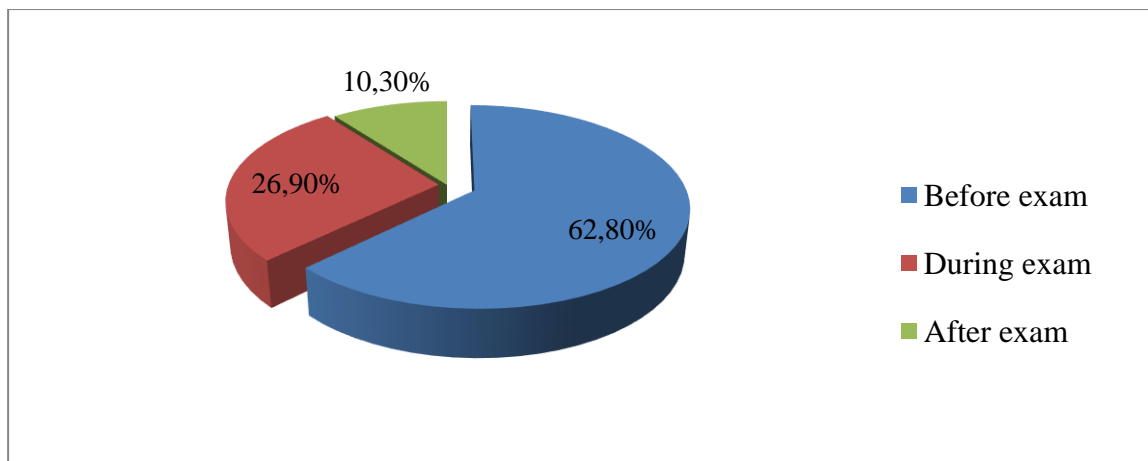
Graph 8
Students' Feelings during Exam Taking
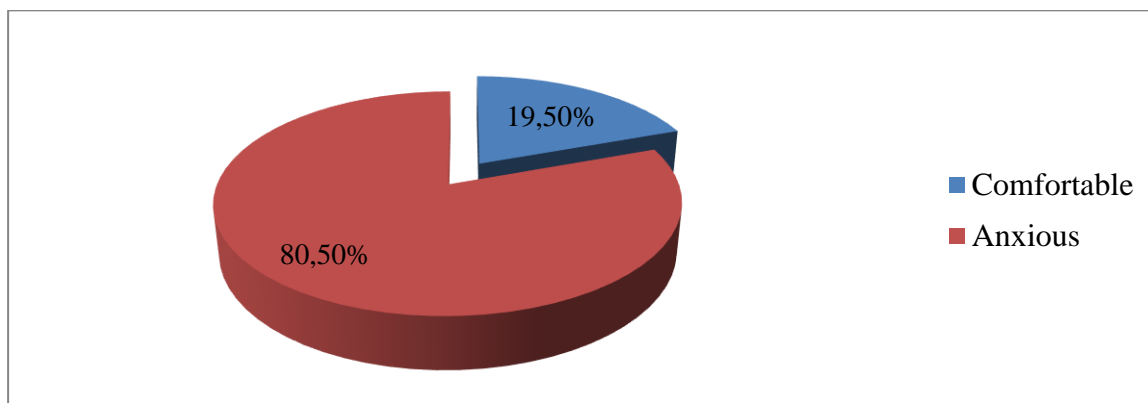
The graph above shows that the majority of students have negative experiences and views toward examination. (80.50%) of respondents consider exam as a source of anxiety and stress. Those who are highly anxious have their anxiety from the idea that exams define their destiny whether they will succeed or not. This idea may interrupt their thoughts and drive them think of the results rather than the exam itself. Moreover, only (19.50%) of the sample, feel comfortable during exams, this is likely because they apply particular strategies such as studying effectively. That may make them pass the period of exams in relaxing way and get the results they are looking for.

Q9. When do you feel anxious or worried?

Graph 9
The Period When Students Feel Anxious

The aim of this question is to investigate the exact period when students feel anxious in order to suggest the appropriate strategies they should focus on whether before, during or after exams taking. As it is shown in the graph above,(62.80%) of the sample experience more anxiety before exam, may be because they are controlled by negative expectations such as "How the exams' questions will be?", "Am I able to answer all of the questions?", "Are the questions tricky?"… The second option is "During exam"; it is selected by 22 students with the percentage of (16.90%). In this situation, the biggest worry of students is time management because they care about running out of time as well as the difficult questions they face. The lowest percentage of this question is (10.30%); it is for students who experience anxiety after exams. We presume that students, after exams, keep dwelling of their mistakes that make them feel confused and unable to focus on the following exams.

Q10. What are the major sources or reasons behind feeling anxious?

