

**The Effects of Anxiety on English Oral Performance of Students from the University  
of Nariño Language Center**

Heidy Yuriani Mideros Santacruz

Carlos Andrés Salazar Guerron

English and French Program

Linguistic and Languages Department

Faculty of Human Sciences

University of Nariño

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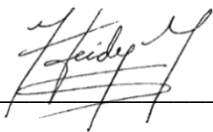
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Heidy Yuriani Mideros Santacruz, Carlos Andrés Salazar Guerron

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San Juan de Pasto, junio 2021



Heidy Yuriani Mideros



Carlos Andrés Salazar

# THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY ON ENGLISH ORAL PERFORMANCE

**Nota de aceptación**

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**Jurado**

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**Jurado**

San Juan de Pasto, junio 2021

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## Resumen

La comunicación en el idioma extranjero es de gran importancia para los aprendices de un idioma ya que se plantea como un objetivo esencial, sin embargo, alcanzar altos niveles de competencia en el idioma extranjero resulta una tarea difícil de realizar. Otros factores pueden llegar a tener un impacto en la producción oral es por ello que, desde hace varios años, se ha estudiado que tanto pueden llegar a influir otros factores en el desarrollo de la producción oral. La ansiedad es uno de esos factores que se considera influye en el desarrollo de actividades de habla. Para los docentes, el entender este fenómeno puede servir de gran ayuda a contrarrestar las posibles consecuencias que puede tener en la producción oral de los aprendices, así como aumentar los niveles de participación de los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, el objetivo de este trabajo fue entender el fenómeno de la ansiedad a través de la recolección de información sobre el habla y la producción oral además de las fuentes que pueden generar ansiedad en los estudiantes, así como los efectos que puede tener en la producción, los cuales en gran parte son negativos. Por otra parte, en este prospecto también se plantea una unidad didáctica con algunas actividades opcionales las cuales tienen como objetivo prevenir la presencia de la ansiedad y que están apoyadas en fundamentos teóricos que las plantean como alternativas viables y útiles para una producción oral óptima.

*Palabras clave:* Ansiedad, idioma extranjero, producción oral, actividades.

## **Abstract**

Communication in a foreign language is of great importance to language learners because is an essential goal, but achieving high levels of proficiency in a foreign language is a difficult task. Other factors can have an impact on oral production, which is why for several years, it has been studied how much other factors can influence the development of oral production. Anxiety is one such factor that is considered to influence the development of speaking activities. For teachers, understanding this phenomenon can be of great help in counteracting the possible consequences it may have on learners' oral production, as well as increasing students' participation levels. Therefore, the aim of this work was to understand the phenomenon of anxiety through the collection of information about speaking and oral production in addition to the sources that can generate anxiety in students, as well as the effects it can have on production, which are largely negative. On the other hand, this prospectus also proposes a didactic unit with some optional activities which aim to prevent the presence of anxiety and which are supported by theoretical foundations that propose them as viable and useful alternatives for an optimal oral production.

*Keywords:* Anxiety, foreign language, oral production, activities.

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Annex II: The list of IELTS topics.

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## **Glossary**

### **Foreign Language Anxiety**

Foreign language anxiety is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon; it is defined as the subjective feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with foreign language contexts, which include speaking, listening and learning (Young, 1990).

### **Foreign language learning**

Foreign language learning and teaching refer to the teaching or learning of a nonnative language outside of the environment where it is commonly spoken. A distinction is often made between ‘foreign’ and ‘second’ language learning. A second language implies that the learner resides in an environment where the acquired language is spoken (Moeller & Catalano, 2015).

### **Acquisition and learning**

Acquisition refers to the process of learning first and second languages naturally, without formal instruction, whereas ‘learning’ is reserved for the formal study of second or foreign languages in classroom settings (Moeller & Catalano, 2015).

### **Oral Production**

Oral production is the way people share information about things they are familiar with, taking into consideration the conversation context. (O’ Malley & Valdez, 1996) Therefore, it is the ability to communicate with others through the speaking skill.

## Introduction

Language is the main source of communication since it is the method people use to share ideas and thoughts with others. Although there are millions of languages around the world, ETS Research Centre claims that English has become the language of international communication as it is not only the most learned language worldwide, but also it is the official language in 53 countries which means that more than 900 million people know the language. (ETS Global, 2020). This growth and importance force the speakers of other languages to learn it to continue having opportunities, since many organizations and companies as well as institutions of higher education use English.

When learning English learners go through different stages and need to master the different skills, but the oral production still represents a challenge for English learners, which makes the strategies a viable path in order to accomplish proper proficiency. The mastery of the four skills in English is an objective that all learners should achieve, but as Harmer (2001) states the speaking skill requires greater commitment and confidence because it includes more factors than the others do; like the correct construction of sentences, the proper pronunciation to avoid confusion, and the security when speaking with others or in public. These factors make students feel too much pressure to speak despite knowing and handling the language. Some learners at advanced levels are part of a group of people who know and handle the English language yet they struggle expressing themselves in the target language due to anxiety.

At the oral production stage, learners have to be able to communicate in the target language by mastering different communicative skills to use the language properly. However,

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learners face difficulties when using language skills to communicate because some factors can affect their performance. Anxiety is well known for being one of those factors that interfere in the proper development of oral production in a foreign language. Foreign Language anxiety is defined by Clement (1980) as a complex construct that deals with learners' psychology in terms of their feelings, self-esteem, and self-confidence. That's why it's said that learners who feel anxiety are more likely to fail in the achievement of their goals than those who don't.

The studies developed by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), Aida (1994) and Horwitz (1996) focused on the phenomenon of anxiety in foreign language learning and found that there is a close relationship between anxiety and poor oral performance. These authors concluded that students express anxiety when they find themselves in situations in which they have to perform orally in front of their teacher and peers since the lack of confidence, the fear of making mistakes and being judged causes anxiety to increase affecting them in different ways, which prevents them from producing what they have learned. In addition, to learn about the effects of anxiety on students' oral performance, many researchers used the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), in which students were given the opportunity to express themselves orally using the foreign language. Irzeqat (2010) found that lack of self-confidence and shyness reinforces the appearance of anxiety, while Aravena, Castro and Peñaloza (2016) suggested that students' anxiety affects academic performance when they realize that they are making mistakes when speaking by increasing their nervousness and consequently their anxiety.

Although to date there has been extensive research studies that try to better understand the subject of foreign language anxiety, and they have achieved significant advances in that regard; each investigation may yield different results depending on the different situations in

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which the studies are conducted. Therefore, it is not possible to have precise and general conclusions for all cases. Authors like Young (1991) and MacIntyre (1998) recognize anxiety as a phenomenon present in the second language-learning environment, and even though it has been established that anxiety might have a negative influence on language learning there are still no clear conclusions (Kráľová, 2016). In addition, Alper et al (1960) and Nishitani et al (2011) encourage other authors to continue studying the subject as this means that constantly studying this topic still has relevance and positive effects. Therefore, new studies and proposals continue to be relevant and contribute to a better understanding of how anxiety can influence the performance of students and possibly find solutions to help counteract it.

As mentioned, oral production can be one of the most challenging stages when learning a language, so understanding anxiety and its effects on the oral performance of students in the Language Center is especially important. In that way, learners and teachers can work together to make the foreign language learning process as beneficial as possible for students, whose main objective is to use the language communicatively outside the classroom. However, the lack of attention to this phenomenon by learners and teachers can allow anxiety to have a detrimental effect on students' oral performance and overall academic achievement.

In the process of learning a new language learners cope with different stages and skills one of which is oral production. The main purpose of this study is to understand the possible negative effects that anxiety can have on the oral performance of learners from the Language Center. The study aims to identify the causes and effects of anxiety on the oral performance of learners as well as to provide strategies and activities that help learners overcome this issue.

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## Objectives

### General Objective

To determine the influence of anxiety on Foreign Language Learning, and to identify the possible negative effects that anxiety can have on the oral performance of students from the University of Nariño Language Center.

### Specific Objectives

- To understand the causes of foreign language anxiety to guide the teacher to help students overcome this obstacle that prevents them from learning and performing in the foreign language.
- To identify the behavior and characteristics that demonstrate that students experience anxiety when speaking and whether this affects their performance.
- To provide some alternative activities that help develop a safe environment in which students feel comfortable to participate in class using the target language.

## Justification

Foreign language learners must perform different activities that demonstrate the knowledge acquired throughout their academic history, however, oral activities still represent a challenge for some students as they experience anxiety when performing these activities, which reduces the level of proficiency. Anxiety can be caused by different factors present in the learning environment and, therefore have some negative effects on the oral performance. Anxiety is one of the main factors that do not allow students to perform oral activities properly and calmly. To prevent anxiety from being a detrimental factor for the appropriate advancement of

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foreign language learners who are part of the language center, it is necessary to determine the influence anxiety can have on the learner of a second language as well as identify the possible negative effects on their oral performance.

