

# A Qualitative Study on Iranian Test-takers' Anxiety in FCE Speaking Test: Investigating the Perceptions, Causes, and Strategies Applied

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## Abstract

This study aimed to explore the causes, consequences, strategies, and perceptions of Iranian learners in the FCE speaking test. The instruments employed in this study included an IELTS proficiency test, FCE speaking test, observation scheme, and learner interview in order to measure the male and females' perceptions of the quality of FCE tests, the causes of test anxiety in such tests and how they could be reduced or controlled. To this end, 42 female and 41 male Iranian English learners, studying FCE at a language institute in Tehran, were randomly chosen. Being homogenized via an IELTS test, 33 female and 32 male students, aged 15-17, were selected. While the 65 participants were taking part in the FCE speaking test, an observation was held on their performance. Finally, 10 female and 10 male participants were picked through convenience sampling and engaged in a semi-structured interview. The data gathered from the observations and interviews was content analyzed. The data analysis findings, using descriptive statistics, revealed that the females had a better perception toward four out of the six qualities of the test. The most disturbing criteria for their test anxiety were stress, being nervous, and becoming scared of not being able to pass. Some participants suggested having more practice tests before the exam to reduce test anxiety. Additionally, some symptoms of anxiety were selected to be observed to realize the reactions the participants showed when they became anxious. All of the selected signs except twisting hair were mostly spotted in the males. Moreover, the male participants showed more symptoms of test anxiety in all parts of the FCE speaking test. The findings of this study have generated a number of important implications for future practices which are significant for teachers, test developers, learners, and other stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *Test anxiety, FCE, test quality, learners' perception, speaking test*

## 1. Introduction

Test anxiety “refers to the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses that accompany concern

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performance and severe psychological difficulties. Moreover, Zeidner (1998) describes test anxiety as: “one of the key villains in the ongoing drama surrounding psycho-educational testing” (p. 4). It has been concluded by some researchers that the learners who are test anxious during the tests, perform more poorly on the exams than the less anxious students (Eysenck, 2001; Putwain, 2008). Besides, many studies such as Basso, Gallagher, Mikusa, and Rueter (2011) have concluded that gender can be an influential factor in the expansion and revelation of anxiety in assessment situations. Furthermore, it has been found that the female students' level of anxiety is higher in the exams in contrast with their male counterparts (Hembree, 1988). So, it can be concluded that test anxiety plays a crucial role not only in the exams, but also in the individuals' lives.

Yet, researchers have not reached an agreement with regard to the causes of these gender differences. For instance, some constituents such as neurodevelopmental, physiological, and hormonal elements have been assumed to be prominent in increasing the females' anxiety level when they are compared with the males (Basso et al., 2011). Moreover, different factors, including perceptions of test validity, test format, test length, time limit, test techniques, testing environment, along with the clarity of test instructions can have an impact on the learners' reactions to language tests (Young, 1999). Nonetheless, not much attention has been paid to this subject, specifically for the FCE speaking tests in Iran.

Scovel (1978) has mentioned that there are two types of anxiety, that is to say, facilitative and debilitating anxiety. These two are named “harmful” and “helpful” anxiety in Oxford's (1999) terminology. Facilitative anxiety motivates the student to “fight” the new learning task and makes the learner perceptively prepared to shift toward the learning task as a contest. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety motivates the student to “flee” the new learning task and stimulates the student thoughtfully to display evading behavior. It should be noted that other classifications of anxiety also exist in the literature. According to Liebert and Morris (1967), test anxiety has two constituents, “worry” and “emotionality”. “Worry” is theoretically recognized as “any cognitive expression of concern about one's own performance, whereas “emotionality” is defined as “autonomic reactions which tend to occur under examination stress” (p. 975). Worry is found to be inversely related to performance expectancy in a test condition at large; however, there is no relationship between emotionality and expectancy (Liebert & Morris, 1967). Worry is chiefly a cognitive concern about the outcomes of not passing. When the students perceive that they would succeed, thoughts of worry are minimized. On the contrary, they should be maximal in circumstances where the learners expect failure (Ibid).

Indeed, the causes of the gender differences in test anxiety and the male and female FCE test takers' perceptions of the quality of FCE tests have not been understood fully by the researchers, particularly on the FCE learners although such a study has been carried out in other proficiency exams as GRE tests (Powers, 1986). So such matters should be considered if teachers, learners, and even parents desire good scores from the tests. Hence, this study is aimed at exploring the causes, consequences, strategies, and perceptions of Iranian learners in the FCE speaking test as this matter is extremely significant for the instructors and students as well as teaching methods, syllabus design, and test development in English Language Teaching (ELT) classes.

## 2. Review of the Related Literature

Young (1992) has defined language anxiety as an event, which is psychological, complicated, and peculiar to language learning. Similarly, King, Ollendick, and Gullone (1991) tend to associate test anxiety with the repulsive emotional responses which can be identified with the subjective feelings of worry and uncertainty hastened under exam situations. They further assert that highly test anxious learners' performance has been affected by test anxiety, whereas lower test anxious subjects may demonstrate a more desirable performance.

Research on test anxiety dates back to 1914, Folin, Demis and Smillie's following Luria's (1932), Brown's (1938a, 1938b), and Neumann's (1933) research that surveyed test anxiety. In 1952, Mandler and Sarason conducted some surveys regarding the matter and developed the Test Anxiety Questionnaire to appraise peoples' test anxiety. Sarason later in 1958 scrutinized the relationship between test anxiety and learners' performance, which indicated a correlation between the two. From this perspective, highly anxious individuals are likely to indicate poorer performance in their examinations. In 1966, Spielbergger concluded that more test anxious learners were likely to form three out of one college dropouts compared with their less anxious counterparts. In 1967, Liebert and Morris concentrated their studies on test anxiety and concluded that worry and emotionality should be considered as the two major components in test anxiety. The 1980s saw more research concentrating on the models of test anxiety of which more concentration was allocated to attention and cognitive performance (Stöber & Pekrun, 2004).

After the 1980s, there were more studies on its observed signs such as perspiring and shivering, which are among the physiological reactions to test anxiety. Regarding the measurement of test anxiety, earlier studies used to measure test anxiety through physiological means (Folin et al., 1914). Nonetheless, scholars found physiological means results rather frustrating (Levitt, 1967). For instance, Hopkins and Chambers argued that "the physiological measures are essentially unrelated, and do not provide the basis for the identification of a preferred measure of anxiety" (1966, p. 189) by the time they examined five types of physiological measures which were used to measure anxiety. Afterwards, several standardized and revised instruments were developed to measure test anxiety, including the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI), which was developed by Spielbergger (1980). In many studies, it has been indicated that the female students experience more test anxiety than their male counterparts (Chapell et al., 2005; Zeidner, 1998).

