ORAL ESL TEST ANXIETY WITH EMIRATI SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

A THESIS IN TEACHING ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

In the UAE and globally, high-stakes testing is prevalent in second language learning. One important and integral part of high-stakes English language tests is the oral proficiency interview, which can be a pre-requisite to gaining admission to an English-speaking university.

The purpose of this study is to examine Emirati secondary school boys' and girls' experiences with and perceptions of anxiety in the classroom and oral assessments and tests. Furthermore, this study focuses on the different types of anxiety experienced in class and during an Edexcel IGCSE (International General Certificate in Secondary Education) ESL (English as a Second Language) OPI (oral proficiency interview). In addition, this study, conducted in the UAE, examined the strategies students used to prepare for oral tests and whether test-taking strategies students used in oral proficiency interview exams assisted with their anxiety. The study also observed physical signs of test anxiety and anxiety differences between secondary boys and girls during an Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI test.

The volunteer participants were 25, 15-17-year-old Emirati students from two IGCSE ESL classes that I do not teach. This study included a videotaped mock oral proficiency IGCSE interview; audiotaped semi-structured individual interviews, questionnaires, and an audiorecorded semi-structured focus group discussion. The findings suggested that language and test anxiety is multi-faceted and can affect boys and girls in a number of different ways and at different times during class activities and also in an OPI. In addition, all participants showed different physical signs of test anxiety during the first two stages of the OPI, and these physical signs of test anxiety were considerably less frequent in the final part of the OPI. The causes and types of anxiety

reported by the students ranged from language learning difficulties, problems trying to retrieve appropriate English vocabulary, code switching from Arabic language to English and vice versa, differences in social status of the teachers/language instructors, and unfamiliarity with the interlocutor.

The pedagogical implications of these findings for understanding anxiety and oral test anxiety with second language students for teachers, schools and examination boards are discussed, as are suggestions for future research. Furthermore, considering the important role of teachers in second language pedagogy and the use of English as the main language of instruction, this study also offers suggestions to lessen anxiety for oral class activities and oral assessments, and presents test-taking strategies.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT…….…….. iii

LIST OF FIGURES……..……x

LIST OF TABLES……...…….....xi

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS…….....xii

DEDICATION…….....xiii

Chapter

1. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY…….…….....1

Statement of the Problem ……...……2

Roles of the Researcher…….....5

Review of Chapters and Appendices …….……5

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....6

What Is an Oral Proficiency Interview.....6

Common Formats of an OPI.....…….…….…6

Validity and Reliability in Oral Proficiency Interviews…….....8

Construct Validity ……8

Construct-irrelevant Variance ……..……8

Predictive Validity ……...8

Content Validity ……...……9

The Link between Reliability and Validity ….……...10

Reliability……..…....10

Factors Affecting Reliability ……..……10

Test Administration Reliability ……..11

Rater Reliability …….……12

Test Reliability ……..12
Context of Test Questions ……13
Student-Related Aspects of Reliability…….....14
Gender Differences and Interlocutor Effect 14
Language Learning Anxiety…….....15
Types of Anxiety Related to Language Learning…….....16
Communication Apprehension ……16
Test Anxiety ……17
Fear of Negative Evaluation ……...……18
Factors Affecting Anxiety…….....18
Student Beliefs ……18
Learner Self-esteem ……19
Instructor Beliefs ……19
Environmental Factors and Anxiety ……...20
Gender Issues ……..20
The Effects of Language Anxiety……..….....21
Physical Manifestations of Anxiety ……21
Cognitive Difficulties ……..21
Input ……21
Processing ……...22
Output…….....24
Schema Theory and Oral Response ……24
Social Effect of Being Evaluated ……25
Washback…….....26
Washback and the Effect on Teachers ……26
Washback and the Impact on Education and Society…..……26
Achieving Positive Washback on Tests ……..……27
Learning and Test-Taking Strategies..……..…….....28
Anxiety-Reducing Strategies.……29
IGCSE ESL Oral Proficiency Interview Exam……..29
Advantages and Disadvantages of the Edexcel

IGCSE ESL OPI……..30
Marking the IGCSE ESL OPI ……31

3. METHODOLOGY 33
Overview of the Study.....33
The Participants.....34
The Setting…….....35
The Edexcel IGCSE ESL Course……...…….....35
The IGCSE Oral Interview ……...……36
Data Collection…….....36
The OPI Observation ……36
The Semi-structured Follow-up Individual Interview ……..37
The Questionnaire ……37
The Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion……..……38

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS.....40
Results 40
Observed Manifestations of Anxiety in the OPI
(Research Question One)……..……....41
Part One of the OPI…….....…….……41
Part Two of the OPI.....43
Part Three of the OPI……..….....…….…..……...43
Reported Causes of Anxiety……...……..…….....44
Causes of Oral Anxiety in Class……....…...……45
Oral Anxiety in the OPI…….……48
Students Suggestions…….....……..…….....53
Gender and Anxiety…….……...……...53
Reported Test-Taking Strategies……..….……...54
Observed Test-Taking Strategies…...……...… ….……..55
Strategies Reported Being Used Prior to the OPI……..……...55
Anxiety-Reducing Strategies Reported Used

During the OPI……………………………….………..56
Miscellaneous Responses ……………………………..…57

5. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS..60
Summary of Findings...60
Implications of the Study……….………….…………………….......65
Implications for Teachers..……..……………..………………..……...65
Implications for Schools……..…...….……………....………………67
Implications for Edexcel………………........……………...…………..68
Limitations of This Study and
Directions for Further Research…………………..…………...69
Final Thought ……..70

REFERENCE LIST…….………………………………………………..71

Vita……………………………………………………………………………79

Appendix

A. EDEXCEL ORAL INTERVIEW TEST………………………………......82

B. EDEXEL SPEAKING MARKING GUIDE
(PUBLIC VERSION)……………………………………………......85

C. INITIAL OBSERVATION SHEET: TEST-TAKING SYMPTOMS
AND PREPARATION……………………………… ………………......89

D. SEMI-STRUCTURED FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS……………………..90

E. QUESTIONNAIRE………………………………………………………91

F. SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (STUDENT VERSION)……..….....93
G. SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (TEACHER VERSION)……..….....94
H. CONSENT FORM……..97

FIGURE

Figure Page

1. Recursive relationships among anxiety, cognition and behaviour…….....23

TABLES

Table Page

1. Background Data about the Participants……34
2. Number of Students Manifesting Observable Signs of Test Anxiety ……...41
3. The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part One of the OPI……42
4. The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part Two of the OPI……...43
5. The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part Three of the OPI……..……....44
6. A Summary of the Reported Causes of Anxiety……52
7. The Causes of Anxiety in English Classes and Oral Exam Assessments…..……..…….....54
8. Number of Students' Test-taking Strategies Used in Part Two of the OPI……..55
9. A Summary of Anxiety-reducing Strategies…...……...……..... 57
10. Feelings about Learning and Using English in the classroom…...…….....57

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DEDICATION

Words cannot express the huge thanks and support I would like to express to my wife, Ana and my son Afonso. Thank you for everything.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

One common traditional and globally recognized means to examine speaking skills and competency used in the UAE is an oral proficiency interview (OPI) exam. This OPI exam can be taken throughout a language course, formative, and at the end of a course, summative. Typically, the OPI exam is recorded and conducted between one interlocutor/examiner and one test taker. Furthermore, the OPI is either rated by a school examiner/ interlocutor or, as in the case in my school, sent to external raters to be marked. Currently, my school uses the internationally recognized examination board in the United Kingdom, Edexcel, which reports grades to the school approximately three months after the exam.