Graph 10
*Students' Reasons behind Exam Anxiety*
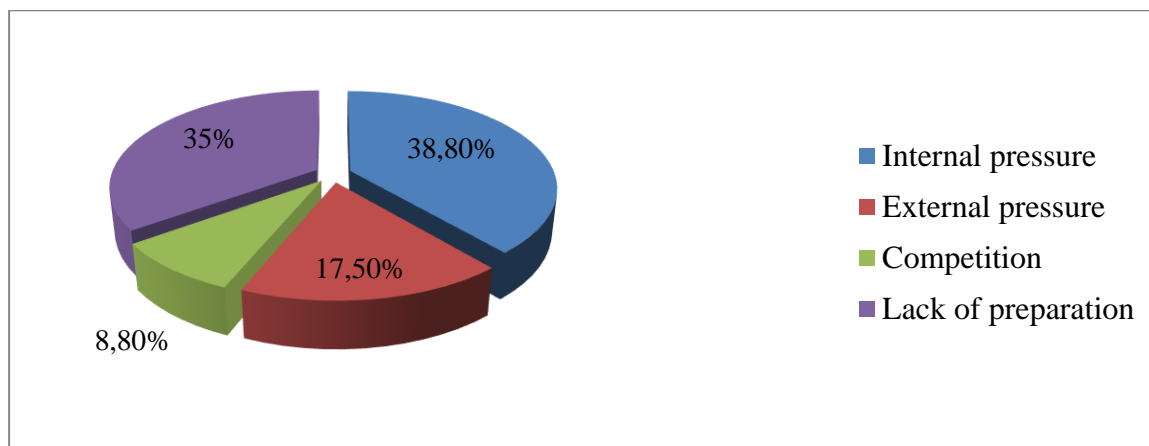
The purpose of asking this question is to examine the major sources of fear and anxiousness while testing, because revealing the exact source of anxiety can make both students and teachers deal with it easily and effectively. As it is mentioned in the graph above, internal pressure, reserves the highest percentage. 31 students consider feeling nervous to result from internal worry about the exam difficulties and the negative image they got about it. The second option is "external pressure"; it is selected by 14 students who often care about others' opinions and high expectations, and how others will judge him/her if he/she will achieve less than they predict. Lack of preparation is also one of the major sources of exam anxiety. This option is selected by 28 students, who seem to be less motivated to get ready for the exam, this may occur when students keep procrastinating until the night before exam. Moreover, only 7 students from the total sample consider competition as a major cause behind their worriment.

Section Three: Strategy Use

Q11. Before exam, you have use to…

Graph 11
Students' Strategies Used Before Exams
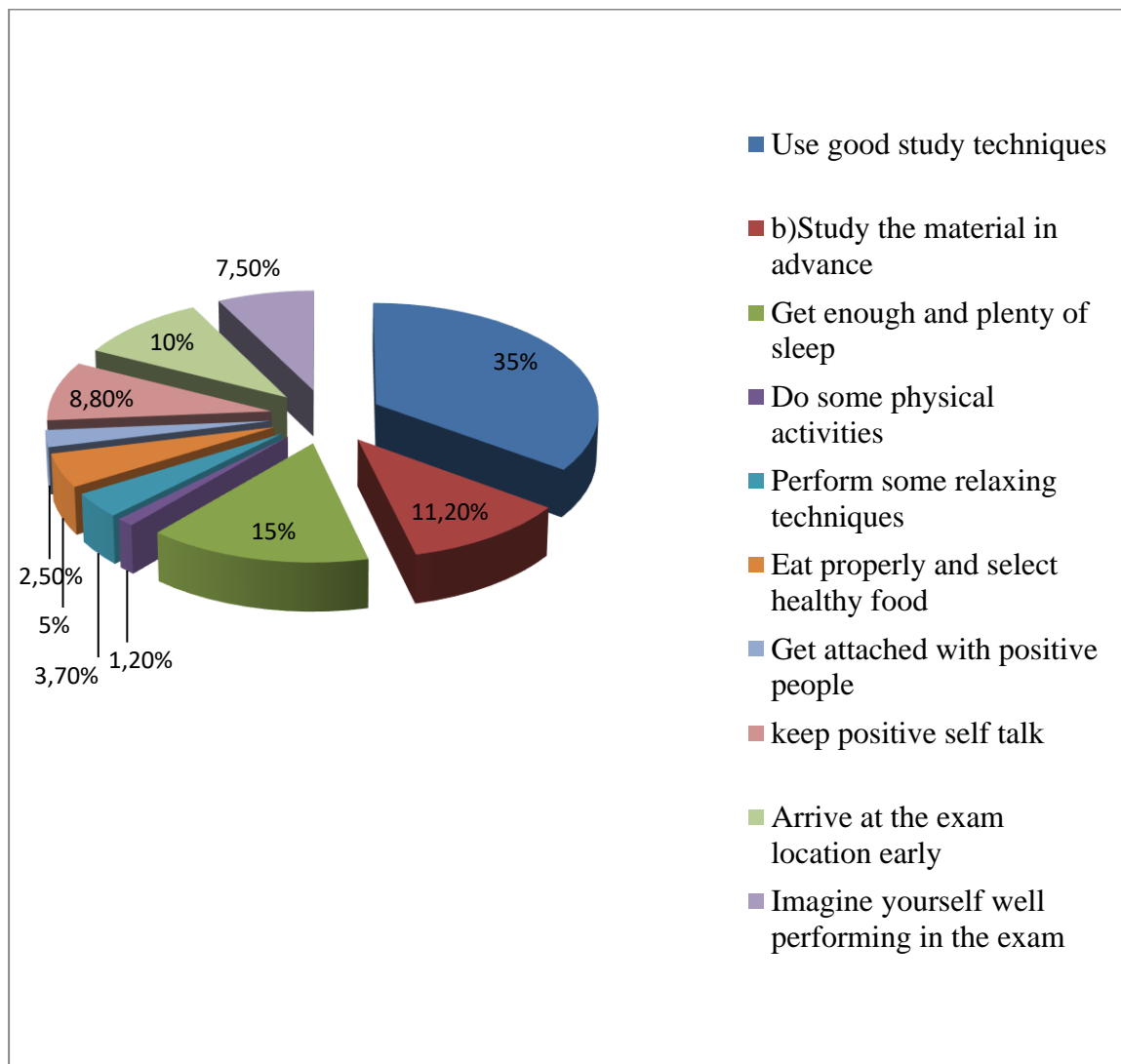
Given the choice to select more than one strategy, this question investigates the strategies that EFL learners used to follow. We suggest a list of options that contains strategies used before exams, (35%) of answers were for using good study techniques, probably, because they observe that using this strategy makes them more effective and comfortable. (11.20%) prefer to study the material in advance and avoid cramming the night before exam since they will not be able to cover all the lectures in a limited period. Whereas,