Learning a second language, especially English, has become a necessity for most people because it allows them to be active members of our evolving society. Having more opportunities in the work field and also chances to enter higher education are the benefits of knowing English. For this reason, English has a great amount of importance for people. Having a great level of language proficiency means more chances to stand out and be successful in any field a person is working in. To do so, it is necessary to be able to use the language without fear in any kind of situation especially in the speaking part as this will be the vehicle of communication with other people for language learners. This research seeks to provide insights about anxiety influence in oral production working with its possible origin which is the classroom where the foreign language is being learned. The phenomenon of anxiety prevents students from expressing themselves freely and participating actively in oral activities which allows them to improve the level of knowledge and fluency when speaking. If from the school and the courses the students are afraid to speak then this will remain and affect their communication when they go out to face the real world.

The classroom should be the right place to make corrections and help students improve their language skills. Learning a foreign language is a task where many mistakes are made, but it is thanks to those mistakes that the students can improve. Anxiety prevents students from using language orally or makes students make silly mistakes that do not make progress possible. Avoiding feeling anxious and frightened requires help from the teacher, so understanding how

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anxiety affects oral performance will enable teachers to acquire knowledge on how to address this problem and give guidelines and strategies that work as a support to learners facing this issue; therefore, the language center will become a place that cares for the optimal learning of the language, including psychological factors like anxiety which affect the performance of the students.

### **Theoretical Frame**

This chapter provides background information about anxiety and its causes and effects on foreign language learning. Also, this theoretical frame includes different points of view discussed by several authors who agree that the main obstacle to success in learning a foreign language especially in oral performance is anxiety.

### **Antecedents**

Many researchers studied anxiety and how it affects oral production in the target language. Aravena, E., Castro, J. L., Guedda, O., and Peñaloza, R. (2016) wanted to determine the level of anxiety by using The FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) when students take an oral exam using the foreign language. They also observed self-confidence, its effects, and its respective consequences and took into account factors such as grammatical errors and the stress that the students made at the time of the test. The sample was composed of 10 students belonging to the first year of a language program. In a conclusion, the researchers found that anxiety affects the students' academic performance because they make different mistakes when speaking in a foreign language and when they realize that they are committing them their nervousness increases. Also, Irzeqat (2010) tested how the students and teachers perceive anxiety in academic terms when they speak a foreign language; and provide strategies to diminish



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anxiety within and outside the educational campus by using a mixed methodology implementing interviews and the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale as instruments. The participants were high school students who took the questionnaire, while an interview was conducted with teachers who were better able to express ideas in the foreign language. In conclusion, the researcher found that anxiety in these students occurs at the moment they have to speak in the foreign language, since factors such as lack of self-confidence and shyness play an important role in the lives of the participants. Finally, Aghajani, M., and Amanzadeh, H. (2017) studied the relationship between anxiety and oral performance in foreign language students. The researchers used a quantitative methodology and made use of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and a questionnaire as instruments for the collection of the data. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) developed this instrument called the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to help them measure anxiety. The scale is made up of a 33-item questionnaire that uses a 5-Point Likert-type scale. The options include in the questionnaire range from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” (See Annex I). The scale measures a learner’s level of anxiety by giving anxiety a score through the addition of the ratings of the 33 items. This means that the range could be 33 to 165; which in return indicates that the higher the number, the higher the level of language anxiety learners are experiencing. This instrument was developed based on self-reports from students as well as the researchers own scientific experiences, but information gathered from reviews of other similar instruments also played an important role. (Aghajani & Amanzadeh, 2017; Misieng & Pae, 2012). The participants of Aghajani and Amanzadeh’s research were foreign language students in general adults, who in addition to carrying out the questionnaire also participated in a discussion where they had the opportunity to express themselves orally. The participants were asked to introduce themselves

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and after were given the opportunity to choose among 20 envelopes with different topics, which contained an IELTS discussion topic sentence. (See Annex II) They took two minutes to prepare and after that, they had to talk about the topic for about six minutes during which the speaker was carefully observed by the instructor who was taking notes of the behaviors and assessing communicative performance in terms of the student's "communicative fluency, word choice, use of collocations and the development of comprehensible sentences" (Aghajani & Amanzadeh, 2017). After that, the participants had to answer the FLCAS questionnaire. Briefly, the researchers found that anxiety is strongly related to the low performance in the oral performances of the students.

### **Speaking**

It is known that children learn their first language naturally, instinctively, but the acquisition of a second language is different. Learning a second language in this case English can be very difficult, as it requires a conscious effort and the development of several skills like reading, writing, listening, and speaking.

### **Speaking Definition**

Effective oral communication requires the appropriate use of language, which involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation.

As mentioned by Cameron (2001), speaking is the active use of language to express meaning so that other people can make sense of them. So, to be a good speaker it is necessary to find the appropriate and grammatically correct words to convey the meaning accurately. Also, Harmer (2002, page 46) argues that speaking happens when two people are communicating with

each other. Thus, taking this into account, it can be stated that the ability to speak is very important in communication since it refers to the use of language to express meanings to transfer information without losing the accuracy of the language.

Furthermore, Mazouzi (2013) states that speaking activities should be designed to take into account fluency and accuracy achievement as these two elements play an important role in communication. Fluency is described by Hughes (2002), as the ability learners have to keep communication by speaking understandably otherwise listeners can lose interest. Hughes (2002) also mentions that fluency is the ability to answer by using proper words, phrases, stress, and intonation as well as pronouncing sounds correctly. This aspect means that the learner must be able to keep going when speaking spontaneously. On the other hand, the term accuracy is explained by Mazouzi (2013) as the attention pay to the precision and the completeness of language in the act of speaking in which the focus is on grammatical structures, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Therefore, speaking is when students drill certain language patterns, but oral production is a complex process that involves speaking and listening as a two-way communication where a response is expected. When students produce orally, they need to understand what they are speaking and what they are listening to build a conversation and achieve communicative competence.

### **Oral Production**

Communication is an inherent process of the human condition since its main purpose is to transmit thoughts, feelings, and information; all this makes it a vital action for interaction with other people. Therefore, communication through the foreign language involves the achievement

of four language skills listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and the latter is an important skill that should be improved especially in future professionals.

### **Oral Production Definition**

According to the Common European Framework for Languages (CEFR) (2000), oral production is related to the production of an oral text for one or more listeners, such as giving information to an audience in a public address. Oral production may involve reading a written text aloud, speaking from notes, acting out a rehearsed role, speaking spontaneously, improvising, or singing a song. Nevertheless, oral production is not just speaking, as argued by Peña and Onatra (2009):

“Speaking is something students do when they drill particular language patterns, but the oral skill is much more than this. It involves speaking and listening as a two-way process where responding is expected.” (p.12)

Therefore, oral production is a complex and dynamic process that requires communicative skills so that students can use the language in a meaningful way and real-time situations. Moreover, Krashen (as cited in, White & Ranta 2002) claims that:

“Oral answers are acquired knowledge results from the input processing of the Language Acquisition Device which proceeds subconsciously when L2 input is comprehended and the learner is in a positive affective state.” (p.15)

Thus, it can be affirmed that both the role of speaking and the role of listening as input are significant parts of the development of oral production.

### **The Importance of Oral Production in FLL**

Students who have a good ability to speak are known to be better at understanding and interpreting information from others. Spratt, Pulverness, and William (2011) conducted an investigation in which it is recognized that:

Speaking is a productive skill, like writing it involves using speech to express meanings to other people. When people speak, they use different aspects of speaking depending on the type of speaking they are involved in. That is why speaking is a complex activity. (p. 34)

Language has communication as its main objective so that people who can communicate in different languages have the opportunity to travel and visit other countries to learn and share their different knowledge and experiences. The teaching and learning of a foreign language have increased in recent years due to the impact of globalization, since having the ability to speak another language is very important to communicate ideas and understand people from other countries.

### **Methodology and Approaches to Learn and Teach Oral Performance**

To learn a foreign language, it is necessary to develop the four skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, those skills are not developed enough due to different factors such as the lack of learning resources, the exaggerated use of grammar, and the presence of anxiety. As a consequence, learners have many problems, especially in oral production since when they try to express themselves; they just produce isolated words or disconnected sentences making their production poor and meaningless.

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In the present days, speaking is required in academic and professional performances so the lack of this skill becomes a serious disadvantage. Fortunately, the application of some communicative and interactive tasks helps to improve oral skills. Bearing in mind task-based learning and communicative and interactive views, students can approach speaking as a way to negotiate to mean and to establish social relations with others.