The Edexcel IGCSE ESL (International General Certificate of Secondary Education English as a Second Language) exam (see Appendix A) is compulsory for all English-as-a-second-language students at the school where I currently work. ESL students are the vast majority of all the students at the school. Furthermore, these ESL learners are all Arabic first language students. Although most of the students have been at the school learning through English as the main language of instruction and studying English from around the age of four, I have often witnessed students manifesting forms of ESL anxiety in the classroom (hands shaking and hesitating while trying to pronounce words) and in test-taking situations.

The IGCSE ESL oral interview is part of this high-stakes exam for students at my school because each year the Edexcel IGCSE ESL course is graded by this single summative exam. The IGCSE ESL exam is also timetabled as the first exam of all the subjects in the school that all second language students undertake each year.

Another important reason that the IGCSE ESL exam is high stakes for students at my school is the school's policy. If an IGCSE ESL student gets a C grade (a pass), he/she has to re-sit the one-year Edexcel IGCSE course the following year. The reason for this policy is that it is assumed the student will be motivated to improve and get a better grade the next time. However, for students, having to do another year using similar materials, being placed in a group below their own year, and being labelled as a "re-sit" can translate into a de-motivating factor for learning English.

One other demotivating factor stemming from students' test experience is that

the exam papers are sent to the examination board in the United Kingdom to be marked and only single grades are sent back that range between A+ ("excellent skill") and G ("little to no skill") (Edexcel, 2010, p. 3). These grades provide no feedback to individual test takers or give any advice to teachers about how the test taker was graded in each part of the exam. In terms of *washback* which refers to the effect tests have on learning and teaching (see Cheng & Curtis, 2006), then negative washback may add to raising uncertainty and anxiety in students' exam preparation.

Statement of the Problem

Addressing test anxiety, therefore, becomes an integral part of teaching, as teachers need to prepare students for tests and subsequently be partially responsible for helping students deal with oral test anxiety. Thus factors which may cause students to fail oral proficiency interviews need to be examined. One oral exam which is used throughout the world and in the UAE includes the high-stakes oral interview test, IELTS (International English Language Testing System). In 2008 and 2009, the UAE was ranked one of the lowest in the world in terms of test taker performance in the IELTS oral speaking interview. This test is a pre-requisite for students to gain the grades needed from the exam for university admission (IELTS, 2009).

In addition, as an IELTS examiner in the UAE, I often see not only negative effects of student-related factors of reliability in terms of test anxiety and lack of test-taking strategies during oral interview exams, but also the impact of the role high-stakes IELTS exams play in allowing or not allowing students to study in English-speaking universities in the UAE or overseas. Moreover, these high-stakes tests are being used as a vital part of obtaining immigration status in English-speaking countries. Two examples of high-stakes language tests which are used for immigration purposes include the Adult Migrant English Program (2011) used in Australia and also IELTS. According to IELTS (2011) a number of international government agencies require IELTS band scores and these countries include Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Grades from this global high-stakes English language OPI test are becoming recognised as valuable currency and present opportunities to study, work, and live in English-speaking countries.

One reason students fail these exams may be student-related factors affecting their reliability as test takers, not having exam strategies for effective test-taking.

Student-related issues of reliability could also include anxiety towards the exam itself, which may affect performance. The Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI can be compared to IELTS as it has the same exam structure and design (three parts), with similar time frames and tasks (individual questions, presenting an unfamiliar topic, and discussion).

Oral test anxiety can also stem from a number of other factors. Firstly, some ESL teachers do not fully understand how oral anxiety affects students in oral assessments or oral tests. Such ESL teachers, e.g., English teachers who have no training in teaching second language learners, may not understand how this type of anxiety can be an obstacle towards learning another language or another subject taught in a second language. In the context where I work, for example, 90 percent of the teachers are native English-speakers, and their previous experience is in teaching first language students from their own country (*School Handbook*, 2010). Moreover, these teachers often have a number of different accents, South African, New Zealand, Australian, varied English accents which some students find confusing to understand. Furthermore, these teachers have little or no ESL experience in teaching Arabic learners before they arrive in the UAE from their home countries. In addition, as the school adopts a British curriculum, the school policy of recruitment is directly through agencies in English-speaking countries. This policy means that qualified English speaking teachers in English-speaking countries are considered highly valuable, whether or not they have any experience teaching in an Arabic context. Also, the majority of native English language teachers at my school do not speak Arabic or a second language. Thus some teachers are unaware of the challenges facing ESL students studying in English as the main language of instruction.

Another factor which contributes to the anxiety students experience is through oral assessments and tests. Oral test anxiety can also be manifested before, during, and after an oral interview and can be a contributing factor towards learning and using a second language in test taking situations. Anxiety is experienced at different stages and dealt with in different ways by different students. Anxiety can also become an obstacle towards retrieving information in the stages leading to oral responses. Test anxiety in oral interviews can also be observed through physical manifestations, such as sweating, or pencil tapping, and also in the strategies (or lack of strategies) students use for their oral preparation. For example, for the IGCSE ESL OPI, students are

presented in Part Two with a task prompt and allowed one minute to prepare and take notes. These notes are a way of processing information and activating schemata to prepare for their oral presentation. Observing what types of strategies which students use to prepare their oral presentations, e.g., note taking, brain storming, drawing, etc. (or no strategy used), highlights whether their test-taking strategies are effective or ineffective to control anxiety when they present their oral responses.

To consider these factors of oral anxiety in oral interview exams for Emirati students at a secondary school in one educational zone in the UAE, my specific research questions are the following:

1) How is test anxiety manifested by Emirati secondary school male and female students in an Edexcel IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview?

This question is addressed through a videotaped individual oral proficiency interview which followed the rubric of the IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview exam. The video was subsequently viewed for physical signs of test anxiety as noted in the literature, and a check list and observation notes were then written up for data analysis.

2) What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview?

This question was addressed through the videotaped observation in terms of what observable strategies were used, if any, before the exam and in all three sections of the OPI.

3) What do these students report as factors in their experiencing oral test anxiety?

This question was addressed directly after the OPI observation by the audiotaped semi-structured follow-up individual interview. All the students undertook the questionnaire and semi-structured focus group discussion, which took place right after the OPI.

4) What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety?

5) What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class?

These questions were addressed in the semi-structured follow-up individual interview, the questionnaire, and the semi-structured focus group discussion.

Roles of the Researcher

I had three roles in this research. Firstly, as an IGCSE ESL teacher it was my duty and responsibility to prepare students for the summative Edexcel IGCSE ESL exams at the end of the year, in particular, the part of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL exam which is the OPI. Secondly, I was appointed by the school to be the only IGCSE ESL Edexcel OPI interlocutor, which means that I had to administer the OPI, select exam topics, set up the exam equipment and interview individual students. I have had five years as an IELTS examiner and five years as an Edexcel IGCSE ESL interlocutor at my school. However, I have had no formal or on-going training as an Edexcel IGCSE interlocutor, and I am also the only teacher who is asked to be the interlocutor at school. My third role was that of a researcher, observing manifestations of oral test anxiety, anxiety-reducing test-taking strategies, and factors affecting oral test anxiety.

Review of Chapters and Appendices

Chapter One reviewed the context of where the study took place and problems which may cause students to experience oral anxiety in class and in test-taking situations (Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI). Chapter Two, the literature review, defines what an OPI is and how this method of oral assessment is used in the Edexcel IGCSE ESL exam, the factors of reliability and validity that affect OPIs, and how anxiety may affect language learners and test takers. Subsequently, this chapter also reviews test anxiety and the impact of washback on teaching, learning and students. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in the study, including the design of the study, the participants, the setting, and the data gathering instruments used. Chapter 4 then discusses the findings concerning the causes and types of anxiety observed and experienced by the participants, strategies used to decrease test anxiety, and gender differences in test anxiety. Chapter 5, the final chapter, discusses the conclusions, implications, and limitations of the study. It also presents suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section starts by defining OPIs (oral proficiency interviews), OPI formats, and the advantages and disadvantages of using an OPI in terms of validity and reliability. Also, this chapter discusses the types of language anxiety students may experience and the factors which affect students' learning of and being tested in a second language. The last part of this chapter reviews the term washback, strategies for learning, test-taking strategies and anxiety-reducing strategies which may be used in class and tests. Finally is a review of the Edexcel IGCSE OPI (International General Certificate of Secondary Education English as a Second Language), which was the focus of this research.