(15%) of them believe that getting enough and plenty of sleep can make them ready for the coming exam. (10%) of our participants choose to arrive at the exam location early to invest time in preparing themselves for the exam. Moreover, no more than one student is aware of doing some physical activities such as swimming, running…. and only (3.70%)use to perform some relaxing techniques despite the benefits of practicing such activities in refreshing human bodies from the negative energy. Moreover, (7.50%) of respondents seem to be optimistic, they use to imagine themselves well performing in the exam and (8.80%) are aware of applying self-motive, they keep positive self-talk as a kind of encouragement without relying to others unlike students who prefer to get attached with positive people in order to get some positive vibes, with the percentage of (2.50%). Eating properly is also one of the most important strategies that most students do not give much importance, as represented in the graph above, only (5%) of them are agree that selecting healthy foods can raise their body energy, hence, they will be able to concentrate better. In sum, although all strategies are used before the exams, the most ones are using good study techniques and getting enough and plenty of sleep.

Q12. During exam, you have used to…

Graph 12
 *Students' Strategies during Exams*
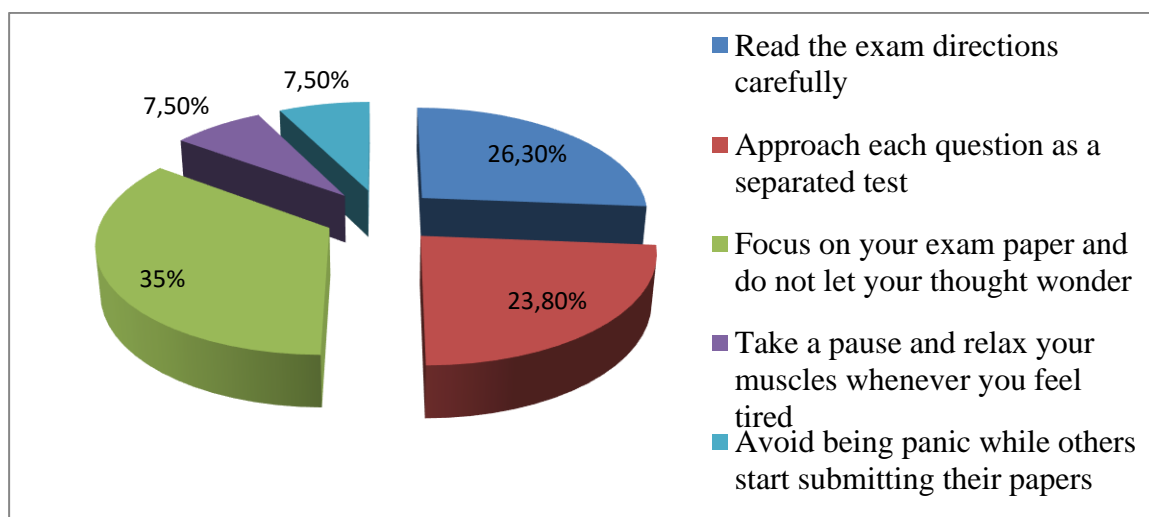
In order to know learners' use of strategies during exam to reduce anxiety, we have asked this question. From the results that are represented in the graph above, we notice that (35%) of participants choose to focus on their exam paper without any interruption, because caring about other things that are unrelated to the exam is considered as a waste of time. Moreover, (26.30%) of them believe that reading the exam directions carefully is one of the best ways that helps them understand better what they should do and how they have to answer properly. The second option, which is "Approaching each question as a separates test, (23.80%) of respondents believe that focusing on that strategy helps them being more able to organize their thoughts depending on the classification of the exam questions; means from the easiest to the hardest. In the light of the following answers, we observe that there is a balance in the number of students who prefer to take a rest whenever they feel tired and students who prefer to avoid being panic while others start submitting their papers, with the percentage of (7.50%). Hence, taking a pause during passing the exam aids students retrieve their energy to complete the rest of the questions and recover the information they may forget. Additionally, anxiety reaches a high level when students see their classmates start submitting their papers thinking that they are so late and they will not be able to complete. For that, students should have more self-control and they have to know how to lead the given time.