Moreover, Ohata (2005) has stated that the rationale behind the students' nervousness in testing situations is being worried about getting low scores and not achieving their high prospects. In 1977, Hill and Eaton found what is effective in test anxiety and learners' performance relationship is the degree of time pressure in the examinations. Strongman (2000) found that test anxiety leads to average differences, both in cognitive performance and individual differences in performing areas. Sargolzaei, Samari, and Keykhany (2003) argue that highly anxious learners are likely to know the answers; however, their anxiety thwarts their attempt to use their knowledge. Rezazadeh and Tavakoli (2009) surveyed the relationship among gender, academic achievement, years of study, and the levels of test anxiety among Iranian learners. They used 110 undergraduate subjects from Isfahan University in Iran. They came to the conclusion that the females were more test anxious than their male counterparts.

Yet, researchers have not reached an agreement with regard to the causes of these gender differences and test scores. Nonetheless, such a research has not been carried out on the FCE speaking test performance of students anywhere.

It has been stated by Spielberger and Vagg (1995) that learners whose test anxiety is high seem to have “greater activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system, and more self-centered worry cognition and test-irrelevant thoughts that interfere with attention and performance” (p. 7) throughout the exams than their less test anxious counterparts. As a result, this study helps the students understand the negative consequences of test anxiety in their lives, bodies, and performances; hence, they will be motivated to diminish their level of test anxiety. In addition, when instructors know that test anxiety can have negative consequences on the performance of their learners, they will endeavor to diminish the anxiety of their students. Consequently, it can have a great impact on their choice of materials and methodology used in classrooms. Besides, learning to budget time based on the amount of time allotted to complete the test can be helpful for students to improve their performance on the exams. Furthermore, defeating test anxiety necessities comprehending its signs and the learners' academic obscurity with regard to their gender. Accordingly, by understanding the female and male FCE test takers' perceptions about the causes of their test anxiety and their perceptions of the quality of the FCE speaking tests, the stakeholders can supply meticulous and contemporary approaches and teaching methods regarding gender differences. Accordingly, the analysis of the following research questions is considered significant to be dealt with in the present study:

*Q1. To what extent are the male and female FCE test takers' perceptions of the quality of FCE tests related to their level of test anxiety?*

*Q2. What are the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests and how can they be controlled or reduced?*

### **3. Theoretical Framework of the Study**

A number of distinguishing theoretical models and perspectives, according to Zeidner (1998), have considered the nature, antecedents, correlates, and consequences of test anxiety. In this regard, test anxiety conceptual models have had a penchant for drive-oriented and arousal perspectives (Mandler & Sarason, 1952) and further shifted to cognitive-attentional formulations (Wine, 1971), mainly to those which have highlighted skill deficits (Culler & Holahan, 1980). More recently, self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1991), self-worth (Covington, 1992), and transactional perspectives (Spielberger & Vagg, 1987) have been taken into account and applied to test anxiety research winning great respect among the scholars.

A thorough theory of test anxiety must identify the factors that mediate the impacts of worry and emotionality on performance such as “the nature of the intrapersonal perceptions and cognitions and of the information-processing and retrieval mechanisms” (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995, p. 11). Concurrently, the vital correlates of test anxiety, such as “study habits and attitudes (study skills), test-taking skills (test wiseness), and task-irrelevant thoughts” should be recognized (Ibid).

This study took advantage of transactional perspectives of Spielberger and Vagg (1987). Transactional Process Model is a theoretical framework for investigating and assessing “(a) the effects of examination stress on the internal emotional and cognitive processes that influence test

anxiety and (b) the adverse effects of worry and emotionality on information processing and academic achievement” (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995, p. 3). In particular, Spielberger (1975) distinguishes between a series of incidents that occur throughout an evaluative condition. These incidents consist of stress related to examination circumstances (stressor), the test’s subjective interpretation as more or less intimidating for an individual (threat), and the emotional conditions aroused in exam circumstances. During the examination, “stressor” and “threat” represent important elements of a temporal sequence of incidents that cause the arousal of an anxious reaction (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Participants and Research Setting

The participants of this study were 33 female and 32 male Iranian English students who had been studying EFL for 3-5 years at Simin Language Institute in Tehran. They were all FCE learners and L1 speakers of Persian who were studying at the upper-intermediate level in the 15-17 age range. None of the participants had the experience of living in an English speaking country. Indeed, the focus of FCE courses at Simin Language Institute is on reading, writing, use of English, listening, and speaking and it takes about one year and a half to be completed.

Initially, 83 participants (42 females and 41 males) were chosen according to the random sampling technique. Random sampling is one type of probability sampling (Dörnyei, 2007). The key component of probability sampling is “random sampling”. This involves selecting members of the population to be included in the sample on a completely random basis, a bit like drawing numbers from a hat. The assumption underlying this procedure is that the selection is based entirely on probability and chance, thus minimizing the effects of any extraneous or subjective factors. As a result, a sufficiently large sample should contain subjects with characteristics similar to the population as a whole. Although this is rarely fully achieved, the rule of thumb is that random samples are almost always more representative than non-random samples. (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 97)

After homogenizing, 65 participants (33 females and 32 males), whose scores were one standard deviation (SD) above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean (based on the participants’ IELTS scores), were selected for this study.

Moreover, according to the convenient sampling technique, 20 students (10 males and 10 females) were chosen for the interview section of this study. Convenience or opportunity sampling is one type of non-probability sampling (Dörnyei, 2007).

### 4.2. Instrumentation

The instruments employed in this study included an IELTS proficiency test, FCE speaking test, observation scheme, and learner interview. It is worth mentioning that these instruments were used to reply to the queries of this research and to control some variables which might have an influence on the reliability and validity of the study such as the IELTS proficiency test.