What Is an Oral Proficiency Interview?

An OPI, according to Brown (2003), is a type of oral assessment in which test takers sit "down in a direct face-to-face exchange and proceed through a protocol of questions and directives" (p. 167). The OPI as a form of assessing and testing second language students has become a popular way to assess and test oral skills. Underhill (1992) notes that "the interview is the most common of all test; for many people, it is the only kind of oral test" (p. 54). One reason why OPIs are popular ways of testing oral skills is that oral interviews may offer a realistic means of assessing students' oral language performance (Chalhoub-Deville, 1995).

An OPI may be used for a variety of different purposes, "including academic placement, professional credentialing, student assessment" (Fall, Adair-Hauck & Gilsan, 2007, p. 380). For the purpose of grading, OPIs may also be recorded and assessed by either a trained examiner, as done with IELTS or, alternatively, sent away for external marking, as done with Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI.

Common Formats of an OPI

The format of oral interviews as a tool for assessment/testing can follow different interviewing designs: the teacher/examiner interviewing the students, the students interviewing each other, or the students interviewing the teacher/examiner (Graves, 2000). Alternatively, a one-to-one interview follows a "direct, face-to-face

exchange between learner and interviewer" (Hughes, 1992, p. 54). There are variations of the one-to-one OPI format. One example is to place two test takers at one time with the interviewer (Cambridge, 2011).

A practical advantage of placing two test takers at one time in an OPI is that test centers can see more students at one time (Hughes, 2003). Another advantage of having two students together is that test tasks could be presented to encourage student-to-student interaction. This interaction, as Brown (2004) notes, can be achieved through posing problem-solving activities, and through "role plays, the interviewer can maximize the output of the test takers while lessening the need for his or her own output" (p. 171).

Maden and Taylor (2001) also suggest, linking interviewing to teaching, that the interviewer (usually the language instructor or teacher,) should also enter into the interaction with students for both teaching and assessment purposes. However, as Maden and Taylor (2001) note, the length of interaction with the instructor/ interviewer may affect the type of response and hinder maximum spoken responses from the test taker.

Canale (1984) believes that to maximize a test taker's performance in OPIs, students should be led through four main stages in test administration: Warm up, level check, probe, and wind-down. The warm up stage is intended to put the "test taker at ease and to familiarize him or her with the target language and with the interviewers" (Canale, 1984, p. 354). The level check is designed to seek "to identify that proficiency level at which the test taker performs best (i.e. most comfortable and most satisfactorily)" (Canale, 1984, p. 354). According to Brown (2004), using question prompts at this stage can also help provide the interviewer with a picture of what the test taker can do and cannot do, whereas the probe stage provides an opportunity for the interlocutor to challenge test takers to try and go beyond their oral skill level. According to Canale (1984), the purpose of this probe is to "verify the test taker's maximum proficiency level and to demonstrate to the test taker what tasks he or she cannot yet perform" (p. 454). The wind-down section, according to Brown (2004), is to dedicate a "short period of time during which the interviewer encourages the test taker to relax with some easy questions, sets the test taker's mind at ease, and provides information about when and where to obtain the results of the interview" (p. 168). Brown (2004) also adds that this stage is not scored.

Validity and Reliability in Oral Proficiency Interviews

A test is said to be valid if it really measures what it is supposed to measure (Weir, 2005; Hughes, 2003). However, there are many aspects of validity, including construct validity, construct-irrelevant variance, predictive validity and content validity.

Construct Validity

Bachman and Palmer (1996) define construct validity as "the meaningfulness and appropriateness of the interpretations that we make on the basis of test scores" (p. 21). The meaningfulness and usefulness of test scores are to make sure a test score is an accurate representation of a student's level of language knowledge skills (Luoma, 2004; Weir, 2005). Underhill (1992) also states that a test should "share the same assumptions and the same philosophy as the program of which it is part" (p. 106). If, for example, an OPI is measuring aspects of communicative competence, then the test needs to reflect these components.

Construct-irrelevant Variance

Construct-irrelevant variance can be defined as extraneous factors affecting the "test taker's ability on the construct that causes the test score to be high or low" (Fulcher & Davidison, 2007, p. 25). If aspects of a test task are irrelevant to the focal construct of a test, then this may make the test irrelevantly more difficult for some individuals or groups (Messick, 1989). Construct-irrelevant variance in a test may lead to lower scores for some test takers but higher scores for other test takers (Weir, 2005). Fulcher and Davidson (2007) point out that test anxiety and test unfamiliarity would introduce a construct-irrelevant element.

Predictive Validity

Predictive validity may be used to predict a student's success in English at some future point in their educational journey (Hughes, 2003). Brown (2004) also adds that predictive validity is achieved in tests if tests can accurately "predict a test taker's likelihood of future success" (p. 25). One example of what assessment seeks to aim at predicting through an OPI can be illustrated through the high-stakes IELTS exam which includes an OPI. The IELTS mission statement says that the test is

"measuring real ability for real life. IELTS encourages, reflects and tests English as it is used in work, study and life. This real life authenticity gives you a personal and valid indicator of just how good you are!" (IELTS, 2008, p. 1). In other words, IELTS claims to measure general English ability. However, Dooey's (1999) study into whether IELTS was an accurate predictor of performance and success for business, science, and engineering students with 89 undergraduate students, found that language was not a key factor contributing to academic success, as measured by the IELTS test. On the other hand, Woodrow's (2006) study found significant correlations between writing, speaking and listening of 82 IELTS students and the same students' GPA in their first semester at university. Determining predictive validity with tests like IELTS may depend on factors such as the group of students and the course studied, as well as the size of the sample and length of the study.

Content Validity

When considering validity and testing general language proficiency, Hughes (2003) states that "a test is said to have content validity if its content constitutes a representative sample of language skills with which it is meant to be concerned" (p. 23). To reinforce content validity in a test, the tasks used should be relevant and representative and at the same time show opportunities of complexity which can reflect different levels or abilities from individual students (Messick, 1996). Bachman and Palmer (1981, cited in Weir, 2005) also note that content validity is "principally concerned with the extent to which the selection of test tasks is representative of the larger universe of tasks of which the test is assumed to be a sample" (p. 25). However, selecting valid oral tasks to reflect oral proficiency in a language is challenging. Weir (2005) observes that validating tasks in tests is challenging, owing to the "attempts to operationalize real-life behaviour in a test" (p. 20).

Hughes (2003) also points out that in an achievement test selecting an accurate range of test tasks which reflect the course aims can be problematic if the course aims are set out in more general terms. Understanding fully what concepts the test content aims to measure becomes essential if "the results of performance on a test give us an accurate picture of the underlying abilities or constructs we are attempting to measure" (Weir, 2005, p. 12). In addition, Brown (2004) points out that these constructs should aim at eliciting an adequate and equal weighting towards the tasks

students have to perform, e.g., tests offering a variety of item types and appropriate time distribution which are representative for what skills are taught in a course. Then to achieve content validity, the tasks and content must accurately match the list of skills or functions from a language curriculum.

The Link between Reliability and Validity

A complex issue is how and to what degree validity and reliability impact a test (Alderson, Clapham, & Wall, 1995). Weir (2005) points out researchers focusing on aspects of test reliability and validity on tests in the past had different opposing viewpoints.