Q13. After exams, you have used to…

Graph 13
Students' Strategies after Exams
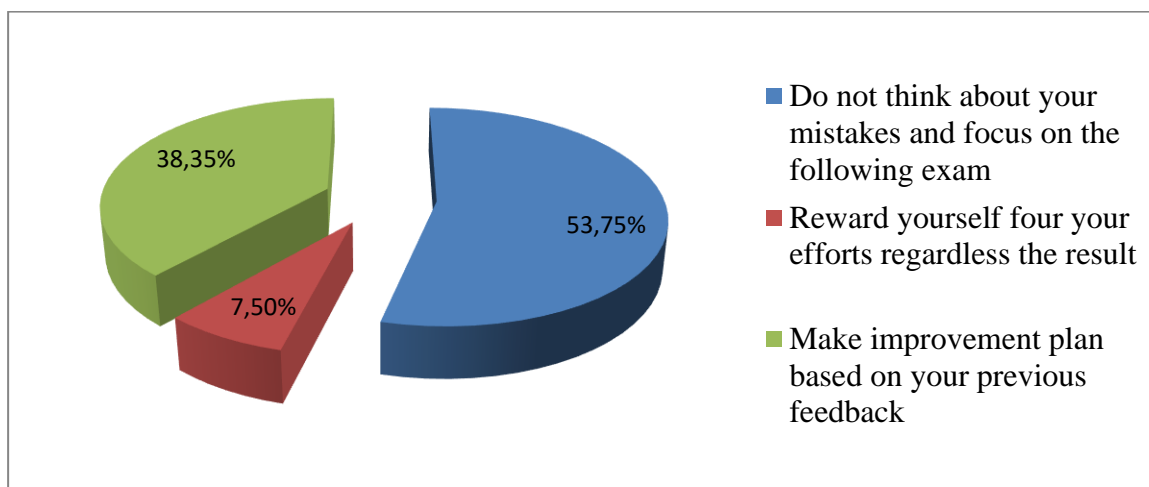
The pie chart above, show the reliable statistics of using strategies after exam taking. The majority of EFL learners (53.75%) recognize that thinking about the mistakes they make unable them focusing better on the next exam because they will be more anxious of the results. We consider it as a good factor that most students are aware of such problem and its negative impact on their results. Moreover, (38.35%) of them use to make an improvement plan based on previous feedbacks and only (7.50%) prefer to reward themselves for their efforts regardless the result.

Q14. According to your experiences, do you use other strategies?

Graph 14
*Students' Application of Other Strategies*
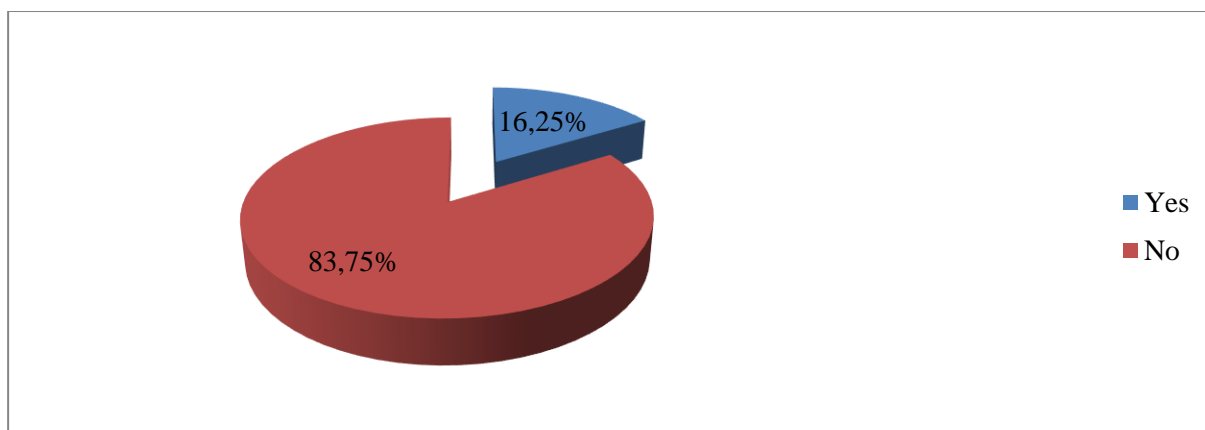
In this question, participants are asked to share other strategies that they used to apply in order to lower exam anxiety. They are given total freedom to respond and justify their answer. The results show that most of EFL learners (83.75%) are not enough interested to use other strategies, or probably, because the bunch of strategies suggested in the questions (11, 12 and 13) cover all the strategies they used to follow. Moreover, (16.25%) of students are quite motivated to look for other effective methods and techniques that provide their needs such as having fun or watching motivational videos before exams in order to increase their self-confidence.

Section Four: Correlation between Strategies Used to Lower Exam Anxiety and Its Impact on Students' Performance

Q15. How often do you use strategies to decrease exam anxiety?