#### 4.2.1. IELTS (International English Language Testing System)

In order to homogenize the participants, a retrieved version of IELTS test, IELTS Practice Tests Plus (2001) was given to the participants of this study (n = 83, 42 females and 41 males) to determine their general language proficiency. It is worth mentioning that the IELTS test is a

standardized test and as a result, its reliability is checked by the stakeholders before it is distributed to the test takers. The descriptive statistics of these participants' IELTS scores are presented in Tables 1 and 2, once altogether and the other time separately based on the two genders.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for all Initial Participants*

	<b>Statisti</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
Mean	5.87	.06
Median	6.00	
Variance	.38	
IELTS Std. Deviation	.61	
Minimum	4.50	
Maximum	7.00	

Table 2. *Descriptive Statistics for Males and Female Participants' IELTS Scores*

<b>Gender</b>		<b>Statistic</b>	
<b>Std. Error</b>			
Female	Mean	5.88	.09
	Median	6.00	
	Variance	.38	
	IELTS Std. Deviation	.62	
	Minimum	4.50	
	Maximum	7.00	
Male	Mean	5.87	.09
	Median	6.00	
	Variance	.38	
	Std. Deviation	.62	
	Minimum	4.50	
	Maximum	7.0	

Based on Table 1, the mean IELTS score of all the participants is 5.87, and the standard deviation is .61. This means that all the IELTS scores almost within 5.26 and 6.5 (n = 65, 33 females and 32 males) were chosen as the homogeneous scores and considered in the final phase of the study.

#### 4.2.2. *FCE Speaking Test (First Certificate in English)*

To measure the participants' level of test anxiety, the perceptions of the male and female participants as to the quality of FCE tests, the causes of test anxiety in such tests, and the ways

through which they could be reduced, the participants of this study took part in an FCE speaking test taken from Cambridge ESOL (2012). According to Cambridge ESOL (2012), the FCE speaking test includes four sections, and takes about 14 minutes. There are two examiners (two raters) in the test who assess two test takers in each turn. In this regard, one examiner takes the role of the interlocutor and the assessor and the other takes the role of the assessor who remains silent during the test. The first phase is a conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate about ordinary everyday language, and takes about 3 minutes. An “individual long-turn” for each test taker constitutes the second part in which one candidate talks and the other test taker remains silent during his/her talk and then gives short answers to the interlocutor’s questions. In this section, each candidate is in turn given a pair of photographs in which they have to describe, compare and contrast, or express their opinions. Each candidate is provided with a minute to present their talk while the other candidate has about 20 seconds to give a brief comment. A reciprocal conversation between the candidates with the purpose of sustaining the interaction makes up the third part, which takes about 3 minutes. In this part, the candidates are provided with spoken directions with written and visual stimuli so as to retain the conversation by exchanging opinions, expressing and justifying ideas, and drawing a conclusion from their arguments. The last part concentrates on discursive practices relevant to the subject matter mentioned in the preceding part. In this section, the test takers should discuss a matter and support their attitudes using argumentative skills like agreeing and/or disagreeing. It takes about 4 minutes (Ibid). Indeed, the FCE test reliability is checked by the stakeholders before it is distributed to the test takers since it is a standardized test.

#### *4.2.3. Interview*

The interview used in this study consists of 19 questions intending to measure the male and female participants’ perceptions toward test anxiety, test taking strategies used by them, the FCE test takers’ perceptions of the quality of FCE tests, the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests, and the ways through which they can be controlled or reduced (Appendix A). It is crucial to mention that the interview was conducted face-to-face and it took about 20 minutes to be completed. The interview questions were content questions and semi-structured and were designed by the researcher. Indeed, the students were interviewed voluntarily based on the convenient sampling technique. In order to check the reliability of the interview questions, they were examined and confirmed, in terms of language and content appropriateness, by 3 EFL instructors. Furthermore, 2 interview sessions were conducted with 2 FCE students. The results revealed high reliability and agreement in the participants’ responses. The data gathered from the interviews was subject to content analysis, in which the information was transcribed, summarized, categorized, and the frequencies were measured.

#### *4.2.4. Observation*

The observations made in this study were formal and structured. It is worth mentioning that in this study, observation required real-time coding. The observation form was designed by the researcher and it was carried out on the performance of all the participants of the study, while they were taking the FCE speaking test (Appendix B). Two raters marked the observation

scheme and reported the results of the observations before its administration. The Correlation Coefficient between the raters' comments and marking represented the reliability of the observation scheme ( $r = .88$ ).

Indeed, some symptoms of anxiety were chosen including physical signs of anxiety, wiggling/ squirming in a chair, chewing on a pencil, twisting hair, playing with clothes, and perspiring so as to comprehend the reactions the participants showed when they became anxious. A detailed report of what they did and the test taking strategies they used during the FCE speaking test were written down. In fact, each student was observed while he/she was taking part in the FCE speaking test at Simin Language Institute. The data obtained from the observations was subject to content analysis, in which the information was summarized, categorized, and the frequencies were measured. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, FCE speaking tests contain four parts, and all of these parts were observed to find the participants' level of anxiety in each section.

The observation, used as a data collection method in this study, intended to find out which gender indicated a higher level of test anxiety, the male and female FCE participants' test-taking strategies used, and the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests. It took about 32 sessions and each observation took about 15 minutes.

### **4.3. Data Collection Procedures**

In order to conduct this study and find out the answers to the research questions posed, five steps were taken as follows:

#### *4.3.1. Pilot Study*

The interview questions and observation scheme were pilot tested before they were given to the participants to check their reliability indices. To check the reliability of the interview questions at the pilot phase of the study, they were examined and confirmed, in terms of language and content appropriateness, by 3 EFL instructors. Furthermore, 2 interview sessions were conducted with 2 FCE students. The results revealed high reliability and agreement in the participants' responses. Furthermore, two raters graded the observation scheme and accounted the observation results before its operation. The Correlation Coefficient between the raters' comments and marking revealed the reliability of the observation scheme ( $r = .88$ ). It is worth mentioning that the FCE and IELTS tests reliabilities are checked by the stakeholders before they are distributed to the test takers since they are standardized tests.

#### *4.3.2. Homogenizing Process*

A retrieved version of IELTS test, IELTS Practice Tests Plus (2001) was given to the participants of this study ( $n = 83$ , 42 females and 41 males) to measure their general language proficiency and ensure their homogeneity. In order to come up with homogeneous participants in terms of language proficiency, those participants who scored within one standard deviation below and above the mean were chosen as the final participants of the study.

#### *4.3.3. FCE Speaking Test*

All the participants of this study ( $n = 65$ , 33 females and 32 males) took part in an FCE speaking test. The FCE Speaking test consists of four sections. Indeed, it takes about 14 minutes. There are two raters in the test who assess two students in each turn. In this vein, one rater acts as the



interlocutor and the assessor and the other rater acts the assessor who remains silent during the test.