However, Weir (2005) observes that the validity and supporting reliability of a test should work hand in hand: "validity of a test does not lie in what test designers claim; rather, they need to produce evidence to support such claims" (p. 15). According to Chappelle (1999), reliability is now seen as a type of validity evidence in tests. Considering their importance, both validity and reliability in tests are "complementary aspects of identifying, estimating, and interpreting different sources of variance in test scores" (Bachman, 1990, p. 239).

Reliability

Reliability in test scores, according to Bachman and Palmer (1996), should mean that the "score will be consistent across different characteristics of the testing situation" (p. 19). Brown (2004) defines reliability in classroom tests, saying when teachers "give the same test to the same student or matched students on two different occasions; the test should yield similar results" (p. 20).

Factors Affecting Reliability

Factors which may reduce and affect reliability in tests may include test formats, the content of the questions and the time given for test takers (Coombe, Folse & Hubley, 2007). Other factors of test reliability include test administration, raters, the test itself and test tasks.

Test Administration Reliability

Test-administration-related factors which may impact the reliability of a test can include outside noise during a test, bad photocopying, the amounts of light and temperature where the test is placed, and the conditions of the desks, chairs and time of day the test is administered (Brown, 2004). The way a test is conducted and delivered by the interlocutor/ examiner may also impact the reliability of a student's performance. An interlocutor's accent and/or speech rate also may cause students not to fully understand instructions on a spoken test (Weir, 2005).

Rater Reliability

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), "if raters rate more severely than others, then the ratings of different raters are not consistent, and the scores obtained could not be considered to be reliable" (p. 20), resulting in inter-rater reliability problems. Human error or subjectivity (inter- and/or intra-rater reliability) may also cause differences with the reliability in the scoring process, and this affects reliability in measurement of oral samples from a test taker (Coombe et al, 2007; Brown & Hudson, 1998).

Another way raters may cause the test scores to be unreliable is if the interlocutor is familiar with the test taker. Brown (2004) notes that unreliability in test scores may happen due to the interlocutor or examiner being biased towards the test taker.

Creating a consistent scoring system which is workable and reliable for tests is a challenge (Brown, 2004). Underhill (1992) also points out that one reason oral samples are difficult to score is that "at higher levels it is difficult to produce such well-defined scales" (p. 56). In addition, understanding how to score a limited speaking sample so it is relevant to a given context also may be difficult (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007). Another reason for unreliability in the scoring process may be due to the interview experience of the interlocutor/examiner (Luoma, 2004).

However, to increase reliability in test administration, training can be offered to interlocutors/ examiners to follow standardization in terms of scripts and allocated time frames for each test task. Another way to reinforce standards in OPIs is to offer on-going training for those who are involved in the exams (Cambridge, 2011). According to Cambridge IELTS (2009) reinforcing standards through "recruitment,

training, benchmarking, certification and monitoring for IELTS examiners ensures that they are fully qualified, experienced and effective" (p. 1). Similarly, McNamara (2001) also states that "an important way to improve the quality of rater-mediated assessment schemes is to provide ongoing training for raters" (p. 44). Reinforcing standardisation through monitoring and training for OPIs also reinforces reliability as it may prevent interlocutors/examiners giving any unfair advantage (or disadvantage) to a test taker (Weir, 2005).

Test Reliability

The test itself may prove unreliable due to time given for test takers and unsuitable test formats and content of test tasks (Coombe et al, 2007). Brown (2004) also points out the issues of time discriminating against students who are fatigued and consequently do not perform well under timed constraints. Wigglesworth's (1993) study also examined the effects of planning time (one minute or no time) on oral test discourse. Wigglesworth notes that while planning time was beneficial for high-proficiency test takers in terms of accuracy, low proficiency test- takers did not benefit from increased planning time. Having time constraints in an OPI task may seem unnatural and cause students difficulty if they are asked to present a topic for an extended time, as in Part Two of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI. Individually presenting for an extended time frame in an OPI may seem unnatural since this "rarely occurs in everyday communication" (Woodrow, 2006, p. 322).

The unnatural lack of social interaction between the interlocutor/examiner and test taker in OPIs may also reduce reliability of oral performance. McNamara (1997) points out that "we must correct our view of the candidate as an isolated figure, who bears the entire brunt of the performance" (p. 459). Furthermore, the "power relationship between interlocutor and test taker is yet another factor that can shape the interaction that emerges during the testing event" (Taylor & Wigglesworth, 2009, p. 328). Hughes (2003) also adds that the relationship between the candidate and interlocutor/examiner is one of dominance and the consequences mean that the candidate may be unwilling to take the initiative when communicating.

Furthermore, using the format of an oral interview to measure natural language may also affect reliability of a test taker's oral performance. Fulcher and Marquez (2003) note that an interview "generates a special genre of language

different from normal conversation" (p. 183). The question-answer response format of an OPI to measure natural language may also "be problematic as oral interviews are rarely used in everyday situations" (Woodrow, 2006, p. 322).

Context of Test Questions

Problems with reliability in tests can also depend on the type of test tasks and a test item's ability to measure a language construct or level of a test taker's performance. Elder, Iwasita, and McNamara (2002) note that two problems in tests are "gauging the influence of task characteristics and performance conditions of a candidate and how to determine the difficulty of a task" (Elder, Iwashita, & McNamara, 2002, p. 348). Achieving reliability in selecting appropriate contextualized speaking tasks for individual test takers in a test-taking situation may prove difficult because "speaking takes place in specific social settings, between people with particular communicative goals" (Fulcher & Marques, 2003, p. 51).

Gathering a range of reliable oral samples from short OPI test questions may be limiting for test takers and cause difficulties for test designers to reinforce factors of reliability and validity, e.g., selecting tasks which are culturally appropriate and providing test takers with opportunities to show a range of language skills in test tasks. Weir (2005) notes that if test tasks "reflect real-life tasks in terms of important contextually appropriate conditions and operations it is easier to state what a student can do through the medium of English" (Weir, 1993, cited in Weir, 2005, p. 56).

Test takers also need to be provided with opportunities to show a range of language skills through the tasks presented in tests. Bachman and Palmer (1996) note that tests should provide opportunities "in which the test taker's areas of language knowledge, metacognitive strategies, topical knowledge, and affective schemata are engaged by the test task" (p. 25). Weir (2005) also notes that to reinforce reliability with tasks in tests, "every attempt should be made to ensure that candidates are familiar with the task type and other environmental features before sitting the test" (p. 54). The purpose of providing students with familiarization of task types may help "promote a positive affective response to the task and can thus help test takers perform at their best" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 24).

Student-related Aspects of Reliability

The effects that a student experiences from an assessment or a test such as fatigue, sickness, anxiety, or emotional problems may cause a student's score to deviate from the score that reflects his or her actual ability (Coombe et al, 2007). These student-related aspects of reliability can also stem from gender differences between the candidates and the interlocutor. Factors potentially affecting reliability and validity in a test, including "the age, sex, educational level, proficiency/native speaker status and personal qualities of the interlocutor relative to the same qualities in the candidate are all likely to be significant in influencing the candidate's performance," according to McNamara, (1996, p. 54).

Gender Differences and Interlocutor Effect

One factor of reliability impacting validity which has been studied in OPIs is whether or not the gender of the candidate and interlocutor makes any difference in terms of performance or scores. Studies have shown that the gender differences in OPIs may influence both the reliability of a test-taker's performance and also the way the performance is graded. Young and Milanovic's (1992) study found that women and men had different oral response times to tasks in interviews. Another study into gender differences in OPIs found that interlocutor familiarity with the males and females in OPIs made a difference in the length of a test takers oral performance (McNamara & Lumley, 1997). One study by O' Sullivan and Porter (1996) also revealed that males and females had different interview styles, depending on the cultural background of the test taker.