Learners who are learning English as a foreign language usually do not like to speak and most of the time, they have a passive attitude during the class. However, focusing on oral skills that allow students to communicate and interact meaningfully will motivate them to participate feeling comfortable. Bygate (1987) states that:

“Our learners often need to be able to speak with confidence to carry out many of their most basic transactions. It is the skill by which they are most frequently judged, and through which they make or lose friends.” (p.1)

In this way, interaction is a good alternative to give students the possibility to express themselves in the foreign language and learn from others, since they can change the information and correct each other more comfortably. Rivers considers that “in interaction, students can use all they possess of the language, all they have learned or casually absorbed in real-life exchanges” (Rivers, cited in Brown, 1994, p.159). Also, since interaction involves all the elements of communicative and interactive competences such as grammar, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, etc., students can demonstrate what they can do in the foreign language.

On the other hand, it is also important to create a pleasant environment to encourage student interaction because in this way they can carry out communicative tasks without being afraid of making mistakes. Willis (1996) states that “creating a low-stress atmosphere and using

the language for real purposes are ways to get meaningful communication and through interaction, learners have the chance to acquire discourse skills.” (p.2) With this in mind, task-based learning offers many advantages in the development and improvement of oral skills.

Task-based learning views the learning process as a set of communicative tasks that are directly linked to the curricular goals they serve. Task-based teaching involves an approach where communicative tasks are important because students need to engage in interactions inside and outside the classrooms (Nunan, 1991, p. 279). It means that both teachers and students must be engaged in tasks that involve contexts where learners use the foreign language in a real form not only for a grade but also for their daily life. Furthermore, in task-based learning students can develop diverse discourse strategies such as opening and closing conversation, introducing a topic, and so on, that allow the interaction in different situations and with different audiences.

### **Influence of Anxiety in Oral Production**

The performance in the speaking skill can be influenced by some factors like performance conditions, listening ability, feedback during speaking activities, and affective factors like motivation, confidence, and anxiety. Nation and Newton (2009) state that the speaking performance of learners can be disturbed by performance conditions that include four types: time pressure, planning, the standard of performance, and the amount of support. According to Doff (1998) listening skills are important as a learner will not develop speaking skills unless the learner enhances listening skills. Conversations can only happen successfully if a speaker understands the information they are getting. In the same vein, Shumin (1997) says that the speaker can respond to what a person says assisted by the listening ability. Regarding feedback, Harmer (1991) argues that teachers’ reactions to learners’ performance

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depend on certain situations such as the stages of the lesson, the activities, the types of mistake made, and the person making the mistake. Harmer (1991) also mentions that the purpose and course of a speaking activity can be compromised if teachers make corrections whenever a mistake happens and this situation might become demotivating and make students feel afraid of speaking. Finally, Krashen (1982) confirms that a varied group of affective variables exist and are responsible for success in second language acquisition and in the research done throughout this decade the ones examined the most have been motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety

Thus, as stated above the learning of a foreign language can be affected by different factors, but one of the most common is anxiety. Anxiety is considered as the main factor that affects the proper development of oral production since anxiety affects the learner in different ways limiting him/her from producing what he has learned.

Learners can experience anxiety at different levels and this might depend on specific factors and have negative effects. For example, (Cui, 2011) establishes that usually, learners that experience high levels of anxiety can have lower performance than learners experiencing low levels of anxiety. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) claim that learners experiencing high levels of anxiety might show the behavior of avoiding speaking as a negative effect. However, learners with advanced language proficiency levels end up experiencing lower levels of anxiety (Liu, 2006). Also, Aydemir (2011) investigated anxiety and conclude that learners might experience higher levels of anxiety at the end of a course than at the beginning.

Language learning anxiety is related to how an individual reacts nervously when speaking in the second language and the motivated individual devotes the effort in activities to



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achieve his or her goal (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Besides, Cohen and Norst (1989) found that:

Students have expressed their fears and anxiety when they are put in situations where they have to perform before their peers and the teacher. These fears and anxiety are reflected not only through the use of such words as “embarrassment”, “trauma”, “unnerving”, “frightening”, “resentment”, “frustration” and so on, but also through their physical responses. They tend to blush; their hands are likely to tremble; their hearts tend to pound heavily and they may experience headaches in such conditions (p. 52).

When this type of situation occurs, the teacher should create a pleasant environment and avoid being extremely critical with the students. Besides, teachers must give feedback so that students feel that they are learning and improving every day by highlighting the moments when they develop the activities correctly and not those moments when they make mistakes. Thus, if the teacher demonstrates that the students will not be punished if they fail, they will feel comfortable and begin to speak without fear of making mistakes and the tranquility will lead to better acquisition of the foreign language.

### **Anxiety**

Students learning a foreign language are asked to produce orally, but it might represent a challenge for them due to anxiety. Experiencing anxiety during speaking tasks leads to problems when producing orally. In this chapter, by using previous research on the subject, it will be explained what anxiety is, its causes, and its possible effects. First of all, anxiety is a very broad topic and can be experienced in different situations. This research is focused on the analysis of anxiety in the English classes as a foreign language; and on the causes that lead students of a

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foreign language to feel anxiety when using the language orally which can be academic, interpersonal, or social causes. Finally, the effects that anxiety has on students using a foreign language will be the main point this paper will touch on. Students learning foreign languages might experience anxiety because of different factors, but it is important to understand its causes and effects to help them.

### **Definition of Anxiety**

Anxiety is a phenomenon that has been studied extensively and by different authors who intended to explain it. The concept of anxiety is seen as “an emotional state of apprehension, a vague fear that is only indirectly associated with an object” (Scovel, 1978, p.134). For Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) anxiety is a “transitory emotional state or condition characterized by feelings of tension and apprehension and heightened autonomic nervous system activity” (p.125). This acts largely unconsciously and it is in charge of body functions. Experiencing anxiety can lead you to reflect on two types of reactions; worry or emotionality (Leibert and Morris, 1967). Emotionality alludes to physiological responses, such as becoming blushed or racing heart, and behavioral responses, such as stammering and wriggling. Worry alludes to cognitive responses, such as self-deprecating considerations or having thoughts that are not important (Zeidner 1998; Naveh-Benjamin 1991). Worry is seen as the more weakening of the two since it involves cognitive capacity that otherwise would be committed to the task in hand, for instance, speaking in a foreign language (Tobias, 1985). Anxious people might even experience dread apart from apprehension when anxious people present difficulty in concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986).

### **Types of Anxiety**

Anxiety can be classified into different types depending on some factors. Anxiety generally falls into two categories: trait or state. **Trait anxiety** is a personality trait that tends to make students feel nervous in a variety of situations. **State anxiety**, on the other hand, is a temporary feeling of stress and worry that occurs at a specific time due to a particular circumstance. Finally, there is a third type of anxiety; **situation-specific anxiety**. This type of anxiety reflects a trait that is repeated in specific situations (Spielberger, Anton & Bedell, 1976). Research into language learning anxiety has indicated that language learning can be branded as situation-specific (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Horwitz 2001). That is a trait that persists in language learning situations, for instance, classrooms. This means that the classroom can be considered an important factor causing people to experience anxiety. Lucas, Miraflores, and Go (2011) conducted a study in which the classroom is seen as a source of anxiety for some learners because is in this particular environment that the students always test their competence and performance. Batiha, Noor, and Mustaffa (2014) mentioned in their study that some additional factors that can increase language learning anxiety include the interaction with teachers, fear of failing the course, and vocabulary.

### **Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning**

In the field of foreign language teaching and learning, the phenomenon of anxiety has been present. Researchers refer to it as Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and many of them have offered definitions to this term. MacIntyre and Gardner (1993) defined foreign language anxiety as the subjective feeling of tension and apprehension especially related to foreign language situations, which include speaking, listening, and learning. Similarly, Zhang (2001) referred to anxiety as a psychological tension that learners experience when carrying out a learning activity.

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Horwitz (1986) on the other hand, describes anxiety in the foreign language as “a distinct complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (p. 132). Students have particular thoughts and experience negative feelings when being in the learning context or caused by the learning process itself making them behave differently meaning that they are experiencing anxiety. Finally, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) were the first researchers to mention that FLA is a unique type of anxiety specific to foreign language learning, in the same vein Young (1992) explained that foreign language anxiety is a complex psychological phenomenon to specific the process of learning a language.