#### *4.3.4. Observation*

Each participant was observed while having the FCE speaking test at Simin Language Institute. A detailed description of what they did and the test taking strategies used by them while taking the FCE speaking test were written down as field-notes. In fact, as stated previously, the FCE speaking test consists of four parts, and all of these parts were observed to find the participants' level of anxiety in each section. The observations made in this study set out to realize which gender indicated a higher level of test anxiety, the male and female FCE participants' test-taking strategies used, and the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests. The data obtained from the observation was subject to content analysis, in which the information was summarized, categorized, and the frequencies were measured. It is crucial to mention that some signs of anxiety were picked, such as physical signs of anxiety, wiggling/ squirming in a chair, chewing on a pencil, twisting hair, playing with clothes, and perspiring to understand the reactions the students demonstrated when they became anxious. It took about 32 sessions and each observation took about 15 minutes.

#### *4.3.5. Interview*

At the final stage of this study, according to the convenient sampling technique, 20 students (n= 20, 10 females and 10 males) were interviewed in order to realize their attitudes toward test anxiety, their test taking strategies, and perceptions of the quality of FCE tests. The interview used in this study entailed 19 queries, which required about 20 minutes to be responded. It is worth mentioning that the interview was conducted face-to-face and all the participants' voices were sound recorded using a Digital Voice Recorder (DVR). Then, the data gathered from the interview was content analyzed. That is to say, the recordings were transcribed, summarized, categorized, and the frequencies were measured.

## **5. Data Analysis**

The measurement reports were derived from semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 participants (n= 20, 10 females and 10 males) and observations done with 65 participants (n= 65, 33 females and 32 males). The responses obtained from the interviews and observations were subject to content analysis. To be more precise, in order to analyze the information, first, the data was (transcribed for the interview), coded, categorized, and charted (Appendices C & D). Subsequently, an across-group content analysis was carried out and the results were charted so as to find out the main themes. Ultimately, according to the themes, all the data was analyzed and interpreted using frequency counts and descriptive statistics. The data was computer analyzed using SPSS 22 for windows and Microsoft Excel version 2010 to find a summary of the basic descriptive statistics of the IELTS scores.

## **6. Results**

### *6.1. Interview Results*

To assess the extent to which the male and female FCE test takers' perceptions of the quality of FCE tests were related to their level of test anxiety, six FCE test qualities were selected for this

study to be analyzed. These qualities entailed test length, time limitations, content validity, test instructions, test techniques, and testing environment.

As a warm up, the participants were asked about their feelings about learning English and using it in the classroom as well as their reasons for that. 80% of the females and 70% of the males mentioned that they felt pleased and happy since they found this language useful, enjoyable, and lovable. On the other hand, 20% of the females and 30% of the males declared that they did not like English, but they thought it was necessary for them to learn that language.

Regarding the first quality of the FCE speaking tests, that is to say, test length, all the participants mentioned that it had taken them about 15 minutes. However, 80% of the females stated that the time was optimal in comparison with 70% of the males who also confirmed the optimality of time. Time limit was considered as another quality of the FCE speaking tests. In this regard, all the participants agreed that there was a specific time limit set for expressing their ideas on a certain subject. Nonetheless, 80% of the females and 70% of the males declared that they did not have any time management problems.

Regarding content validity, as another quality of FCE tests, all the participants stated that the topics raised were in accordance with the topics they had encountered and practiced in the class. As to test instructions, 70% of the females and 60% of the males mentioned that the speaking tasks and discussions (instructions) were clear.

Test techniques were considered as another quality of FCE speaking tests. Regarding the techniques or strategies employed while taking the FCE speaking test, 30% of the females and 40% of the males tended to ask for the repetition if they failed to understand the question. The other participants had the tendency to use other techniques such as guessing the answers and paraphrasing words if they did not know the words in English. Brain storming, time management, trying to be relaxed, and not thinking about the results of the exam were among other strategies exploited by the above-mentioned test takers.

The testing environment was the last quality assessed in the FCE speaking tests. Hereupon, all the participants agreed that the interview environment of the FCE test was desirable.

To sum up, the female participants had a better attitude toward the four qualities of the FCE speaking tests than their male counterparts; however, regarding content validity, both the males and females stated that the topics raised were in accordance with the topics they had encountered and practiced in class. Likewise, with reference to the testing environment, both the males and females agreed that the interview environment of the FCE test was desirable.

In order to assess the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests and the ways through which they can be controlled or reduced, the researcher commenced the interview with a type of warm-up describing the purpose of the study. This was continued with the list of main questions. In this regard, when the participants were asked about the most disturbing criterion about speaking English in the class, 40% of the females and 50% of the males mentioned that stress was the main cause of their test anxiety. On the other hand, when the participants were asked about their feelings when they were interviewed for an English test, 70% of the females and 80% of the males declared that they felt very anxious and stressed out because they were scared of the interview exams. In particular, 30% of the females and 40% of the males stated that the most disturbing criterion about speaking English in the oral interview exams was stress since they

were worried about their test scores. When they were asked about the strategies they used when their mind went blank, 50% of the females declared that they thought more and more to remember something and 40% of the males stated that they did nothing. Regarding their feelings

when they failed to understand what the interviewer was saying, 50% of the females and 60% of the males stated that they became angry and nervous.

When the participants were asked whether or not they were afraid of making mistakes or errors while they were speaking English and what their reasons were in case their answers were positive, 30% of the females and 60% of the males said they were afraid of making mistakes or errors while they were speaking English because of becoming anxious. On the other hand, when the participants were asked whether or not they would seek help from others in stressful situations, 80% of the females and 70% of the males said yes and they declared that they used strategies, such as asking their teacher, friends, and relatives. When the participants were asked about the reasons of becoming nervous or anxious before or while using English in oral interview exams, 30% of the females and 40% of the males mentioned that they were scared of not being able to pass. Finally, when the participants were asked about their feelings when the interview was over and their suggestions to control or reduce oral anxiety in oral interview exams, 60% of the females and 80% of the males declared that they felt anxious because of forgetting to mention some of the points and 20% of the females and 10% of the males stated they felt satisfied, relaxed, and happy. Moreover, they suggested having more interview sessions (practice tests) before the exam. On the other hand, 20% of the females and 10% of the males declared that their stress had been reduced when the interview was over.

In conclusion, stress, being nervous and angry because of becoming afraid of interview exams, and becoming scared of not being able to pass were among the most disturbing criteria for test anxiety in FCE speaking tests. Among the strategies used by the participants, thinking more and more to remember something and using strategies such as asking their teacher, friends, and relatives were mostly mentioned by the participants. Some participants suggested having more interview sessions (practice tests) before the exam in order to control or reduce their test anxiety.