However, O'Loughlin's (2002) study into whether the gender of the interlocutor/examiner had an impact on OPI scores in the IELTS interview test revealed that the gender of candidates and those who rate candidate's performance did not have a significant impact on the rating process. O'Loughlin (2002) also noted from his study that one possible reason why there is no effect is that oral interviews may be "gender neutral" (p. 21).

How an interlocutor may affect student's behavior in a test due to the use of non-verbal communication may also be a factor which can influence a student's oral performance. Plough and Bogart's (2008) study into the paralinguistic and nonverbal behavior of an examiner (eye contact and body posture; paralinguistic features such as

voice volume, speed, and non-lexical sounds; and verbal and nonverbal turn-taking and listening behavior such as head nods and back channel cues) in oral tests found that these prominent factors influenced the test takers' oral performance and also influenced marking from those who rated the performance. Using appropriate non-verbal communication between interlocutor and test taker may also mirror the strategies of engagement of a real authentic conversation. In contrast, not looking engaged, yawning, for example, may have the reverse affect. Another study by Jenkins and Parr (2003) reviewed whether or not non-verbal communication influenced interlocutor's marks in oral tests. Jenkins and Parr's study conducted in Canada found that higher marks were rewarded to test-takers in oral proficiency exams who employed non-verbal behavior considered appropriate by North American raters.

Language Learning Anxiety

Previous literature and research into how language anxiety affects language learning and performance has not been clear and has often been problematic (Young, 1991). One area of research has looked into how anxiety has a negative relationship with language learning and performance (MacIntryre & Gardner, 1994). Other research has shown how anxiety may have a positive relationship with language learning (Brandl, 1986, cited in Young, 1991). The positive relationships between anxiety and learning and taking for students may include the motivation to get good grades and "compel students to work harder, to learn certain content and skills" (Cizek & Burg, 2006, p. 25).

This problematic relationship between language learning and anxiety does depend on the language context and the learners. Kim (2009) points out that "learners bring to the class a litany of different experiences and proficiencies that influence the level of anxiety they have regarding the learning task" (p. 139). Furthermore, those students who display less self-confidence in class (due to being anxious) may influence the reliability of performance of using and learning a target language (Pichette, 2009).

Cultural considerations and the context of where language learners are placed may also be a factor for language anxiety. Jung and McCroskey (2004) point out that "living in a different culture combined with different norms can function as another

suspected situational variable" (p. 172). Xie and Leong (2008) add that although "anxiety may be a universal emotion, cultural beliefs and practices still have important influences on experiences and manifestations of anxiety" (p. 52).

Two aspects of how anxiety can change across different settings or conditions can be illustrated through the terms of state anxiety and trait anxiety characteristics. State anxiety is a temporary individual condition which is only evident in specific situations (Cizek & Burg, 2006). Trait anxiety, however, is already part of an individual's personality or character and is a more stable personality characteristic (Cizek & Burg, 2006). A student who experiences higher levels of trait anxiety and then added amounts of state anxiety may become highly anxious under test-taking conditions.

Types of Anxiety Related to Language Learning

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) describe the relationships between different types of foreign language anxiety and how these types of anxiety can influence performance when using English as a foreign language: Communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. These three concepts provide insights into how anxiety affects language learners and also the causes of English second/foreign language anxiety.

Communication Apprehension

Horwitz et al (1986) define communication apprehension as "a type of shyness characterized by fear or anxiety about communication with people" (p. 128). They also note that this type of anxiety can be caused by learning and through the experiences of learning a second language.

The causes of communication apprehension with language learners can be "explained through their negative self-perceptions stemming from the inability to understand others and make [students] understood" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989: cited in Ohata, 2005, p. 13). In addition, language learners who also feel less in control of a communicative situation may also feel that their attempts at oral work are being monitored (Horwitz et al, 1986).

Communication anxiety with language learners may also be caused by the environment in which they are placed, both in terms of a change in cultural settings or

learning environment. One example of anxiety change that a second language may experience is where and with whom the language learner uses the language. Woodrow (2006) observed that for the participants involved, "communicating with native speakers was the most referred to out-of-class stressor" (p. 322). Language learners then may experience different aspects of communication apprehension in different unfamiliar social contexts and with people they are not familiar with (outside a class setting).

Test Anxiety

Test anxiety can be defined as a "type of performance anxiety stemming from fear of failure" (Horwitz et al, 1986, p. 127). Cizek and Burg (2006) also add that test anxiety "is one of the many specific forms of anxiety; it results in a combination of cognitive and physical responses that are aroused in testing situations or in similar situations in which a person believes that he or she is being personally evaluated" (p. 1).

Some individuals may also be more prone to suffer or be more vulnerable to test anxiety than others. For example, when it comes to tests some individual test takers or learners may be described as being laid back, whereas others may be described as highly nervous (Cizek & Burg, 2006).

One reason why test anxiety may become an obstacle to students learning a foreign/second language is that exams and tests have become a major part of today's society (Spielberger & Vagg, 1995). A consequence of English-as-a-second language tests for students may mean that there is a continuous pressure requiring results for a particular educational context. For example, Lloyd and Davidson (2005) observe that for students failing high-stakes English second language tests at Zayed University in the UAE, it "may mean dismissal from university" (p. 324).

However, although test anxiety may be perceived as a negative experience some students may perform better under pressure. Brandl (1986, cited in Young, 1991) considers "a little bit of intimidation a necessary and supportive motivator for promoting students' performance" (p. 50). Cizek and Burg (2006) also add that "preparing and reminding test takers of the importance of tests may raise levels of anxiety, but also may raise motivation to do well" (p. 92).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

The fear of negative evaluation may not only relate to assessments/tests but may also occur in any social, evaluative situation such as interviewing for a job (Horwitz et al, 1986). However, these areas of anxiety relate to the learners' negative self-perceptions and also their ability to be understood by others or feelings behind being able to be understood (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Lee, 2007). These feelings of being negatively evaluated or sounding dumb in front of others can affect students in learning and using a second language (Young, 1991).

Factors Affecting Anxiety

Horwitz et al (1986) identified factors of anxiety which may affect second language learning. These include student beliefs, learner self-esteem, and instructor beliefs. However, other factors which may affect anxiety include environmental factors and gender issues.

Student Beliefs

Implementing something new, like a new language, threatens a student's sense of self-identity. Language anxiety may stem from beliefs surrounding learning a new language, and these may cause frustration and tension in class (Howitz et al, 1986, from Young 1991). Young (1991) also adds that the beliefs and perceptions of learning a language can contribute towards language anxiety.

Furthermore, these beliefs and perceptions may stem from unrealistic feelings toward learning a language. Horwitz (1988, cited in Ohata, 2005) points out that some students' beliefs are based on six different ideas: "1) Some students believe that accuracy must be sought before saying anything in the foreign language. 2) Some attach great importance to speaking with excellent native L1-like accent. 3) Others believe that it is not okay to guess an unfamiliar second/foreign language word. 4) Some hold that language learning is basically an act of translating from English or any second/foreign language. 5) Some view two years as sufficient to gain fluency in the target language. 6) Some believe language learning is a special gift not possessed by all" (p. 138).

Learner Self-esteem

The way students perceive themselves as individuals is also another factor which contributes toward language learning anxiety. The concept of "self" relates to how an individual sees him/herself as a learner, perceptions of failing and being evaluated in class and assessment/tests (Horwitz et al, 1986). According to Horwitz et al (1986), "learners' self-esteem is vulnerable to the awareness that the range of communicative choices and authenticity is restricted" (p. 128). This belief is based on the idea that any oral performance can become an obstacle and consequently lead to embarrassment when the concept of self as being competent is challenged in some way.