Graph 15
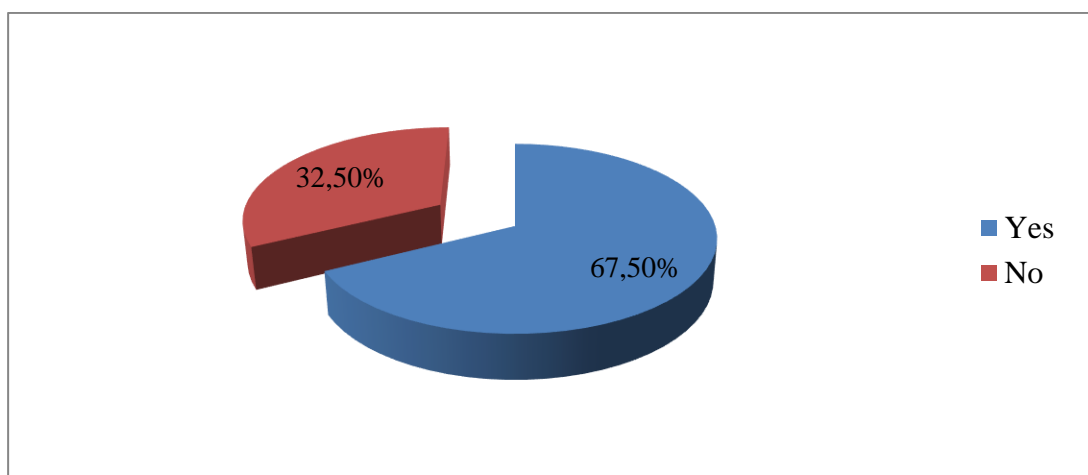*The Use of Strategies to Decrease Exam Anxiety*
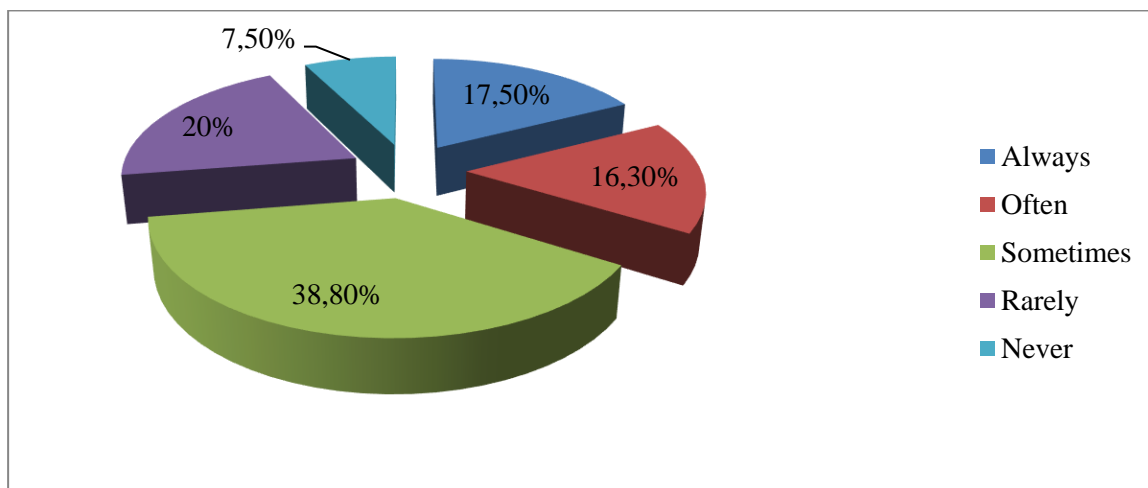
As it can be seen from the graph, the highest number (38.80%) goes to "Sometimes", (17.50%) to "Always" and 13 of learners chose "Often" making up the percentage of (16.30%) from the total sample. This means that the majority of responses are aware of the

importance of applying strategies during exams, which let them feel more comfortable and less stressed. (20%) of participants claim "Rarely" which refer that they may consider these strategies as wasting time much more than being effective to lower their anxiety. The rest (7.50%) of them have answered with "Never" because they may be unknown of strategies used in order to cope with the feeling of exams' fear. To sum up, students use of strategies to decrease exam anxiety is depending on the different degrees of anxiety that may EFL learners' experience.

Q16. Are you aware of applying particular strategies to lower exam anxiety?

Graph 16
Students' Awareness of Applying Strategies to Lower Exam Anxiety

The aim of this question is to know if EFL learners are aware of using strategies to decrease their anxiety during exam. We can observe that more than half of respondents (67.50%) say "Yes", it means that they are aware of using strategies to remove their stress. Against (32.50%) who say "No"; this means that they are not aware of their anxiety or even looking for solutions to solve that problem in their learning process.

Q17. Do you think that teachers have a positive impact on treating the feeling of exams' fear?

Graph 17

Students' Perceptions of the Teachers' Position on Reducing Exam Anxiety
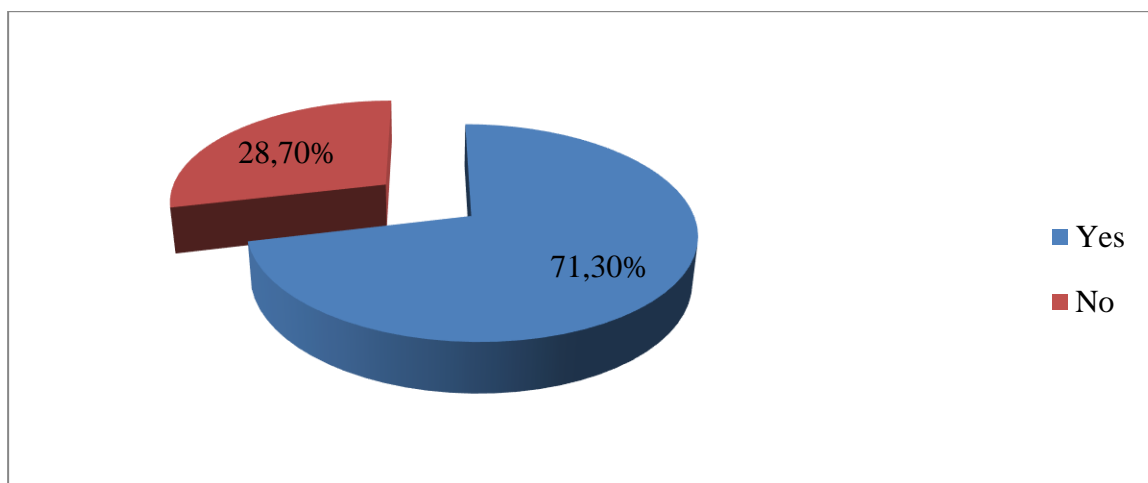
This question is asked to find out students' perspectives toward the positive impact of teachers' role to help them cope with exam anxiety. The responses from the item seventeen show that most of students (71.30%) say "Yes"; means that teachers do positively and effectively influence EFL learners to remove their feeling of stress during exams. This indicates that teachers build a good relationship among him/ her and his/ her or among learners themselves, which lead to create a good atmosphere while studying as well as while testing. Whereas (28.70%) of participants choose "No", maybe they are less motivated for that they do not consider teachers as influencers who help them treat exam anxiety.

Q18. Do you think that there is a significant connectedness between the use of specific strategies and the reduced exam stress?