## *6.2. Results of Observations*

Each part of the FCE speaking test was observed and recorded separately in order to be evaluated. In addition, the female and male participants' observations were analyzed and compared separately so as to better understand their level of test anxiety. FCE speaking tests contain four parts. In all the parts, generally, a level of test anxiety was observed in 80% of the females and 90% of the males.

In particular, in order to realize what reactions the participants show when they become anxious, at the beginning, some symptoms of anxiety were chosen to be observed while the participants were taking part in the FCE speaking test, including physical signs of anxiety, wiggling/ squirming in a chair, chewing on a pencil, twisting hair, playing with clothes, and perspiring. The first symptoms were the physical signs of anxiety. These signs were shown in 70% of the females and 80% of the males. Wiggling/ squirming in a chair was noticed in 60% of the females and 70% of the males. Chewing on a pencil was reported in 20% of the females and 30% of the males. Twisting hair was another symptom of anxiety which was spotted in 30% of

the females and 10% of the males. Playing with clothes was observed in 20% of the females and 30% of the males. Perspiring was also noticed in 20% of the females and 30% of the males. Last but not least, the test-taking strategies used by the participants appeared to be paraphrasing words, taking some notes, and asking for the repetition. Paraphrasing words was reported in 40% of the females and 40% of the males. Moreover, taking some notes was spotted in 30% of the

females and 20% of the males, and finally, asking for the repetition was noticed in 30% of the females and 40% of the males.

Indeed, the data gathered from the interviews and observations were indicative of the fact that in most cases a great deal of anxiety was observed in the male test takers. Therefore, it can be inferred that the males are more anxious than females on the whole. Indeed, the female participants have a better attitude toward the four out of the six qualities of the FCE speaking test than their male counterparts. Indeed, the observation results demonstrated that the females were less anxious than males except in twisting hair.

## 7. Discussion of the Findings

With respect to the first research question, six FCE test qualities were selected to be analyzed by the use of an interview. These qualities entailed test length, time limitations, content validity, test instructions, test techniques, and testing environment. Each of these qualities was scrutinized separately in order to see the extent to which the male and female FCE test takers' perceptions of quality of FCE tests were related to their level of test anxiety. In brief, the interview results were almost in accordance with the results of the observations. That is to say, the female participants had better attitudes toward four out of the six qualities of the FCE speaking tests than their male counterparts. However, regarding content validity, both the males and females stated that the topics raised were in accordance with the topics they had encountered and practiced in class and for testing environment, both the males and females agreed that the interview environment of the FCE test was desirable.

The researchers, which have exclusively concentrated on the association between anxiety and oral performance in a foreign or second language testing circumstances, are minimal. Various elements, which have an effect on the reactions of learners to language tests, embrace perceptions of test validity, test format, test length, time limit, test techniques, testing environment, as well as the lucidity of test instructions as indicated in the studies (Young, 1999). In 1977, Hill and Eaton found what is effective in test anxiety and learners' performance relationship is the degree of time pressure in the examinations. Similarly, Schwarzer, Ploeg, and Speilberger (1982) stated that "test anxiety may play an indirect role in performance, depending on the amount of time available for completing an examination and the degree to which an individual has prepared for the task at hand" (p. 6).

With regard to the second research question about the causes of test anxiety in FCE speaking tests and the ways through which they can be controlled or reduced, as declared by the participants, stress, becoming nervous and angry because of being afraid of interview exams along with becoming scared of not being able to pass were among the most disturbing criteria for test anxiety in FCE speaking tests. Among the strategies used by the participants, thinking more and more to remember something, using strategies such as asking their teacher, friends, and

relatives were mostly mentioned by the participants. Some participants suggested having more interview sessions (practice tests) before the exam in order to control or reduce test anxiety.

The results of the second research question can be explained as follows. Regarding the possible sources of language anxiety, Young (1991) has proposed a list in a review of the literature on anxiety in language learning. Six potential sources of language anxiety were introduced by the author, some of which relate to the student, some to the instructor, and others to the instructional practices. She claimed that language anxiety can stem from: "(1) personal and

interpersonal anxieties; (2) learner beliefs about language learning; (3) instructor beliefs about language teaching; (4) instructor-learner interactions; (5) classroom procedures; and (6) language testing" (p. 427). Young (1994) also explicated that these sources of language anxiety are interconnected. Moreover, Liebert and Morris in 1967 concentrated their studies on test anxiety and concluded that worry and emotionality should be considered as the two major components in test anxiety. More significantly, according to Wine (1980), the "attention" of individuals, who have a high or low test anxiety, is influenced by evaluative conditions in opposite ways. Wine (1980) hypothesized that the attention of the more test anxious learners was directed to their thoughts and feelings "inward". On the other hand, the attention of the less anxious individuals was more focused on the task they were doing.

Stöber (2004) considered four facets of test anxiety associated with the learners' strategies to deal with test anxiety in the pre-test phase, i.e. worry, emotionality, interference, and lack of confidence. The study-skills deficit advocates declared that the paucity of study and test-taking skills can eventuate in test anxiety in learners. In this vein, the learners' performance deficits should not be considered as an evanescent intervention. Conversely, it is the learners' insufficient information organization or inadequate retrieval of the learned materials that leads to test anxiety (Ziedener, 1998).

Benjamin et al. (1981) argued that the performance deficiency of highly test anxious individuals is because of the problems in the encoding phase of the novel material which should be acquired, difficulties in storing the new material in their mind, or setbacks in retrieving it during the exam.

Furthermore, the perception and evaluations of the test condition would be affected by the test-taking skills that a learner has developed to deal with exams (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995). When a student takes part in an exam, depending on the student, the test condition would at first be discerned as more or less menacing. This first perception would be instantly followed by an interpretive evaluation of the test condition. The learners would experience a proliferation in state anxiety, vain and self-disparaging strain cognition, and other test-irrelevant thoughts, depending on the extent to which an exam is deemed intimidating. This may cause extra negative feedback that further changes the evaluation of a test condition as more or less terrorizing (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995).

Strongman (2000) found that test anxiety leads to average differences, both in cognitive performance and individual differences in performing areas. All in all, Huberty (2009) highlights the role of worry in all definitions of test anxiety and argues that very high levels of worry is likely to impede social, personal, and academic performance though everyone is susceptible to sporadic worry.