Instructor Beliefs

ESL teachers and instructors also have their own perceptions about effective teaching student interaction in a language learning context. Brandl (1987, cited in Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1999) points out that "anxiety is exacerbated when instructors believe that their role is to correct students when they make errors and do not promote group work" (p. 220). The type of class activity which a second language teacher selects may also influence the levels of anxiety experienced by those in a class. Young (1991) points out that some instructors think that they "cannot have students working in pairs because the class may get out of control" (p. 428). However, Frantzen and Magnan (2005) believe that anxiety in language classes could be "ameliorated by the sense of community that instructors ... established in their classrooms" (p. 183). Young (1991) also notes that "students felt more at ease when the instructors' manner of correction was not harsh and when the instructors did not overreact to mistakes" (p. 432).

For instructors recognising the causes and signs of language anxiety may assist with effective teaching of a new language to students. Onwuegbuzie et al (1999) note that it is important that "foreign language instructors not only recognise the possibility that some students experience high levels of anxiety, but also identify these at-risk students" (p. 232). Horwitz et al (1986) also point out that anxiety should be considered when "attributing poor student performance solely to lack of ability, inadequate background, or poor motivation" (p. 131).

Environmental Factors and Anxiety

The class environment and the way teachers deal with language learning anxiety have a major influence on language acquisition and subsequently on language testing. Leger and Storch's (2009) study found that confidence was reduced when students' initial perceptions of the classroom environment were that it was competitive. However, their research found that oral anxiety decreased, and oral confidence was increased when small group discussions were introduced over a twelve-week period. Krashen (1985) also emphasised that for some learners "the only input is teachers' or classmates'" (p. 46). Lack of contact with a target language or exposure to input from a target language community, in or out of the classroom, may prevent learners from having learning opportunities to develop confidence using the target language.

Teachers providing and adopting communicative activities which allow interaction can provide confidence. Swain (2000, cited in Lantolf, 2000) suggests that focusing more on communicative activities in which language can be negotiated between language learners or activities which have the social purpose or aim means that the "learners seek solutions to their linguistic difficulties" (p. 100).

This point, that communication can achieve a communicative goal, emphasises Vykotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Richards and Schmidt (2002) note that ZPD "theory assumes that learners use the techniques used during collaborative efforts when encountering similar problems" (p. 595). Collaborating with others in language learning therefore could be an opportunity to negotiate and use communicative strategies to build on others' oral input to achieve a communicative goal in the target language. Through social construction of working through tasks between others, students and test takers may be given opportunities to use oral strategies, to negotiate meaning and produce oral output.

Gender Issues

Another individual difference affecting test anxiety is the gender of the test taker. Hembree's (1988) review of 500 studies of test anxiety involving 900 correlations found that "across grade levels, females exhibit higher levels than males," although "females` higher test anxiety does not appear to translate into a performance differential" (p. 73). Cizek and Burg (2006) have provided several reasons why test

anxiety is more prevalent in girls (particularly at secondary school age) than in their male counterparts. They note that "women react to evaluative settings as more threatening, whereas men may be more likely to treat a test situation as a personal challenge" (p. 69). In addition, Cizek and Burg (2006) also state that culture may be a factor in the way women may report test anxiety and men may "tend to be more defensive and to exhibit the culturally taught response of suppressing acknowledgment of anxiety" (p. 69).

The Effects of Anxiety

The previous sections have reviewed the literature on types of anxiety relating to language learning and the factors affecting test anxiety. This section discusses the physical signs stemming from anxiety and cognitive difficulties (input, processing, and output stages of language learning) and the effect these factors have on language learning and tests.

Physical Manifestations of Anxiety

One observable factor of test anxiety is through physical manifestations. Cizek and Burg (2006) refer to this physical component of test anxiety as the "emotionality physiological response to a testing situation" (p. 54). The manifestations of emotionality include "pencil tapping, fidgeting, wiggling or squirming in a chair" (Cizek & Burg, 2006, p. 54). These observable physical reactions or responses to a test or test task may affect a student's performance.

Cognitive Difficulties

Anxiety can also affect the stages (input, processing and output) of learning and using a second language in class and in tests. The relationship between these stages and anxiety can show why second language learners make mistakes and the linguistic problems learners experience when learning and using a second language (MacIntrye, 1995).

Input

The input stages of language learning are when a language learner is provided with new information. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the input stage

aims at “providing comprehensible input and the reduction of stress as keys to successful language acquisition” (p. 79). Krashen (1985) in his “Input Hypothesis” states that “speech cannot be taught directly but emerges on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input” (p. 3). According to this theory, the key to successful language learning is having an “affective filter” which aims at reducing anxiety in the learner which may become an obstacle towards learning and using a second language. One teaching method which aims at reducing anxiety for second language learners is the Natural Approach to learning. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), this approach aims at minimizing stress and emphasizes that “students should center on meaningful communication rather than form; input should be interesting and so contribute to a relaxed classroom atmosphere” (p. 183). In the Natural Approach learners should take on the role of involving themselves in meaningful communication, and the “language acquirer is seen as a processor of comprehensible input (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 182). For successful development of language to be acquired in this teaching approach, levels of anxiety need to be reduced.

Processing

Processing information and performing cognitive operations on new information when being anxious can cause difficulty for students when learning and being assessed in a second language (Onwuegbuzie et al, 1999). Horwitz et al (1986) add that while communicating, “complex and nonspontaneous mental operations are required” and failure may “lead to reticence, self consciousness, fear, or even panic” (p. 128).

Studies have also shown that some second language students face a range of other problems when processing information. One problem is processing topic words and pronunciation (Chen, 2005). The retrieval of vocabulary items and functional use of the vocabulary items can be a challenge for students who are experiencing anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). In testing situations Tobias (1980, cited in Onwuegbuzie et al, 1999) adds, “some students with high levels of English second language anxiety tend to have a mental block, similar to that experienced by students studying mathematics” (p. 218).

MacIntrye (1995) points out that cognition, behavior, and anxiety are interlinked with each other:

> A demand to answer a question in a second language class may cause a student to become anxious; anxiety leads to worry and rumination. Cognition performance is diminished because of the divided attention and therefore performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self-deprecating cognition which impair performance, and so on. (p. 92)

MacIntrye (1995) has pointed out that the forms of anxiety have a cyclical nature. This can be seen in Figure 1.

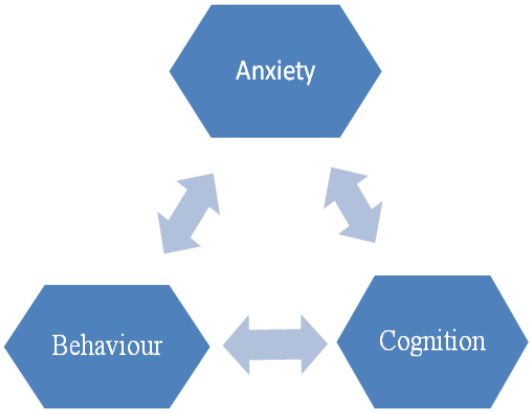

Figure 1: Recursive relations among anxiety, cognition and behaviour

MacIntrye's model can also draw attention to how anxiety is evident for language learners when retrieving information. Spielberger and Vagg (1995) also highlight how anxiety is a cyclical process which links thoughts, behaviours, and responses from test takers.

According to Cizek and Burg (2006), the cycle starts (input) when the test taker is presented with a test. The test taker then is faced with making a judgement about the test and evaluating his/her test-taking skills and strategies in relation to the test. Then, depending on this evaluation and perceptions of the test, the test taker will make a decision on whether or not the test is threatening. If the test is threatening, then levels of worry, emotional behaviour, and test anxiety will rise. The anxiety manifestations will then lead to a negative effect on the test taker's cognitive processing. The negative impact of test anxiety may affect the test taker's responses to test questions or prompts and his/her ability to perform. According to Cizek and Burg (2006), the process of anxiety stemming from the first initial task will lead the test

taker back, in a cycle, to the first steps of the process of forming his or her test-taking ability and skills in accomplishing the task accurately.