Graph 18

Students' Perceptions toward the Connectedness of Strategies and Low Exam Anxiety
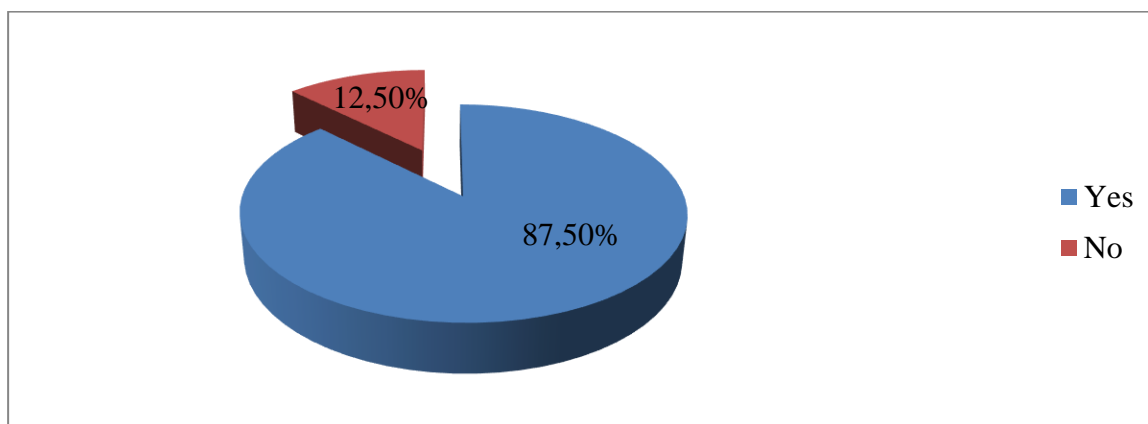
This question aims at investigating EFL learners' views of whether there is a relationship between low anxiety and the application of strategies. The graph above demonstrates that on one hand, (87.50%) of our participants are agree that exam anxiety may be decreased due to the use of certain strategies. On the other hand, (12.50%) of respondents declared that they disagree which means that they may do not use strategies to lower their tests' fear. Hence, we assume that there is a positive impact of using certain strategies and feeling less anxious, as those who are agreed, which assists them feel more comfortable during examination.

Q19. Do you think that strategies used to reduce anxiety do positively influence your exam results?

Graph 19

Students' Perceptions toward the Impact of Strategies on Exams Results
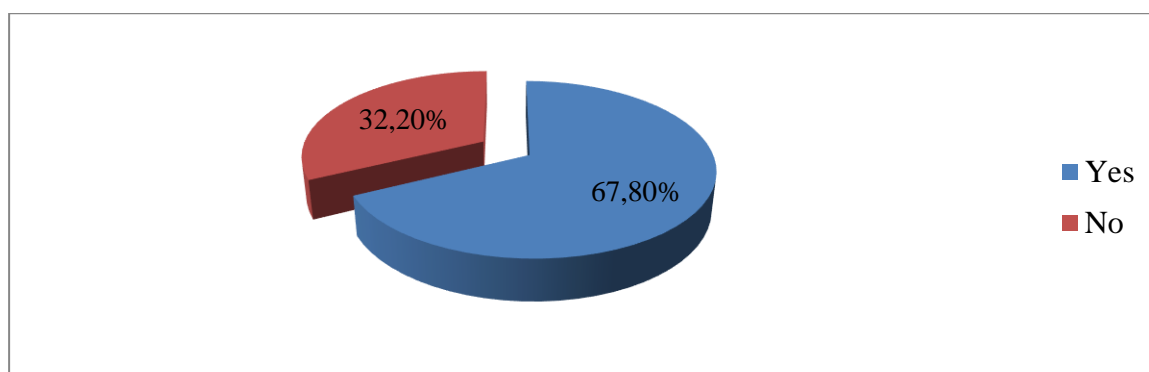
In this question, the majority (67.80%) of participants symbolized the number of students who gave positive response "Yes", it means that strategies used to reduce exam stress do positively affect their exam performance. Those respondents consider anxiety as an obstacle which negatively influence their exam results, as they justify their answer that applying strategies help them feel more comfortable and confident, also lead to better concentration on exam, then, a good result will be achieved. However, (32.20%) of the sample chose "No", they do not agree that strategies used to lower exam anxiety do effectively impact their performance. They believe that exam results depend on intelligence rather than low anxiety and do not feel that stress has that effect on their performance since the latter is often the same either they feel anxious or not.

2.1.4. Discussion of the Findings

Anxiety takes a large part in EFL learners' classes because of the negative effects that appear on their exams results. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to realize the impact of applying learning strategies to lower exam anxiety and enhance learners' performance.

Based on the analysis of students' questionnaire and the data collected, it is evident that the majority of third year EFL learners suffer from exam anxiety as it is confirmed in the graphs (06- 07- 08), even that those students who denied the reality of being anxious, they unconsciously experience it but may be they have high self-control than others. Moreover, the large number of responses indicated that passing an exam or dealing with a test is an anxiety provoking situation and a source of pressure for EFL learners because they consider it as a personal responsibility that they have to be ready for it.

As it is represented in the graph (16), most of students are aware of applying particular LS either, before, during or after exams to find solutions and solve that problem in their learning process. It can be considered as a good sign to observe that EFL learners are aware of

the negative impact of anxiety on their performance, and they used to apply learning strategies to be a part of their learning attitude in order to treat this phenomenon.

The biggest part of our participants, as it is shown on the question (19), do agree that using learning strategies such as, making an effective plan for the exams, getting plenty of sleep and using good study techniques, are the best ways to reduce the feeling of anxiety during the period of examination, as a results they do positively influence their performance as well as their results.