### **Anxiety and Oral Performance**

The most difficult skill to develop for students studying a foreign language is the ability to speak. Nowadays, in foreign language classrooms, learners are required to perform oral tasks in front of a group or participate in group conversations. And, these speaking activities may affect the students negatively as they are very demanding, so students may start to feel nervous and anxious when using the target language (Tanveer, 2007). Young (1990) argued that speaking in the target language is the skill that makes learners experience anxiety the most. For this reason, researchers have conducted many studies to examine students' anxiety scores and relate them to oral performance. For example, Price (1991) found out that making mistakes in pronunciation drives learners to be anxious. Due to this fear of making mistakes, speaking in front of their classmates could be exceptional anxiety inciting action for the foreign language learners. Also, Koch and Terrell (1991) stated that presentations, role-playing, and defining words are among the most anxiety inciting oral activities. Moreover, the discoveries of a study

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conducted by Ay (2010) illustrated learners' anxiety happens mostly when they are required to speak in the target language without being prepared in advance.

Researchers have conducted studies to examine students' anxiety scores and related them to oral performance. For example, Phillips (1992) used the exam called the FLCAS, and interviews to collect data from 44 participants. Phillips not only examined the relationship between the exam scores and FLA but also the relationship between FLA and several performance variables. Although the learners' performance in a written test was good, she found that there is a negative relationship between the FLA and the performance of the students as the learners who experience a higher level of anxiety tend to say fewer things, use short sentences to communicate, and rarely use dependent clauses. Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) also investigated the oral output and the effects of foreign language anxiety. The participants were 20 Spanish-speaking students studying in a university ESL program. The participants were divided into two groups as high and low according to their language proficiency. Also, the students were assigned randomly into anxiety and non-anxiety conditions. The first group included a rigid and more serious environment and cameras while the second group was in a relaxing environment without cameras. The participants were asked to talk about three pictures. The results showed that the students in the anxiety condition group tended to speak less and interpret less than those who were in the non-anxiety condition group; this reveals that there is a negative relationship between the FLA and the students' performance.

### **Causes of Foreign Language Anxiety**

The studies of anxiety in foreign language learning have made it possible to discover different causes or sources, these sources anxiety are determined by the students, who are the

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main protagonists generating anxiety; the teachers, who are guides and counselors to help students not to experience anxiety; and additionally, the practice inside the classroom. Language anxiety arises from: personal and interpersonal anxieties, this can be perhaps the most powerful generating source of anxiety because in this field people with low self-esteem are involved who worry about what their partners think and try to please others. A second generating source of anxiety is the learner's beliefs about language learning, these are the thoughts students have when learning a new language and how they affect language acquisition. Also teachers' beliefs about language teaching, this is the role that the teacher plays within the classroom to either increase or decrease the levels of anxiety in the students. Instructor-learner interactions, it is the way, in which the teacher corrects mistakes made by students. The classroom procedures, this is defined as the different oral activities that students have to perform speaking in the target language. Finally, language testing is the anxiety that arises at the moment of being evaluated (Young, 1990).

Some other researchers have identified and talked about different causes which generate anxiety in students of a foreign language. Communicative apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation were identified as causes and are related to the social context and the educational environment (Horwitz, 1986). Communicative apprehension is defined as the low and difficulty in performance that a person has when communicating with someone. It is also the fear and insecurity when speaking in front of a group of people. Also, it is the anxiety generated by expressing ideas, thoughts, or opinions within a group (Yalçın, 2014). On the other hand, Horwitz et al. (1986) said that “people who typically have trouble speaking in groups are likely to experience even greater difficulty speaking in a foreign language class where they have little control of the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored” (p.127).

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Experiencing anxiety can be a normal event when speaking in groups, so it is not strange that students of a foreign language experience it when speaking in the target language. This might be an even stressful activity for students to perform.

Another cause of this phenomenon is test anxiety. Test anxiety is generated by the panic or fear to fail in the academic life in which the learners are immersed. Also, test anxiety, many times arises due to the demands that the apprentices impose, and also to the pressure that parents, teachers, or society impose for the learner to be perfect. The fear of negative evaluation is explained as the expectation that each learner has of being evaluated, the fear of having a negative evaluation given by others in different situations, such as oral exams or classroom presentations (Yalçın, 2014). Another factor is the fear that the learner has of being ridiculed at the moment of receiving a negative evaluation, sometimes because the teacher does not make the respective corrections adequately. Finally, according to MacIntyre (1989), test anxiety contributed to the general anxiety factor but not to the communicative anxiety factor, thus suggesting that test anxiety is a general problem rather than a specific one in the foreign language classroom.

### **Effects of Foreign Language Anxiety**

#### **Academic Effects**

Experiencing anxiety is a very common phenomenon in classrooms when learning a foreign language. Anxiety is not only prevalent among students but can also have mostly negative effects that harm the student's learning and academic achievement. Foreign language anxiety has been established as the best prognosticator of success in second/foreign language learning (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a). Several studies have

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investigated the relationship between foreign language anxiety and second/foreign language achievement and these have generally clear in their results that there is a constant negative relationship between language anxiety and language achievement (Horwitz, 2001).

Researchers have mostly used the final grades of learners and standardized proficiency tests to measure language achievement in foreign anxiety studies (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). For instance, Horwitz (1986) found that there is a negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and the grades students expected to receive in their first semester language class ( $r = -.52$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and also with their actual final grades ( $r = -.49$ ,  $p = .003$  in Spanish courses, and  $r = -.54$ ,  $p = .001$  in French courses). Similarly, Aida (1994) and Saito and Samimy (1996) found a significant negative correlation between the grades American students obtain in their classes of Japanese and anxiety results. Coulombe (2000) also reported a negative correlation between the FLCAS scores and the French final grades of students in different proficiency levels. Using an oral French test Phillips (1992) also reported that students' scores on the FLCAS are correlated negatively with the scores of the test.

Other language performance measures used in foreign language anxiety studies, included teacher grades, self-grade, and cloze tests, etc... These language performance measures show that there is a negative relationship with foreign language anxiety. For example, Trylong (1987) used teacher ratings to indicate students' achievement in language courses and show the existence of a negative relationship between anxiety and the rating teachers gave. On the other hand, MacIntyre, Noels, and Clement (1997) asked students to give a grade to their language proficiency levels and also found a negative relationship between anxiety and students' self-ratings. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) used tests in English-speaking students and show that



there is a negative relationship between foreign language anxiety and the scores of a cloze test, a writing task, and an objective test to measure students' language achievement.

### **Cognitive Effects**

Another research has suggested that anxiety causes cognitive interference in performing specific tasks (Sarason, 1980; Schwarzer, 1986). Researchers stated that anxiety could have some cognitive effects. For example, Eysenck (1979) suggested that anxious learners tended to have their attention divided between task-related cognition and self-related cognition. In the context of foreign language learning, task-related cognition in a production task means encoding the words, understanding the meanings of phrases and the structure of a message, and planning future things to say. For anxious learners, self-related cognition is related to excessive self-evaluation, stress over potential failure, and concern over others' opinions. Since self-related cognition has to compete for cognitive resources with normal cognitive requests and the capacity to handle data is restricted, anxiety-related cognition, as a rule, prevents normal performance. Tobias (1979, 1986), on the other hand, hypothesized that the cognitive effects of anxiety are mainly because of the interference with the three stages of cognitive processing: Input, Processing, and Output. MacIntyre and Gardner (e.g., 1989; 1994) created different anxiety scales (i.e., the input anxiety scale, the processing anxiety scale, and the output anxiety scale) addressing anxieties related to these stages of cognitive processing and designed a group of experiments to check the hypothesis that Tobias (1986) proposed. Their results show that anxiety had interference with all the stages of cognitive processing, but it had the strongest impact on processing and output.

### **Social Effects**

Anxiety is also believed to encompass some negative social effects. An important social effect of foreign language anxiety is that anxious learners do not communicate as often as relaxed learners (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991a, 1991b). Speaking has been identified as one of the most relevant sources of anxiety for many learners (e.g., Price, 1991), normally, anxious learners are less willing to communicate in their languages. MacIntyre and Charos's (1996) provide some evidence in their study indicating that anxious learners seemed to be less willing to communicate and that they tended to talk less frequently when allowed to do so in a natural setting. Horwitz, et al. (2010) went further and saw the concept of Willingness to Communicate (WTC) as an alternative conceptualization of foreign language anxiety. Foreign language anxiety tries to understand why some learners avoid communication in their foreign language classes or why they feel uncomfortable when speaking, on the other hand, WTC intends to analyze the conditions under which learner chooses to communicate. Finally, since affective variables tend to be related to each other, it may be sensible to accept that foreign language anxiety, one of the most important of them, may have negative effects on other affective variables such as attitudes and motivation towards language learning. Anxiety is probably influencing students' feelings about learning a language (Horwitz, et al., 2010). Liu and Huang (2011) found that anxiety and students' English learning motivation were correlated negatively. Phillips (1992) stated that students' attitudes and motivation toward language study could be affected negatively by anxiety. Horwitz (1986) also concluded that anxious learners tend to "skip class," or "seek refuge" in the last row to avoid the humiliation or embarrassment of being asked to participate in speaking activities. These behaviors may be interpreted as indicators of low motivation towards the language class as a result of high anxiety levels.