It is worth mentioning that the data gathered from the interviews is almost in accordance with the information gained from the observations. To begin with, in order to realize what

reactions the participants showed when they became anxious, some symptoms of anxiety were chosen to be observed while the participants were taking part in the FCE speaking test, including physical signs of anxiety, wiggling/ squirming in a chair, chewing on a pencil, twisting hair, playing with clothes, and perspiring. All of these signs except twisting hair were mostly spotted in the males. That is to say, twisting hair was noticed in 30 percent of the females and 10 percent of the males. In the test-taking strategies used by the participants in the FCE speaking tests, 40 percent of the females and 40 percent of the males paraphrased words; 30 percent of the females and 20 percent of the males took some notes, and finally, 30 percent of the females and 40

percent of the males asked for the repetition. Besides, FCE speaking tests contain four parts. In all parts of the FCE speaking test, the males showed more symptoms of test anxiety in comparison to the females.

Moreover, this study revealed that the females had a better attitude toward four out of the six qualities of the FCE speaking tests than the males. Ultimately, stress, becoming nervous and angry because of being afraid of the interview exams, and becoming scared of not being able to pass were among the most disturbing criteria for test anxiety in the FCE speaking tests. Among the strategies used by the participants, thinking more and more to remember something, using strategies such as asking their teacher, friends, and relatives were mostly mentioned by the participants. Last but not least, some participants suggested having more interview sessions (practiced tests) before the exam in order to control or reduce their test anxiety.

## **8. Conclusions and Implications**

For the first research question, six FCE test qualities were selected to be analyzed using an interview. These qualities entailed test length, time limitations, content validity, test instructions, test techniques, and testing environment. Each of these qualities was scrutinized separately in order to see the extent to which the male and female FCE test takers' perceptions of the quality of the FCE tests were related to their level of test anxiety. In brief, the interview results were almost in accordance with the results of the observations. That is to say, the female participants had better and higher attitudes towards four qualities of the FCE speaking tests than their male counterparts; however, regarding content validity, both the males and females stated that the topics raised were in accordance with the topics they had encountered and practiced in class. With reference to the testing environment, both the males and females agreed that the interview environment of the FCE test was desirable

With respect to the second research question about the causes of test anxiety in the FCE speaking tests and the ways through which they can be controlled or reduced, stress, becoming nervous and angry because of being afraid of interview exams along with becoming scared of not being able to pass were among the most disturbing criteria for test anxiety in FCE speaking tests. Among the strategies used by the participants, thinking more and more to remember something, using strategies such as asking their teacher, friends, and relatives were mostly mentioned by the participants. Some participants suggested having more interview sessions (practiced tests) before the exam in order to control or reduce test anxiety.

Last but not least, in order to realize what reactions the participants showed when they became anxious, some symptoms of anxiety were chosen to be observed while the participants were taking part in the FCE speaking test, including physical signs of anxiety, wiggling/

squirming in a chair, chewing on a pencil, twisting hair, playing with clothes, and perspiring. All of these signs except twisting hair were mostly spotted in the males. To be more precise, twisting hair was noticed in 30% of the females and 10% of the males. Regarding the test-taking strategies used by the participants in the FCE speaking tests, 40% of the females and 40% of the males paraphrased words; 30% of the females and 20% of the males took some notes, and finally, 30% of the females and 40% of the males asked for the repetition. FCE speaking tests contain four parts. In all parts of the FCE speaking test, the males showed more symptoms of test anxiety in comparison with the females.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study. It may be concluded that the increased level of test anxiety may result in decreased academic performance. The current study supports the fact that the use of some special techniques and strategies, such as creating a positive classroom environment, providing training in study skills and test taking strategies, applying meditation program, employing physical activity, and helping students heighten their confidence, can effectively lead to the reduction of test anxiety. Indeed, instructors are in a unique position in order to provide guidance and mentorship for their students to help them understand test anxiety and its negative impact in their performances and even their personal lives. Researchers have shown that these strategies are most influential when used concurrently with one another strategy (Ergene, 2003). It means that instructors can incorporate numerous test-anxiety management strategies into their regular program. In today' academic environment, taking part in the standardized tests like the FCE speaking test is a reality that most of the teachers and students must encounter as part of their educational experience.

It can also be inferred from this study that using pre-task rehearsal, practice tests, reviewing notes before the examinations, emphasizing success rather than failure can be helpful in decreasing test anxiety and in having a better performance. Likewise, this study showed that teachers can teach the learners who face test anxiety to apply test anxiety techniques such as praying, taking deep breaths, concentrating on the past successes as well as teaching them to use effective test-taking skills prior to and during the exam. These strategies can assist the learners to stay stress-free, focused, and motivated to be successful in the tests. In this sense, teachers can aid test anxious students handling their feelings. Another important point to be mentioned here is that in order to cope with the fear of forgetting important information, instructors can teach their students to list the key points, definitions, formulas, dates, and the names that are expected to be exploited during the test. The learners also can enhance their performance on the tests by learning to budget their time based on the amount of time given to them to accomplish the test, by knowing the particular point values related to the different queries and parts, and the levels of complexity of the diverse test items. When constructing a test, the stakeholders can highlight the crucial aspects of the test directions and items so that the students can understand specific details, time, length, and space limitations. Also, the stakeholders who are worried about the memory of the learners should take some actions like developing programs such as counseling and psychotherapy.

Finally yet importantly, test anxiety on the standardized tests like the FCE speaking test will continue to make trouble for some students. Hence, it may encourage the researchers to pursue their research on this matter until all learners are able to display their most excellent performance. For instance, there is a need for further study with other age ranges. In addition,

other studies can be carried out on the other skills of FCE tests rather than speaking. Moreover, other studies can be accomplished on the participants with other levels of proficiency rather than FCE learners.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Interview Questions

1. What are your feelings about learning English and using English in classrooms? Why?
2. What disturbs you the most about speaking English in the classroom? Why?
3. How do you feel when you are interviewed for an English test?
4. What disturbs you the most about speaking English in oral interview exams? Why?
5. Tell me what happened during your FCE speaking test?
6. How long did the FCE interview take? Was it optimal?
7. Was there a specific time limit set for expressing your ideas on a certain subject? Did you have any time management problems?
8. Were the topics raised in accordance with the topics you had already encountered and practiced in the class?
9. Were the speaking tasks and discussions (instructions) clear?
10. What techniques or strategies did you employ when you took the FCE speaking test?
11. How did you find the interview environment of the FCE test?
12. What did you do when your mind went blank?
13. How did you feel when you failed to understand what the interviewer was saying and what did you do then?
14. How did you feel when you made a mistake while speaking?
15. Are you afraid of making mistakes or errors while speaking English? Why?
16. What happens to you when you are in a stressful situation when speaking English?
17. In stressful situations, do you seek solutions from others for help? Who? How?
18. What do you think are the reasons why you get nervous or anxious before or while using English in oral interview exams?
19. How did you feel when the interview was over? What suggestions would you like to offer in oral interview exams to control or reduce oral anxiety?