2.1.5. Limitations of the Study

The current research has faced some limitations. First of all, our sample was restricted only to third year English students at Mila university center, in which exam anxiety is a phenomenon that all learners of different study levels suffer from. Additionally, our participants may not take things seriously which may make our findings less accurate and valid. Moreover, we were delimited for the method used to gather data, we would like to use both questionnaire and experiment with focused group to test the effectiveness of strategies used before and during exams; however, third year students have finished their studies before we start our frame work.

2.1.6. Pedagogical Recommendations

2.1.6.1. Students' Recommendations

- Students are required to be well informed of learning strategies used to reduce the negative impact of exam anxiety.

- Students should know their own source of anxiety, to effectively manage and control that feeling.

- Students should benefit from decreasing anxiety to enhance their exam performance.

- Importance should be given to produce an improvement plan which helps students progress their studies.

- Students should focus on the exam itself rather than the result.

- Students used to lower exam anxiety are not valid only within learners of schools or universities; they may used by employee who has to take test for career advancement.

- Students should decrease their test stress, it may increase their brain ability to think clearly and function properly.

2.1.6.2. Teachers' Recommendations

- Teachers should raise learners' awareness of the learning strategies use to lower feeling anxious during examination.

- Teachers should create a relaxing atmosphere in the exam session in order to let students feel comfortable and well focused.

- Teachers should build a friendly relationship with his students that helps them feel less worried, since learners need to see their teacher as a friend, not only as a teacher who all the time gives orders.

- Teachers should give students multiple opportunities to deal with enough knowledge and skills in relation with the assessing exams.

Conclusion

This chapter is devoted for the practical part of the present dissertation, which focuses on investigating EFL learners' use of strategies to lower exam anxiety and its impact on their results. It statistically analyses and discuses the answers gathered from students' questionnaire. Initially, the collected findings demonstrate that EFL learners experience anxiety while testing and applying strategies work effectively to reduce anxiety levels before, during and after exams. Additionally, the results collected provided answers to the research

questions and assume the hypothesis that strategies used can reduce anxiety and do positively
influence learners' performance.

General Conclusion

The recent study is devoted to investigate EFL learners use of learning strategies to lower exam anxiety, this research was also explored at shedding light on the connectedness of learning strategies and its efficiency on learners' performance. In order to examine and observe this correlation, two hypotheses are proposed, in the first one we have hypothesized that if EFL learners use learning strategies in the exams' period, they would help them reduce exam anxiety. The second hypothesis is "EFL learners would enhance their exam results if they appropriately use LS to lower exam anxiety. In addition to four questions are asked; "Does learning strategies use to lower learners' exam anxiety?", "What types of strategies EFL learners' use to decrease their exam anxiety?", "Are EFL learners aware of applying particular strategies to reduce exam anxiety?" and "To which extent may reducing anxiety influence EFL learners' performance?". The target of this work; answering the suggested questions, a questionnaire is administrated to 80 third year students of English at the Department of Foreign Languages, Mila university center.

The first chapter is entitled "Anxiety and Learning Strategies", is made up of two sections, the first section offers an overview of exam anxiety as an matter that the majority of EFL learners experience and suffer from, along with its causes and symptoms. The second section, deals with the most appropriate or suitable learning strategies that may assist EFL learners to overcome their exam anxiety.

The second chapter" findings and discussion" in which we attempt to provide the results gained. Along this chapter, and after analyzing the gathered data, the findings detected that the majority of students experience tests' anxiety with different degrees andthe major sources of that anxiety among our sample are: internal pressure, lack of preparation, and the fear of being less than others' expectations. However, the results show that the large part of

EFL learners are taking in consideration the application of learning strategies since its great importance and the remarkable effects appear on their results. From the obtained outcomes, it also became clear that the most effective strategies selected by students are: using good study techniques, keeping positive self-talk, and getting enough and plenty of sleep, they make them feel more confident and comfortable because they create a good and relaxing atmosphere which motivates them to achieve more.

As a conclusion, we can say that this study seems to be a preliminary point to the upcoming researchers and learners about the value of using learning strategies to reduce the feeling of anxiety in examinations and the necessity of making them a part of learning attitude.

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Appendix

Students Questionnaire

Dear students,

You are kindly invited to complete this questionnaire, which is an essential part of a research work. It aims at investigating strategy use to lower exam anxiety and its impact on students' results. Your answers will be a great help for us.

Please, read each question carefully and put a tick (√) in the appropriate box, and make a full statement whenever necessary.

Section One: Students Profile

1. Gender

a) Male ☐   b) Female ☐

2. Age

a) 19_21 ☐

b) 21_23 ☐

c) 23_25 ☐

d) 25 + ☐

3. Your choice of studying English is

a) A personal choice ☐

b) A parent preposition ☐

c) An obligation ☐

4. How do you evaluate you modules' grades?

a) Good ☐

b) Average ☐

c) Low ☐

5. What is your level in English?

a) Excellent ☐

b) Good ☐

c) Average ☐

d) Unsatisfactory ☐

e) Poor ☐

Section Two: Anxiety

6. Do you experience sweating, nail biting, stomach ache and short breath while testing?

a) Always ☐

b) Often ☐

c) Sometimes ☐

d) Rarely ☐

e) Never ☐

7. Do you consider passing an exam as an anxiety provoking situation?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