### **Didactic Unit Development**

When learning a language, different obstacles can be presented that impede students to perform successfully in the foreign language class. One of the most common obstacles that affect the appropriate learning of a foreign language is anxiety since it could have negative effects on the English Oral performance of students. However, these effects could be reduced if teachers incorporate in their classes different teaching strategies that allow students to feel comfortable, providing them an appropriate learning environment where they could overcome the fear they feel at the moment of speaking. Thus, a didactic unit is a useful guide in the teaching process since it presents some strategies and activities that teachers should use to help learners have meaningful learning.

As Escamilla (1993) states, the didactic unit is a way of planning the teaching and learning processing element of content that becomes an integration of the meaningful process. For that reason, after describing the theoretical aspects related to this research project. A didactic unit is presented for all the teachers who wish to help improve their students' oral performance by creating a safe environment where learners feel motivated to actively participate in the class, and for those students who are afraid of making mistakes when speaking and want to find a way to reduce their anxiety. Therefore, this didactic unit becomes a guiding instrument in the development of activities and materials that allow the teacher to create an appropriate environment in which students can overcome anxiety at the moment of speaking since by reducing anxiety levels students feel more confident to face their challenges, and the teacher will be able to promote meaningful learning.

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With this in mind, it can be established that this Didactic Unit aims to provide teachers with alternative strategies that promote confidence and a safe learning environment, as well as encourage the positive effects on the oral performance of students. Also, his unit will demonstrate the importance of using activities that do not cause anxiety in students, with the implementation of some speaking activities that ensure students not only develop a high level of proficiency in the speaking skill, but also a low-anxiety environment that does not prevent them from properly developing speaking activities.

As we have been talking about in this paper, anxiety levels are present when it comes to speaking activities that involve talking to a group, so some activities like speaking games might seem like a trigger for anxiety. Besides, one of the things that prevent students from speaking is the fear of being evaluated as well as the fear of making grammar or syntax mistakes. But Lee (1979) highlights that games are very useful to encourage spontaneous communication because when learners are playing games they are not paying attention to correct grammar use or syntax.

Therefore, some authors have shown supports towards games and their contributing factors to the foreign language learning process. For example, Richard-Amato (2005) has pointed out the advantages of games as an entertainment strategy that helps to lower the anxiety levels of a learner and allows the acquisition of a foreign language without experiencing stress. Lewis (1999) has also supported the use of games through different claims. According to Lewis, games create a learning environment that promotes different positive aspects such as interaction, discovery, and experimentation, and in addition to these benefits, motivation also tends to be higher, as well as, the dynamism that is why learners are very receptive towards games.

On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that it is easier for learners to construct knowledge when they work in groups because they are engaged in in-group discussions.

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Working in groups is a great way to ensure low learners' inhibition and anxiety to produce language, compared to other conventional methods of teaching (FakiehAlrabai, 2015). Some researchers attribute some positive aspects that cooperative learning promotes such as improvement in academic performance (Slavin, 1990), greater motivation to learn (Garibaldi, 1979 in Kagan 1986), improvement regarding self-esteem (Johnson and Johnson, 1989) and, more positive social behaviors (Lloyd, 1988). These authors claim cooperative learning not only helps students improve their performance in the language but also their confidence and motivation to face the challenges ahead.

Moreover, Castrillón (2003) mentions in her project "Encouraging the development of children's oral communicative competences through play", activities such as games, songs, sketches, presentations of little tasks, can be very beneficial tools for learners to take part actively in activities and they good to include cooperative work. Thus, storytelling inspires students and stimulates their minds in a low-anxiety and motivating setting for learning English as a second language. Stories have been considered useful when learning English because they present the language in a repetitive and memorable context, are motivating, challenging, enjoyable, and exercise imagination and creativity (Ellis and Brewster, 2014).

In other words, stories provide an important source of language experience for students, so the strategy of storytelling in the classroom can be used to help them become competent and confident speakers. Therefore, students who are exposed to stories can develop oral language more easily than students who are not, and this exposure also helps them reach a higher level of language proficiency, allowing them to be active participants in learning their foreign language.

Furthermore, many teachers agree on the fact that students learn to speak in the second language by "interacting," so communicative language learning best serves for this aim. As

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Hershner (2016) argues, this communicative approach helps students reduce their anxiety levels and improve their communicative competence by facilitating friendly and supportive learning environments, and by focusing less on making mistakes. Therefore, through the use of interviews, students have the opportunity to communicate with each other in the target language based on real-life situations. Nowadays, interviews have been used as a suitable strategy to reduce the effects of anxiety and to reach the desired confidence of students since when students learn to ask and answer questions they increase their ability to perform orally with confidence expressing themselves by their own means.

Finally, the objective of teaching a foreign language is to make learners become experts of the language. Speaking is one of the abilities that usually represents a challenge; however, it can become a more dynamic activity if the students can work cooperatively to accomplish specific goals by working together to solve problems, complete tasks, or achieve common goals as Artz and Newman (1990) mention in their definition of cooperative learning.

To achieve the mentioned strategies, this didactic unit includes lessons that seek to reduce students' anxiety when speaking through the implementation of some speaking activities.

### **Lesson 1: Mafia Game**

#### **Objectives of the Lesson**

To improve the speaking ability by using a game in which language is actively used to discuss in short debates and come to an agreement.

To enhance oral production by lowering the anxiety levels using a game called Mafia.

#### **Explanation of the Activity**

In this case, it would be the students who will act as the players. The players need to divide into two groups: One of the groups will be the mafias and the other one will be innocents.

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In this game, each of the players will have a role as the final purpose is to solve crimes and find the guilty people who are among all the players. To do so each player is secretly assigned a role based on the group they are in, mafia or Innocents. The number of mafia members can change depending on the number of overall players.

On one hand, we have the mafia, which is criminal, and on the other, we have the innocents, which can be civilians, doctors, lawyers, villagers, police officers, etc. All players will then close their eyes and listen to specific instructions presented by a moderator instructor or facilitator; in this case, the teacher will play this role. Now the mafias are allowed to open their eyes and secretly decide on killing an innocent person each round. Once they have decided, the innocent person that has been killed will be removed from the game guided by the announcement of the moderator. After the removal, all the surviving players will have to open their eyes and have a debate to solve the crime. They can ask questions so that they can conclude who killed the innocent civilian. Each innocent player has a role, so it would be easier. Mafia players have to come up with stories and alibis to defend their innocence. During the discussion accused suspects will be chosen among the players, however, the accused suspects will get the opportunity to defend themselves.

Later, a vote among players will be cast and the suspect with the most votes will have to leave the game. The moderator will announce if the person who is leaving the game was a mafia member or an innocent person. The game will continue until all mafia members have been eliminated or the mafias outnumber the innocents. The moderator announces the winners. (See Annex III)

### **Lesson 2: Jigsaw Activity**

#### **Objectives of the Lesson**

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To improve the speaking ability by working cooperatively in a jigsaw activity in which the knowledge of a specific topic should be learned and shared using speaking.

To enhance the speaking ability by lowering the anxiety levels using a cooperative learning activity.

### **Explanation of the Activity**

This activity consists of creating small groups of four to six people. Each member of the group is consigned with a specific material or task to be learned, so they can become experts in the topic and then teach to other groups. The jigsaw activity starts with a group of students that will work on the same material deciding what it is worth mentioning and teaching and how to teach it to the other learners. After practicing in these “expert” groups as they are usually called, new groups are formed and students are given the task of teaching each other with each of the groups with at least one expert member per topic. (See Annex III)

### **Lesson 3: Storytelling**

#### **Objectives of the Lesson**

To reach higher levels of speaking proficiency by implementing activities like storytelling that has benefits in the speaking skill.

To promote and enhance confidence when using the language orally in activities like storytelling which are considered to help students feel more comfortable when speaking in a different language.

### **Explanation of the Activity**

In this activity, students have to summarize a tale or story they heard from somebody beforehand, or they have to create their own stories to tell their classmates. It also helps students express their ideas in the format of beginning, development, and ending, including characters and



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settings the story has to have. For instance, at the beginning of each class session, the teacher may call a few students to tell short stories as an opening. In this way, not only will the teacher address students' speaking ability but also get the attention of the class.

The storytelling can be developed in two ways; in the first one, the teacher hangs different written stories with colorful papers on the whiteboard. Then the teacher asks the students to make groups and asks every group to take a paper from the board. Also, the teacher asks students to retell their story based on the group discussion, and finally the teacher gives an award to the group considered as the best one.