## Appendix B

### Observation Form

Participants Males- M Females- F	Any observed anxiety?	Any observed anxiety?	Any observed anxiety?	Any observed anxiety?	Physical Signs of Anxiety	Wiggling/ Squirming in a Chair	Chewing on a Pencil	Twisting Hair	Playing with Clothes	Other	Test-taking Strategies Used
	<b>Part 1</b> of the FCE (general questions)	<b>Part 2</b> of the FCE (an individual long turn)	<b>Part 3</b> of the FCE (a two-way conversation between the candidate s)	<b>Part 4</b> of the FCE (discussion/ questions/ answers)							
											Part 1
											Part 2
											Part 3
											Part 4

Notes

## Appendix C

### Interview Content Analysis of the Males and Females

#### Interview Content Analysis of the Males

Questions			Responses	Frequencies (%)
1	Total impression	Feelings about learning English and using English in classrooms and reasons	a) Feeling good and happy since this language is useful, enjoyable and lovable	70
			b) Not like English but think it is necessary to learn	30
2	Causes of test anxiety	The most disturbing criterion about speaking English in the classroom and reasons	a) Not being able to find the right word while speaking and it stops the conversation and causes stress	30
			b) Topics since some of them are so hard and nothing can be said about them and sometimes topics are not enjoyable	10
			c) Shyness since I am coy	-
			d) Stress, not know its reason	50
			e) Teachers since they cause stress	10
3	Reactions toward the speaking test	Feelings when being interviewed for an English test	a) Relaxed and not anxious, having a good feeling	20
			b) Feeling very anxious and having stress because of being scared of interview exams	80
4	Causes of test anxiety	The most disturbing criterion about speaking English in oral interview exams and reasons	a) Becoming angry because of not understanding some of the meanings	20
			b) Questions because of thinking of not being able to answer some of them	10
			c) Shyness since I am coy	-
			d) Stress because of the score	40
			e) Forgetting words because of not being able to continue conversation	10
			f) Stress because of the interviewer accent	20
5	Test content and procedure	FCE speaking test description	a) The test consisted of 4 parts and there were 2 examiners there. One of them did not raise any questions at all. It took about 15 minutes. Two testees took the test simultaneously. Some questions were raised and some pictures were shown to talk about.	70
			b) Hands trembling	-
			c) Having stress	20

			d) Perspiring	10
6	FCE Test length	The length of the FCE interview, whether or not optimal	a) About 15 minutes, yes.	70
			b) About 15 minutes, it was short	30
7	Time limitations	Whether or not a specific time limit set for expressing ideas on a certain subject, Whether or not having any time management problems	a) Yes, no	70
			b) Yes, yes	30
8	Content validity	Whether or not the topics raised in accordance with the topics encountered and practiced in the class	Yes, they were	100
9	Test instructions	Whether or not the speaking tasks and discussions (instructions) clear	a) Yes, they were	60
			b) Not all of them	40
10	Test techniques	Techniques or strategies employed while taking the FCE speaking test	a) Asking for the repetition if not understand the question	40
			b) Paraphrasing words if did not know a word in English	10
			c) Guessing	20
			d) Brain storming	10
			e) Time management	10
			f) Trying to be relaxed and not thinking about the results of the exam	10
11	Testing environment	The interview environment of the FCE test	It was good	100
12	Strategies, solutions	The strategies used when mind went blank	a) Thinking more and more to remember something	30
			b) Nothing	40
			c) Trying to concentrate on the subject	30
13	Test-taking strategies, controlling test anxiety	Feelings when failed to understand what the interviewer was saying and actions taken	a) Becoming angry and nervous and asking the interviewer	60
			b) Feeling embarrassed, trying to understand, but it was not satisfying	30
			c) Feeling relaxed and asking the interviewer	10
14	Test anxiety	Feelings when made a mistake while speaking	a) Becoming angry, anxious	60
			b) Becoming embarrassed	30

			c) Feeling relaxed and having confidence and continuing to speak	10
15	Causes of test anxiety	Whether or not being afraid of making mistakes or errors while speaking English and reasons	a) No, because of knowing that my English would be better in the future	10
			b) No, since it is not important for me	10
			c) Yes, because of becoming anxious	60
			d) Yes, since I am coy	-
			e) Yes, because of score	20
16	Test anxiety	Reactions when being in a stressful situation when speaking English	a) Losing control	30
			b) Hands perspire	10
			c) Becoming worried	40
			d) Forgetting what wanted to say	10
			e) Telling myself to be relaxed since nothing bad would happen	-
			f) Making a lot of mistakes while speaking	10
17	Solutions, strategies	Whether or not seeking solutions from others for help in stressful situations, who?, how?	a) Yes, asking from the teacher, friends and relatives	70
			b) No, I do not	30
18	Causes of test anxiety	The reasons of becoming nervous or anxious before or while using English in oral interview exams	a) The score	20
			b) Shyness	-
			c) Becoming scared of not being able to pass	40
			d) Not knowing a word in English	20
			e) Thinking about not being able to perform well	10
			f) Lack of preparation and not being ready for the exam	10
19	Causes of test anxiety, so solutions	Feelings when the interview was over and suggestions to control or reduce oral anxiety in oral interview exams	a) Feeling satisfied, relaxed and happy, to have more interview sessions (practiced tests) before the exam	10
			b) Feeling anxious because of forgetting to mention some points	80
			c) Stress had been reduced	10