Output

Communicating becomes the final stage after the input and processing stages of language learning and using a second language. Anxiety at this stage can lead to a second language learner being apprehensive and nervous when demonstrating an oral act (Onwuegbuzie et al, 1999).

The three stages of language learning and the way anxiety shapes these stages can be defined by MacIntrye (1995), who states that:

> Language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage, and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students. Anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it. An example of this can be illustrated when responding to a question in a class; the anxious student is focused on answering the teacher's question and evaluating the social implications of the answer *while giving it.* (p. 96)

Schema Theory and Oral Responses

Another processing problem for second language students is cognitively activating and organizing information. Schema theory can be defined as "pre-existent knowledge which we bring with us to all encounters with topic and events" (Harmer, 2007, p. 271). Activating schema, bridging ideas, and fusing knowledge together through the processing stages are what Johnson (2001) refers to as forming effective "mental frameworks" (p. 275). If, for example, a test taker is presented with a task and is unable to activate ideas which form an effective framework due to not having previous knowledge or not having an interest in the task, then this may affect how the task is dealt with and hinder test taker performance (Weir, 2005).

According to Rumelhart (1984, cited in McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005), there are several important features of schemas:

- Schemas have variables.
- Schemas can be embedded, one within another.
- Schemas represent knowledge at all levels of abstraction.

- Schemas represent knowledge rather than definitions.
- Schemas are active processes.
- Schemas are recognition devices whose processing is aimed at the evaluation of their goodness or fit to the data being processed. (p. 169)

Rumelhart et al (1984) observe that for schema to be effective for English language learners, schema can work separately and together. In other words, both a top-down (from an individual's prior background knowledge) and a bottom-up (textual features in the text) approach to the reading process can be part of the fueling of new schemata.

Social Effect of Being Evaluated

Anxiety for a language learner may also stem from the context of where the language is learned and used. MacIntyre and Gardener (1989, cited in MacIntyre, 1995) note that "language anxiety stems primarily from social and communicative aspects of language learning and therefore can be considered as one of the social anxieties" (p. 91).

The way that second language students learning English feel amongst native-English-speaking people may also be a cause of language anxiety. Peirce (1995) provides one view of a second language student:

> I feel uncomfortable using English in the group of people whose English language is their mother tongue because they speak fluently without any problems and I feel inferior. (p. 21)

Second language learners may also feel anxious in a social context because of the feeling of being inferior when interacting with someone who has status or unequal power, e.g., a teacher or a principal. Carrier (1999) notes that the feeling of unequal status between those who are communicating can impact "what can be said, the ways it can be said, and possibly, what language to use, and even how much must be said" (p. 70). The feelings of anxiety while communicating in another language may influence the types of anxiety experienced in class and also during the unequal power situation of the interviewer and test taker in an OPI.

Washback

This section examines the term *washback* and the impact it has on the individual, teachers, society, and education system (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Alderson and Wall (1993) refer to washback as the influence of testing on teaching and learning. However, how much and to what degree of control a test affects those involved with tests becomes problematic to measure. Watanabe (2004) notes that the impact of washback "is a highly complex rather than a monolithic phenomenon" (p. 19). Cheng and Curtis (2006) also point out that "whether washback is negative, positive or either depends on the educational context and those involved at a particular time" (p. 4-5).

The effects of washback on a second language student can include:

1) The experience of taking and, in some cases, of preparing for the test,
2) The feedback they receive about their performance on the test, and
3) The decisions that may be made about them on the basis of their test scores. (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p.102)

Washback and the Effect on Teachers

Washback may also impact teachers when administering tests or assessments for students. One example is when teachers need to "teach to the test," which "implies doing something in teaching that may not be compatible with teachers' own values and goals or with the values and goals of the instructional program" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 33). The negative impact of teaching to the test may mean that "teachers and learners may end up teaching and learning toward the test, regardless of whether or not they support the test or fully understand its rationale or aims" (Cheng & Curtis, 2006, p. 9).

However, teaching to the test may also be beneficial in terms of preparing students who will need to take tests, for example, familiarizing students with tasks and types of questions in tests (Coombe & Al-Hamly, 2002).

Washback and the Impact on Education and Society

According to Coombe (2005), "the impact of testing on curriculum, teaching, student motivation and teacher practice should leave no doubt as to the power of high-stakes testing and its influence on teaching and learning" (p. 37). One example of how

high-stakes tests have had an impact on educational policy and society is through the "governments choice of the content taught, the teaching methodology used, and the attitudes towards the value of educational objectives" (Coombe & Al-Hamly, 2002, p. 33).

Tests can become instrumental in educational policy within educational institutions, both on a national and international level. Bachman and Palmer (1996) note that "a micro level of a test concerns the individual test taker and the macro level affects how the test impacts on society and the educational systems" (p. 30). The negative impact of washback from tests and particularly global high-stakes test may also be used for more than one purpose in society. Shohamy (2000) notes that language tests have a number of purposes and can go beyond measuring a learner's ability to communicate successfully in another language. She states that "language tests become the vehicle for a variety of agendas rather than instruments for measuring language knowledge" (p. 16). Davidson and Fulcher (2007) are also "concerned with the political use of tests to implement changes in classrooms that are seen as improvements by governments" (p. 74). Global tests may provide ways of monitoring progress by governments, but also strengthen their high-stakes nature for those language learners who use them.

Achieving Positive Washback in Tests

One way to achieve positive washback in tests is to achieve test transparency, and to do so the grades provided to test takers need to be as "relevant, complete and meaningful to the test taker as possible" (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 32). The feedback from the test also needs to be fed back to teachers, administration, and all those who are involved.

This collaboration between those involved in tests and ongoing research (IELTS, 2009) and sharing this information between all those who are involved in a test may provide mutual ideas for improving standards and pedagogical practices. Wall (2005) points out that "test results and other observations about the exam should be provided to teachers and a wide range of other parties if change is to occur in the system as a whole" (p. 42-43). Bailey (1996) also points out that involvement of the learners in the process through self-assessment is also critical to achieving positive washback.

Learning and Test-Taking Strategies

Language learning strategies are "steps or actions that learners consciously select in order to accomplish language tasks" (Cohen, 1998, p. 219). In contrast, test-taking strategies are "cognitive abilities that help testees deal with any testing situation in an appropriate manner and know what to do during tests" (Dodeen & Abdelmabood, 2005, p. 193).

Teaching learning strategies to English-as-a second-language learners is often overlooked in a curriculum when teaching language. Joseph (2010) points out that "educators recognize that students´ metacognition may be overlooked in the classroom because most instruction focuses on the content rather that the strategies used to learn the content" (p. 100). However, the benefits of teaching and incorporating language strategies with English second language students are that it can help students develop strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). According to Cohen (1998), developing strategic competence with language students can assist with goal-setting (identifying the task and what to do) and a planning component (how to use topic knowledge and language knowledge to the task). Teaching learning strategies may also empower language students to adopt new strategies which they can use in different contexts. Cohen (1998) found that explicitly describing, discussing, and reinforcing strategies in the classroom raises language learners' awareness to transfer specific strategies to new contexts.

It is important for teachers to consider and recognize language learning anxiety because teachers can assist students with test taking strategies. Coombe and Al-Hamly (2002) note that teaching test-taking strategies are not only "crucial at all levels and in all contexts… but teachers have a responsibility to make the test-taking experience as non-threatening as possible" (p. 304).