The second way is developed as follows; first of all, the students are asked to sit in groups, then, the students make a story based on a sequence of pictures having some key sentences given by the teacher, and the teacher asks the students to tell the story based on the result of their discussion in front of the class. (See Annex III)

### **Lesson 4: Interviews**

#### **Objectives of the Lesson**

To enrich the language speaking ability by using methods such as communicative language teaching and collaborative learning with real-life communication activities like an interview.

To boost the proficiency in the speaking skill by providing low anxiety settings that promotes their communicative competence.

#### **Explanation of the Activity**

Learners can conduct interviews on selected topics with various people. The teacher must provide a rubric to students so that they know what type of questions they can ask or what path to follow, but students should prepare their interview questions. It is known that conducting

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interviews with people gives students a chance to practice their speaking ability not only in class but also outside and helps them becoming socialized and feel comfortable.

Moreover, students can interview each other like making an introduction of his or her partner and after the interview each student can present his or her study to the class. (See Annex III).

### **Analysis and Discussion**

The goal of a language learner is to become an efficient user of the language, which is reflected in a learner communicative ability. In recent years, language teaching has taken an important step in this idea as language teaching has begun to focus on developing communicative skills through teaching methods focused on developing speaking tasks where the objective is interaction, negotiation of meaning, and real-life use. However, as it has been discussed in this paper, a factor can prevent learners' oral production from occurring optimally. Anxiety is a phenomenon that can hinder the normal development of communicative activities, so it is important to consider it and to look for strategies that can help to reduce its presence in the classroom and the negative effects in learners.

Teachers play a very important role in ensuring that students have the ideal spaces and tools to make use of their communication skills and perform at their best. Lucas, Miraflores, and Go (2011) state that the classroom is a source of anxiety because is the place where learners test their competence and performance. That is why creating a pleasant and safe environment for students to express their ideas without fear of making mistakes and with real purposes is very important. Willis (1996) asserts that this leads to constant interaction with meaningful communication, which allows acquiring and improving speaking skills. To ensure that students stay motivated it is necessary that the teacher knows how and when to give feedback at appropriate times and with a positive attitude acknowledging students in success and encouraging in failure, creating a safe learning space. Harmer (1991) mentions that the correction of errors during activities is demotivating and creates fear, which reduces participation.

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Speaking is considered by many learners to be one of the most difficult skills to develop and the one that causes the most anxiety. This is quite understandable as learners are faced with activities such as speaking in front of groups or participating in conversations, which can be very demanding. When faced with these activities, learners end up experiencing tensions and fear, and therefore anxiety ends up playing an important role in their performance when using the language (Tanveer, 2007). Some of the activities that generate a lot of anxiety in learners are presentations, role-playing, and defining words (Koch and Terrell, 1991); in addition, making mistakes (Price, 1991), and not having time to prepare their speech beforehand (Ay, 2010) also generate anxiety.

These activities can be very anxiety provoking for learners, however, it is necessary to reaffirm that the environment can be a variable that has an effect on the anxiety levels that students may feel. Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) in a study they conducted with Spanish speakers concluded that there is definitely a negative relationship between anxiety and performance, but they also identified that a safer environment allows learners to speak more and express themselves better. Fostering a safe environment clearly allows students to express themselves with less fear and more freedom.

Young (1990) and Horwitz (1986) establish some sources that may be the cause of anxiety in learners. Both agree that many find it difficult to communicate in a foreign language because they have to deal with people when using the language. It is evident that when it comes to communication, interaction with other people is necessary and for some learners with certain personality traits such as insecurity, low self-esteem or fear of expressing opinions, it can be a challenge to express their ideas to peers and teachers. Therefore, the success of the learners'

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performance will depend on the type of activities used. The issue of the environment and the role of teachers have already been addressed, now it is necessary to talk about the type of activities that are useful to make the learners able to participate in speaking activities without experiencing anxiety or at least low levels of anxiety.

Interaction is part of the oral communication of a language; however, in many occasions facing a group ends up being very stressful and generates anxiety. Nevertheless, there is an opportunity to take advantage of interaction as a tool to improve communication and reduce anxiety. Fakieh and Alrabai (2015) claim that working in groups causes learners to experience reduced levels of anxiety. Cooperative work can not only ensure bigger participation but also help students improve their oral production, and ultimately benefits motivation and confidence. In many instances, learners feel more comfortable working with their peers who also contribute to the improvement of their level of proficiency. Slavin (1990) says that cooperative learning makes learners have an improvement in academic performance, and also students experience greater motivation to learn (Garibaldi, 1979 in Kagan 1986), as well as have more positive social behaviors (Lloyd, 1988) which can all contribute to better oral performance.

On the other hand, working with the teacher can also be beneficial. Young (1990) mentions the importance of these interactions, and how they can either help or hinder the presence of anxiety. It is known that speakers may avoid or abandon communication after making a mistake or when they experience communicative apprehension (Hershner, 2016), but using interviews with either peers or the teacher is an appropriate strategy to increase confidence, get feedback, and develop useful skills. Interviews allow communication in the target language, and end up being a cooperative activity because with appropriate input, production for a learner

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is easier. They also allow for the development of speaking skills since they involve asking and answering questions. Finally, interviews are activities mostly develop in the classroom with classmates or the teacher which makes the process of feedback easier, besides since the learner works with other learners or the instructor there is less fear of making mistakes or asking for help, as long as the setting has encouraged this behavior.

When discussing anxiety and how it affects students, the importance of keeping students in a safe environment is widely mentioned, and remains an important factor. Speaking games are activities that promote positive aspects in learning situations. As Lewis mentions, they promote interaction and experimentation on the one hand, but also keep students motivated. The dynamism of games makes learners be more open to these types of activities and therefore they end up participating more. The goal of speaking activities is to make students feel comfortable but also engaged so games fit this mold perfectly.

Horwitz (1986) also mentions how there are two other types of anxiety that end up affecting learners. Test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are two other types of anxiety. Both deal with a student's fear of being tested. Test anxiety is a student's fear of failure due to the high standards that are imposed in schools or academies and even society. There is also the fear of negative evaluation, which has to do with the fear of receiving a negative evaluation on a specific activity mostly dealing with feedback and peers opinions. Games are also useful to face these fears, as they not only encourage spontaneous communication meaning that students do not think much about others opinions or being evaluated, but also make learners not pay attention to grammar and syntax, which are common things assessed when speaking that might cause anxiety to arise. Storytelling is also useful in this area not only because it is an activity with a real use of language but also because it presents repetitive language in a memorable context. According to

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Ellis and Brewster (2014) storytelling is not an activity that generates anxiety, but instead a motivating, enjoyable activity, that is challenging but helps learners become more confident and efficient in their use of the language. As a story activity, students reduce their anxiety levels because the focus is not only on the use of language but also on the type of story being told. Students will focus on telling the story appropriately rather than thinking about grammar usage or peers' opinions making them less anxious. With appropriate feedback, this activity will be very helpful for learners who often experience anxiety when speaking.

As presented in this research, there is clearly a relationship between anxiety and students' performance in oral activities. This relationship tends to be mostly negative with students suffering negative effects on the academic side. Teacher grades, self-grade, and cloze tests have been prominently use to verify this relationship and in all instances anxiety has been proven to have negative effects on performance. Similarly, the cognitive effects of anxiety on learners are very detrimental. Eysenck (1979) suggested that anxious learners tend to have their attention divided between two types of cognition. Task-related which in charge of the language, and self-related which is related to thoughts about failure, assessment and others opinions. This division leads to difficulty in handling information and production, hindering optimal performance. Finally, anxiety may have social effects by making anxious learners less likely to communicate (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Communicating less clearly impedes the growth of the learners, since it is through practice and feedback that learners improve their level of proficiency.

On the other hand, other affective variables may be affected by the presence of anxiety. Motivation and attitudes of learners towards learning a language are also important factors that anxiety may be affecting. Phillips (1992) claims that negative students' attitudes and low motivation when learning a language are results of high levels of anxiety. Horwitz, et al. (1986)

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identified specific behaviors that anxious learners have. For example, to “skip class,” or “seek refuge” in the last row of a classroom to avoid the mortification of being asked to participate in speaking activities are clear indicators of students fear of using the language because of anxiety.

In order to prevent anxiety from continuing to have negative effects that end up harming student success, it is necessary not only to understand the causes and effects of anxiety but also to find possible solutions. As it has been shown, some activities can help to reduce anxiety.