8. How often do you feel when you have an exam?

a) Comfortable and confident ☐

 b) Anxious and stressed ☐

9. When do you feel anxious or worried?

a) Before exams ☐

b) During exams ☐

c) After exams ☐

10. What are the major sources or reasons behind feeling anxious while testing?

a) Internal pressure (worrying about test difficulty) ☐

b) External pressure (other's high expectations) ☐

c) Competition ☐

d) Lack of preparation ☐

Section Three: Strategy use

11. Before exams you have used to:

a) Use good study techniques to prepare well and effective ☐

b) Study the material in advance and avoid cramming the night before exam ☐

c) Get enough and plenty of sleep ☐

d) Do some physical activities such as running / swimming ☐

e) Perform some relaxing techniques ☐

f) Eat properly and select healthy food ☐

g) Get attached with positive people ☐

h) Keep positive self talk ☐

i) Arrive at the exam location early ☐

j) Imagine yourself well performing in the exam ☐

12. During exams you have used to:

a) Read the exam directions carefully ☐

b) Approach each question as a separated test ☐

c) Focus on your exam paper and do not let your thought wonder ☐

d) Take a pause and relax your muscles whenever you feel tired ☐

   e) Avoid being panic while others start submitting their papers ☐

13. After exam you have used to:

a) Do not think about your mistakes and focus your attention on the following exam ☐

b) Reward yourself for your efforts regardless the result ☐

c) Make improvement plan based on your previous clarifications / feedback ☐

14. According to your experience, do you use other strategies?

   a) Yes   ☐   b) No   ☐

If yes, mention them

………

………

Section Four: Correlation between Strategies Used to Lower Exam Anxiety and Its Impact on students' performance

15. How often do you use specific strategies to decrease exam anxiety?

a) Always ☐

b) Often ☐

c) Sometimes ☐

d) Rarely ☐

e) Never ☐

16. Are you aware of applying particular strategies to lower your exam anxiety?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

17. Do you think that teachers have a positive impact on treating the feeling of exams' fear?

a) Yes ☐   b) No ☐

- Justify you answer?

………

………

…………………………………………………………………………………………………….

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18. Do you think that there is a significant connectedness between the use of specific

strategies and the reduced exam stress?

   a) Yes   ☐

   b) No   ☐

19. Do you think that strategies used to reduce the feeling of stress do positively influence

your exam results?

   a) Yes   ☐   b) No   ☐

- Justify your answer?

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Thank you for your collaboration

Résumé

Dans le processus d'apprentissage des langues étrangères, l'anxiété de test est un problème important parmi les apprenants de langues étrangères L.L.E qui s'accompagne fréquemment d'une baisse des performances des examens. La présente thèse vise à examiner l'influence des stratégies d'apprentissage, qui aident les apprenants à faire face à l'anxiété des examens, où il sera avantageux d'améliorer leurs performances. Pour atteindre cette fin, une recherche de cas a été menée au Département des Langues Etrangères à Abdelhafid Boussouf, Centre Universitaire de Mila. Les données recueillies analysaient quantitativement en s'appuyant sur un questionnaire pour un échantillon de 80 apprenants de langues étrangères L.L.E de troisième année. De plus, nous émettons l'hypothèse que si les apprenants de langues étrangères L.L.E utilisent des stratégies d'apprentissage, pendant la période des examens, ils les aideraient à réduire l'anxiété des examens et à améliorer leurs résultats d'examen. De ce fait, les stratégies d'apprentissage utilisées par la majorité des apprenants influent positivement dans la réalisation des résultats satisfaits. A la fin, certains conseil ont été proposés aux enseignants et aux apprenants afin d'améliorer le niveau de la conscience sur l'importance d'utiliser ces stratèges pour mettre fin à cette dernier sur leur résultats.

Mots clés : L'anxiété, l'anxiété de examen, stratégies d'apprentissage, les résultats d'examen, les apprenants de langues étrangères L.L.E, la performance des apprenants.

ملخص

يمثل القلق أثناء فترة الاختبار هاجسا كبيرا بين متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية في عملية تعلم اللغات، والذي يرافقه في كثير من الأحيان تراجع في الأداء. تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى دراسة تأثير استراتيجيات التعلم والتي تساعد متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية في التعامل مع القلق والتوتر في فترة الامتحان بالتالي تعزيز أدائهم لتحقيق الأداء والنتيجة التي يطمحون إليها. للوصول إلى الهدف المرجو تم طرح بحث في قسم اللغات الأجنبية في المركز الجامعي عبد الحفيظ بوالصوف _ميلة_ يسعى لدراسة حالتهم في فترة الامتحانات . تم تحليل وإحصاء البيانات التي تم تحصيلهاوانتائجهم بالاعتماد على استبيان لعينة من 80 حالة من قسم متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية.بعد طرحنا للفرضية التي تنص على انه إذا تم الاعتماد على استراتيجيات التعلم في فترة الامتحانات ستكون قدرتهم على التحكم في القلق والتوتر أثناء اجتيازهم للاختبار عالية بالمقابل تعزيزوتحسين قدراتهم. تشير النتائج إلى أن طلاب السنة الثالثة شهدوا مستوى معين من القلق خاصة قبل الامتحانات في هذا الصدد فان استراتيجيات المطبقة لها دور فعلي وملحوظ على الحد من مشكل القلق أو التوتر.و بصدد هذا فان استراتيجياتالتعلمالتي تستعملمنقبل أغلبية المتمدرسين لها تأثير ايجابيفيتحقيق نتائج مرضية. في الأخير تم اقتراح بعض التوصيات لكل من الأساتذة والطلاب من اجل رفع مستوى الوعي لأهمية استعمال هذه الاستراتيجيات للحد من التوتر و تأثير هذا الأخير على نتائجهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوتر، توتر الاختبار، استراتيجيات التعلم، متعلمي اللغة الانجليزيةكلغة أجنبية، نتائجالاختبار، الأداء الطلاب.