Interview Content Analysis of the Females

Questions			Responses	Frequencies (%)
1	Total impression	Feelings about learning English and using English in classrooms and reasons	c) Feeling good and happy since this language is useful, enjoyable and lovable	80
			d) Not like English but think it is necessary to learn	20
2	Causes of test anxiety	The most disturbing criterion about speaking English in the classroom and reasons	f) Not being able to find the right word while speaking and it stops the conversation and causes stress	30
			g) Topics since some of them are so hard and nothing can be said about them and sometimes topics are not enjoyable	10
			h) Shyness since I am coy	10
			i) Stress, not know its reason	40
			j) Teachers since they cause stress	10
3	Reactions toward the speaking test	Feelings when being interviewed for an English test	c) Relaxed and not anxious, having a good feeling	30
			d) Feeling very anxious and having stress because of being scared of interview exams	70
4	Causes of test anxiety	The most disturbing criterion about speaking English in oral interview exams and reasons	g) Becoming angry because of not understanding some of the meanings	20
			h) Questions because of thinking of not being able to answer some of them	20
			i) Shyness since I am coy	10
			j) Stress because of the score	30
			k) Forgetting words because of not being able to continue conversation	10
			l) Stress because of the interviewer accent	10
5	Test content and procedure	FCE speaking test description	e) The test consisted of 4 parts and there were 2 examiners there. One of them did not raise any questions at all. It took about 15 minutes. Two testees took the test simultaneously. Some questions were raised and some pictures were shown to talk about.	70
			f) Hands trembling	10
			g) Having stress	10
			h) Perspiring	10
6	FCE Test length	The length of the FCE interview, whether or not	c) About 15 minutes, yes.	80
			d) About 15 minutes, it was short	20



		optimal		
7	Time limitations	Whether or not a specific time limit set for expressing ideas on a certain subject, Whether or not having any time management problems	c) Yes, no	80
			d) Yes, yes	20
8	Content validity	Whether or not the topics raised in accordance with the topics encountered and practiced in the class	Yes, they were	100
9	Test instructions	Whether or not the speaking tasks and discussions (instructions) clear	c) Yes, they were	70
			d) Not all of them	30
10	Test techniques	Techniques or strategies employed while taking the FCE speaking test	g) Asking for the repetition if not understand the question	30
			h) Paraphrasing words if did not know a word in English	20
			i) Guessing	20
			j) Brain storming	10
			k) Time management	10
			l) Trying to be relaxed and not thinking about the results of the exam	10
11	Testing environment	The interview environment of the FCE test	It was good	100
12	Strategies, solutions	The strategies used when mind went blank	d) Thinking more and more to remember something	50
			e) Nothing	20
			f) Trying to concentrate on the subject	30
13	Test-taking strategies, controlling test anxiety	Feelings when failed to understand what the interviewer was saying and actions taken	d) Becoming angry and nervous and asking the interviewer	50
			e) Feeling embarrassed, trying to understand, but it was not satisfying	20
			f) Feeling relaxed and asking the interviewer	30
14	Test anxiety	Feelings when made a mistake while speaking	d) Becoming angry, anxious	50
			e) Becoming embarrassed	20
			f) Feeling relaxed and having confidence and continuing to speak	30
15	Causes of test	Whether or not being afraid of making mistakes or	f) No, because of knowing that my English would be better in the future	20

	anxiety	errors while speaking English and reasons	g) No, since it is not important for me	20
			h) Yes, because of becoming anxious	30
			i) Yes, since I am coy	10
			j) Yes, because of score	20
16	Test anxiety	Reactions when being in a stressful situation when speaking English	g) Losing control	30
			h) Hands perspire	10
			i) Becoming worried	30
			j) Forgetting what wanted to say	10
			k) Telling myself to be relaxed since nothing bad would happen	10
			l) Making a lot of mistakes while speaking	10
17	Solutions, strategies	Whether or not seeking solutions form others for help in stressful situations, who?, how?	c) Yes, asking from the teacher, friends and relatives	80
			d) No, I do not	20
18	Causes of test anxiety	The reasons of becoming nervous or anxious before or while using English in oral interview exams	g) The score	20
			h) Shyness	10
			i) Becoming scared of not being able to pass	30
			j) Not knowing a word in English	20
			k) Thinking about not being able to perform well	10
			l) Lack of preparation and not being ready for the exam	10
19	Causes of test anxiety, solutions	Feelings when the interview was over and suggestions to control or reduce oral anxiety in oral interview exams	d) Feeling satisfied, relaxed and happy, to have more interview sessions (practiced tests) before the exam	20
			e) Feeling anxious because of forgetting to mention some points	60
			f) Stress had been reduced	20

## Appendix D

Observation Content Analysis of the Males and Females

Observation Content Analysis of the Males

	Items to be Observed	Responses	Frequencies (%)
1	Observed anxiety <b>Part 1</b> of the FCE (general questions)	a) Yes	90
		b) No	10
2	Observed anxiety <b>Part 2</b> of the FCE (an individual long turn)	a) Yes	80
		b) No	20
3	Observed anxiety <b>Part 3</b> of the FCE (a two-way conversation between the candidates)	a) Yes	80
		b) No	20
4  5	Observed anxiety <b>Part 4</b> of the FCE (discussion/ questions/ answers)	a) Yes	90
		b) No	10
	Physical signs of anxiety	a) Yes	80
		b) No	20
6	Wiggling/ squirming in a chair	a) Yes	70
		b) No	30
7	Chewing on a pencil	a) Yes	30

		b) No	70	
<b>8</b>	Twisting hair	a) Yes	10	
		b) No	90	
<b>9</b>	Playing with clothes	a) Yes	30	
		b) No	70	
<b>10</b>	Other	Perspiring	a) Yes	30
			b) No	70
<b>11</b>	Test-taking strategies used	a) Paraphrasing words	40	
		b) Taking notes	20	
		c) Asking for the repetition	40	

Observation Content Analysis of the Females

	Items to be Observed	Responses	Frequencies (%)
1	Observed anxiety <b>Part 1</b> of the FCE (general questions)	c) Yes	80
		d) No	20
2	Observed anxiety <b>Part 2</b> of the FCE (an individual long turn)	c) Yes	70
		d) No	30
3	Observed anxiety <b>Part 3</b> of the FCE (a two-way conversation between the candidates)	c) Yes	70
		d) No	30
4  5	Observed anxiety <b>Part 4</b> of the FCE (discussion/ questions/ answers)	c) Yes	80
		d) No	20
	Physical signs of anxiety	c) Yes	70
		d) No	30
6	Wiggling/ squirming in a chair	c) Yes	60
		d) No	40
7	Chewing on a pencil	c) Yes	20
		d) No	80

<b>8</b>	Twisting hair		c) Yes	30
			d) No	70
<b>9</b>	Playing with clothes		c) Yes	20
			d) No	80
<b>10</b>	Other	Perspiring	a) Yes	20
			b) No	80
<b>11</b>	Test-taking strategies used		d) Paraphrasing words	40
			e) Taking notes	30
			f) Asking for the repetition	30