Young (1990) claims that the type of oral activities students is asked to perform in the classroom can also be a source of anxiety. Therefore, developing activities that have in mind preventing anxiety have more benefits than those that can be more demanding but make tension and fear arise having detrimental effects on performance. On the other hand, the teacher's attitude and the environment that is fostered in the classroom also help to increase the levels of confidence and participation in students. Anxiety is a very difficult phenomenon to avoid when learning a language, the important thing is to be able to identify when it is happening and make use of tools that allow students to face this problem while they continue learning and improving.



### **Recommendations and Implications**

Foreign language speaking anxiety may be due to fear of making mistakes and the fear of negative evaluation, so as recommendation teachers should consider following these suggestions to help students reduce anxiety levels. First of all, teachers should tell students that they are not alone when feeling anxiety during English classes as most of the students suffer from fear of making a mistake when speaking. Thus, teachers should create an anxiety-free atmosphere by establishing a supportive attitude that provides them with optimal motivation. This supportive atmosphere, in which language mistakes are considered natural in the process of learning, can be effective in helping anxious students overcome their fears.

Moreover, it can be argued that to help learners reduce anxiety it is necessary to involve them in short speaking tasks, since they feel more confident to participate in short oral activities with small groups. In this way, anxious students are afforded with several opportunities to use language in a non-threatening context. Also, as Christophel and Frymier established that both verbal (use of humor, use of students' first names) and nonverbal (eye contact, positive gestures) interactions from the teacher have an important role inside the classroom since these can reduce anxiety and impact positively on motivation to learn (1993).

Finally, these recommendations are consistent with previous studies suggesting that teachers should not consider anxious learners as introverted, lazy, unmotivated, or "bad attitudinal" students. Instead, they should identify anxious learners to help them overcome foreign language anxiety and apply different methods to develop meaningful learning with these students.

### Conclusions

To conclude, different authors have extensively studied anxiety, but it continues to be a topic of discussion as learners of foreign languages still experience this phenomenon and because every study can conclude with very different results depending on the environment, culture, personality of the learners and other factors. The main objective of this study is to identify the possible negative effects that anxiety has on the oral performance of students at the Language Center of the University of Nariño. That is why the importance of this research deals with significant aspects that teachers must consider when teaching English to their students such as emotions, the learning environment and learning strategies. Throughout the research it has been said that the classroom and the type of speaking activities students have to perform can be the possible origin of anxiety, and that this phenomenon prevents students from expressing themselves with confidence and participating actively in oral activities that allow them to improve their level of knowledge and fluency when speaking. Therefore, if teachers are aware of this issue and are concerned about helping their students, it is necessary to have relevant strategies and materials to be applied when needed and provide continuous practice with the indispensable emotional support to help them reduce their anxiety and learn to manage it better. It is also useful to give effective assistance to the students since it is necessary to develop control over the students' emotions to fulfill oral competence. Knowing a language is more than just grammar and vocabulary. Nowadays, learning a language requires that individuals not only understand the language but also master all the skills that enable proper communication. For this reason, the teaching of English must focus on the development of communication skills with sufficient confidence and motivation to enable learners to deal with different situations.

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## **ANNEX**

## Annex I

**The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale**

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale contains 33 items, each answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree”. It measures a person’s level of anxiety by coming up with an anxiety score by adding up the ratings on the 33 items. The possible range is 33 to 165; the higher the number, the higher the level of foreign language anxiety. The construct validity of the FLCAS is based on correlations which indicate that the FLCAS can be distinguished from measures of other types of anxiety.

## Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

<i>Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)</i>					
By Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz and Joann Cope (1986)					
SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neither agree nor disagree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree.					
	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.					
2. I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in language class.					
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.					
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.					

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5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.					
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.					

7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.					
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.					
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.					
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.					
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.					
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.					
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.					
14. I would <i>not</i> be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.					
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.					

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17. I often feel like not going to my language class.					
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.					
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.					
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.					
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.					
22. I <i>don't</i> feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.					
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.					
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.					
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.					
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.					
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.					
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.					
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.					

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30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.					
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.					
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.					
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I have not prepared in advance.					

## Annex II

### IELTS topics

A set of 5 minutes' discussion topic sentence adopted from IELTS speaking test samples. Speaking tests were score from 1 to 10. Table 1 shows the list of IELTS topics used in this study.

The list of IELTS topics

TOPICS		TOPICS	
1	What do you like to do together as a family?	11	Which place would you really like to visit? Why?
2	Do you get along well with your family?	12	What's the best place you've ever visited?
3	If you could change your job or profession, what would you do?	13	How do you think computers have changed the world?
4	Describe the company or organization you work for.	14	What are some advantages of the Internet? What are some disadvantages?
5	What kind of school did you go to as a child?	15	Do you think writing email has strengthened or weakened people's writing skills?
6	Do you think your country has an effective education system?	16	Describe a friend. How long have you known each other? What do you usually do together?



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7	Describe your hometown. What's special about it?	17	What do you feel about smoking in public places?
8	What's the weather like in your country? Does the weather affect your mood?	18	What are some of the advantages of marriage? What are some of the disadvantages?
9	Describe your home. What kind of building do you live in?	19	What are some of your hobbies? When did you first develop this hobby?
10	Have you ever been to a wedding? Whose wedding was it? Describe the wedding ceremony.	20	Which is the most popular place to shop in your hometown?

**Annex III**

**Didactic Unit**

**Activities to Reduce the Effects of Anxiety on English Oral Performance of Students from  
the University of Nariño Language Center**

This didactic unit aims to provide teachers with alternative activities that promote confidence and a safe learning environment, as well as encourage the positive effects on the oral performance of students. Thus, this didactic unit includes four lessons that seek to reduce students' anxiety when speaking through the implementation of some speaking activities. The lessons included in this didactic unit are the following:

**Lesson 1:** Mafia Game

**Lesson 2:** Jigsaw Activity

**Lesson 3:** Storytelling

**Lesson 4:** Interviews



I

# Game

## Mafia Game



Work in a group, read the following instructions and have fun.

- **Game Roles**

Citizens



A doctor



A detective



The mafia.



- **To Assign Roles**

Secretly, every student gets one card, in a group there will be 1 or 3 students being mafia members.

- **Role Powers**

- The detective can investigate the identity of another player during nighttime.
- The doctor can prevent someone from being killed (including him/herself) during nighttime.
- Mafia members can choose someone to kill during night time.

- **Game Play**

This game operates in two modes: **day** and **night** time.

In the **day** time, you have to talk to each other and try to determine who might be mafia. At the end of the day, accusations are made. If an accusation is supported in a vote, the accused player is killed. At **night**, you must shut your eyes. The mafia can open their eyes, and, as a group, you must all agree on someone to kill (by pointing). Then, the mafia has to shut the eyes, and the teacher asks the doctor to wake up. The doctor then points at someone to save. The

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doctor then sleeps and the detective wakes up, and points to someone to identify. The teacher must then tell the detective if the person s/he pointed at is a mafia member, citizen, or doctor. Afterwards, everyone opens their eyes as it's morning.

If the doctor did not choose to save the person who the mafia wanted to kill, then the teacher must announce that a player died last night (and tell the class who it was). That dead player becomes a **ghost** who cannot speak anymore in the game, but no longer has to sleep and can therefore watch the game.

Accusations and voting to kill someone in the day and murder at night continue until one of the following happens:

- 1) All the mafia are killed, so the citizens win.
- 2) The mafia outnumber the citizens, so the mafia wins.

Note: When players are killed, they should not reveal what their role was until the game is over. This can make the game more exciting and mysterious.

### • Teacher's note

#### 1.1.1 Mafia: Game Execution

- Explain the rules.
- Assign the roles.
- Tell everyone to go to sleep because it is night time. Then ask the mafia to wake up. The mafia open their eyes and look at each other (so they know not to try to kill each other later). The mafia are then told to sleep again. (Note: it's important that you as a moderator note who the mafia are, so s/he can know when the game has been won.)
- Tell everyone to wake up as it's daytime. Give the players some time to **question** each other to try to determine each other's roles. The purpose of the questioning is to try to figure out who is part of the mafia and who is not.
- At the end of the day, it is time for **accusations**. Players can accuse one person of being mafia. The accuser must provide a **justification** for his/her belief. The accusation then must have a **second** s/he must also give a reason why s/he supports the accusation. If an accusation has been justified and seconded, it goes to a **vote**. If the majority of players vote that the accused should be killed, then s/he is killed and becomes a 'ghost'.
- Tell players to close their eyes and go to sleep because it's night time. The mafia, doctor, and sheriff perform their duties as described above.
- Afterwards, announce if someone has been killed, and repeat the cycle.

# Jigsaw Activities



1. Work in a group, read the paragraph that has been assigned to you and summarize it with your classmates until you become “experts.”

## Top Five Secrets of Success

Are you ambitious? Follow our five secrets of success and you can succeed!

### Group 1

First; \_\_\_\_\_ i that’s what pop star Shakira did. She first performed in public aged four, and for nine years, she wrote songs and sang for her friends. By the age of 13, she had a contract with a record company. For the last 15 years, she has been one of the most successful pop singers in the world. If you can’t start young, then \_\_\_\_\_.

### Group 2

When Steven Spielberg didn’t get into film school, he pretended he had a job at Universal Studios. He walked confidently past the security guards and worked there for three months. For nearly 40 years, Spielberg has directed many Hollywood films, including Indiana Jones, Jurassic Park and more recently, War Horse.

### Group 3

It isn’t just confidence. Our third tip is: \_\_\_\_\_. The 10,000-hour rule for success says you need to practice for a minimum of 10,000 hours. That’s about six hours a day for five years. Microsoft founder Bill Gates is a good example; for about five years, when he was a teenager, he spent 10,000 hours working on a basic computer. His hard work gave him a big advantage over other people.

### Group 4

Others can also inspire you, so tip number four is: \_\_\_\_\_. At the age of five, Novak Djokovic decided he didn’t want to be a good tennis player; he wanted to be the best tennis player in the world. Djokovic got his inspiration from champion Pete Sampras and he modelled himself on his hero -he tried to be better than Sampras and everyone else. In 2011, Djokovic, aged 24, won three major world championships and became the World Number One.

### Group 5

Finally, \_\_\_\_\_. Luckily for Harry Potter fans, author J K Rowling didn’t listen to the negative comments from 12 publishers who rejected her books. For two years, she tried to get them published. Even the publisher who gave her a contract said she had no chance of making money in children’s books. He was wrong, and for the last ten years, J K Rowling has been a multi-millionaire. These successful people started at the bottom and got to the top. You can too! Follow our five-point plan and you will succeed!



2. Form groups where all members are "experts" in a secret of success. Then, share your secret with your classmates to know the list of the top five secrets of success.
3. Write the five secrets of success in the correct place.
  - a) Set your goals high
  - b) Keep trying
  - c) Start young
  - d) Be confident
  - e) Work hard- very hard

## Practice A



With your group, discuss and answer the following questions based on the article "The Top Five Secrets to Success."

1. What did Shakira do when she was four years old?
2. How long ago did Spielberg start in the film industry?
3. How long did Bill gates spend on his computer when he was a teenager?
4. Who did Novak Djokovic want to be like?
5. How many publishers said no to J K Rowling's Harry Potter books?

## Practice B



Work with your group and discuss

1. Do you agree with the five secrets of success in the article? Why? / Why not?
2. Which one do you think is the most important piece of advice?
3. Have you or has anyone you know succeeded in doing something by following any of these tips?

### Useful Expressions to Express Your Opinion

In my opinion,      To my mind,      Speaking personally,  
My view / opinion / belief / impression / conviction is that ...  
I would say that ...      It seems to me that ...

As for me / As to me,  
I hold the view that ...  
I am of the opinion that ...



## III

# Storytelling

- Read the stories below and look up the meaning of the unfamiliar words.
- Choose one story and summarize it to your partner.

1

## Two Friends and the Bear

Vijay and Raju were friends. On a holiday they went into a forest. They were enjoying the beauty of nature. Suddenly they saw a bear coming at them. They were so frightened. Raju who knew climbing trees ran up to a tree and climbed up quickly. He did not think of Vijay. Vijay did not know tree climbing. Vijay had heard animals do not prefer dead bodies, so he fell to the ground and held his breath. The bear sniffed him and thought he was dead. So, he went away. Raju asked Vijay, "What did the bear whisper into your ears?" Vijay replied, "The bear asked me to keep away from friends like you" and went

2

## The Wolf in Sheep-skin

A wolf was walking in the countryside. He found a sheep-skin spread on the ground. He thought, "If I wear this skin and get mixed up in the flock, the shepherd will not suspect me. At night, I will kill a stout sheep and then take him away with me". The wolf covered himself with the sheep-skin and got mixed up with a flock of sheep. As he had expected, the shepherd took him as a sheep and shut him also in the pen. The wolf was waiting for the night. The shepherd had a feast that night. He sent a servant to fetch a fat sheep. The servant saw the sheep-skin covered wolf by chance. That

3

## The Camel and the Jackal

A camel and a jackal were friends. One day the jackal took his friend to a big sugar-cane farm. It was on the opposite side of a river. After a sumptuous meal the jackal began to howl loudly. The frightened camel pleaded with the jackal not to do so. The jackal said, "Friend, I have this habit after every meal. I cannot help it." Soon the farmers arrived and gave a sound thrashing to the camel. When the camel crossed the river the jackal joined him on his back. In the midstream the camel took a deliberate dip in the water. When the jackal cried out in terror, the camel said casually: "I have the habit of rolling in the water after every meal." The poor jackal was drowned.

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## The Crow and the Eagle

There lived a crow on a tree top. Every day he used to watch with utter wonder the acts of an eagle. The eagle had a nest high up on a mountain. He used to swoop down from there to get hold of a lamb and fly up again and all in one go. The crow was amazed by the feat of the eagle. One day he was so excited that he wanted to imitate the eagle. So up he flew as high as he could. From there he began to swoop down. He came down and down. But alas, he could not control himself. He crashed on the ground and broke his beak.



## Practice A

Work in a group and tell your classmates a story, it can be a moral, an anecdote or a joke.

### How to start?

Stories often start with the phrase “**Once upon a time**”.  
However, if you are going to tell your story after someone else has already spoken, you can say something like:

*“That reminds me...”*

*“Hearing your story reminds me of when...”*

*“Something similar happened to me...”*

### Sequencing words

These words show the chronological sequence of events.

First of all,      Secondly,      Previously...  
Then...      Later (on)...      Finally...

## Practice B: Pair Works

- With a classmate, write a short story taking into account the words below.
- Tell your story to another group and listen to other groups' stories.

ring	witch	white horse	dragon
knight	wolf	broom	storm
dark forest	princess	castle	sword
wizard	queen	treasure	mountain
envelope	Magic carpet	cave	bear
sea	boat	giant	army

### Vocabulary

Try to use a wide range of words to make your story more interesting. Remember that you can “*exaggerate*” when you tell a story, so instead of using words like “nice” or “bad”, experiment with more interesting words, such as “fabulous”, “wonderful”, “horrible”, “awful” or “terrible”.

Finally *remember that you are telling a story* not giving a lecture. Try to “*involve*” them in the story, keep eye contact, use the right intonation and try to make your face expressive. Have fun!





IV

# Interviews

1. Look at the pictures below and listen to your teacher pronunciation.
2. Work with a partner and act out this dialogue.

**Panel 1:**

Thank you for giving us this interview, Indira. It's for the "Teenagers" magazine.

It's a pleasure!

**Panel 2:**

I know you're in the international Teenagers Program and you're from India, but I want to know... What do you do every day?

Well, we have many activities every day. For example today, Monday, we study Math, art, geography and music.

**Panel 3:**

Oh! How interesting! What time do you get up?

At six o'clock.

**Panel 4:**

Really? That's very early!

Yes, but it's because I like to swim and I swim an hour every morning.

**Panel 5:**

Do your teachers give you homework?

Yes, they do.

**Panel 6:**

So, What time do you do your homework?

At five o'clock!



## Practice A

Work in a group and ask your classmates some questions about their activities, answer their questions.

### Example

- What time do you get up every morning? I get up at seven o'clock.
- How often do you go to the cinema? I go every weekend. I love movies!
- What do you do on Sundays? I love cooking with my mother and go swimming with my friends.

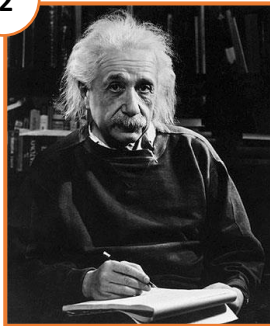
## Practice B: Pair Works

- Choose one of the characters below. Imagine that you are him or her.
- With a classmate, write a short interview about that person, decide who will be the interviewer and who will be the interviewee.
- Prepare the interview to present it to the rest of the class.

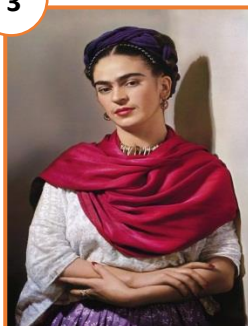
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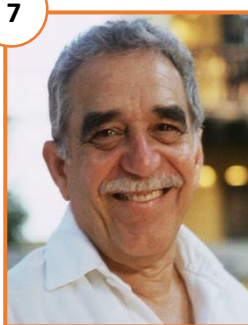
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