However, it is important that teachers identify what type of test-taking strategies to teach, ones which will prove beneficial in a test-taking situation, as students do not always use effective test-taking strategies. Cohen (1998) points out that "respondents may be constantly using strategies that are detrimental to their performance on certain types of items or on an entire test" (p. 218). Dooden and Abdelmabood (2005) also remind us that the purpose of "having such strategies or skills helps students maximize their scores to the limit allowed by the level of their knowledge and preparation for the test" (p. 193). Preparing students for tests may

reduce anxiety and provide students with positive test experience, but also provide greater opportunities for achieving higher scores.

Teaching to the test may also become a problem, particularly with the importance surrounding high-stakes tests. Coombe and Al-Hamly (2002) warn that although "the temptation exists to teach too closely to the test, teachers should not be pressured to do so" (p. 306). Teaching to the test can be either productive or counterproductive, depending on how this is accomplished (Alderson, 2000). However, some arguments against teaching test-taking strategies are that test preparation focuses on test-wise actions, not language skills, and therefore inflates test scores (Papajohn, 2000; Cohen, 1998).

Anxiety-Reducing Strategies

Test-taking strategies or skills can be used effectively to reduce students' test anxiety (Dooden & Abdelmabood, 2005). One study by Carraway (1987) aimed at discovering whether teaching test-taking strategies through a test-taking seminar had any effects on decreasing test anxiety and increasing test results. Carraway's study included 30 nurses in one experimental group and one control group. Those nursing students who took part in the seminar (the experimental group) had lower anxiety and significantly higher test scores. In addition, Carraway concludes that if test-taking strategies/seminars could be implemented early on in courses, students can have time to implement them and practice them for ongoing assessments in the class or other subject assessments/tests.

Coombe and Al-Hamly (2002) offer a number of test-reducing strategies which may help students and teachers prepare for a test. These include both advice and strategies: "Doing stress busters" (p. 308), relaxing the night before the test, using relaxation techniques, and asking for clarification in tests when students do not understand something.

IGCSE ESL Oral Proficiency Interview Exam

The Edexcel International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) in English as a Second Language (ESL) oral proficiency interview is, according to Edexcel (2008), "designed primarily as a qualification for either students obtaining their secondary education through English as a medium of

instruction, or studying English in order to enhance their future educational or employment prospects" (p. 1). The 11-13-minute IGCSE ESL interview is timed by the interlocutor/examiner, and each of the three sections has a strict allocated time limit. In Part One the interlocutor asks students for their name and candidate number. This is followed by asking questions on a topic selected by the interlocutor. The topics selected reflect those that are covered in the course and "include leisure and entertainment, work and education, people and relationships and ideas and the future" (Edexcel, 2010, p. 26). In Part Two a topic is selected by the interlocutor, and the test taker is given one minute to prepare and then is asked to give a one-two-minute presentation on this topic. Finally, in Part Three the interlocutor asks questions about the topic just presented.

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI

One advantage of being part of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, 2009) is that exams like the Edexcel IGCSE ESL can be linked with other exams and this can also provide students and teachers a way of linking and tracking progress. In addition, being part of the CEFR also may offer exams like the Edexcel IGCSE ESL the chances to develop and work alongside other educational institutions and experts in the field of test design.

Standardized global exams also aim at selecting contextual appropriate tasks which do not discriminate against cultures. Edexcel (2008) state that the "key features and benefits of the IGCSE ESL exam specification are the contexts and settings will be those that students are likely to encounter, for example school, the media" (p. 2). Yet reinforcing authenticity and selecting culturally appropriate tasks for this global standardized test may prove hard to achieve. For example, to some Emirati students, discussing working in the holidays in Part Two and Part Three of the oral interview (Edexcel, 2008) would be an abstract idea, as, culturally, for some Emirati teenage girls and boys, this rarely happens.

Another problem the IGCSE interlocutor may have is selecting suitable tasks to elicit oral samples from the students. Edexcel's (2010) claim that the "topics relate to the interests of students using English as a second language for the purposes of communication" (p. 1) may be problematic for interlocutors to implement if they do

not teach or know the students well enough to know whether the topics they selected reflect test taker's interests.

In addition, Edexcel (2010) state that the specific course aims for speaking are that test takers are expected to speak fluently and spontaneously over a range of contexts, which will demonstrate competence in speaking English as a second language. However, providing and demonstrating a range of communicative skills maybe difficult and limited for a student to undertake in a structured OPI (Woodrow, 2006; Hughes, 2003). One example, of the difficulties may be the unnatural feeling of having question-answer responses between the test taker and examiner, or unnatural feelings of the presenting on a single topic for an extended time (Woodroow, 2006).

Marking the IGCSE ESL OPI

The marking of the Edexcel (2008) IGCSE OPI consists of twenty points, and each category is marked out of five points; see speaking descriptors in Appendix A. The four categories are communicative ability and content, pronunciation and fluency, lexical accuracy and range, and grammatical accuracy and range. The band level descriptors range from zero for no language, to five, the top grade.

The publicly accessible marking guides from Edexcel aim at assisting teachers and students to understand how and what speaking skills are scored. However, understanding band descriptors, without training, may be difficult for teachers to interpret. Luoma (2004) points out that using marking scales or bands with evaluative labels "such as excellent to poor cause difficulty for interpretation because of their vagueness" (p. 81). One such example can be illustrated through the Edexcel speaking marking guide. To score the highest level (five) under communicative ability and content, students have to "respond well to all questions" (p. 15). The term "well" can have a variety of different interpretations for teachers/students.

Another complexity is that the numbers given on the band descriptors for the IGCSE ESL speaking exam are then transferred to a letter between A (high grade pass) to G (lowest grade fail). This transfer to single letter grades, according to Luoma (2004), is complex and involves "cutting raw score scales into ranges that correspond to the band scores" (p. 173). Such complexity in understanding how grades are determined may be hard for test takers and teachers to fully understand, which may impact marking transparency.

All Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPIs and tests are graded in the United Kingdom. The reports are then sent back to the school where the OPI was administered with single letter grades for the students to collect either through post or from their school. The student has no way of discussing the reported results.

Using an OPI in the context of high-stakes testing draws attention to the impact tests have on students, schools, and society. OPIs are used globally and in the UAE they function as pre-requisites for some Emirati students to enter English-speaking universities. However, using an OPI as an instrument to measure oral proficiency has advantages and disadvantages in terms of validity and reliability. One factor affecting validity and reliability of OPIs is oral test anxiety. The way students prepare for tests such as OPIs and the way teachers prepare students for them may affect and influence levels of oral test anxiety. Furthermore, oral test anxiety in OPIs may also influence students' test experience and oral performance in this measure of oral proficiency.

Overall, this chapter has reviewed and defined the OPI as an instrument used to measure oral proficiency for second language learners. Furthermore, this chapter has also discussed the challenges and problems of validity and reliability in tests and the effects anxiety has on language learning and test-taking situations. Finally, the format and marking of Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI, which was focus of this study, was also discussed.

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

Overview of the Study

The focus of this research study was to investigate the causes and types of oral test anxiety experienced by ESL students in an Edexcel IGCSE OPI (International General Certificate of Secondary Education English as a Second Language), as well as test-taking strategies reported and used by these students. To achieve triangulation, four qualitative approaches were used: observations, individual interviews, questionnaires, and a focused group discussion.

Firstly, to consider research question one, How is test anxiety manifested by Emirati secondary school males and females in an Edexcel IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview in one educational zone in the UAE?, a videotaped observation of an oral proficiency interview (OPI) was used to identify visible signs of oral test anxiety.

As the Edexcel OPI interlocutor, I was not able to take observational notes during the OPI; thus the OPIs were videotaped to enable me to analyze the behavior of individual participants in the OPI at a later stage of data analysis. Observable anxiety categories, identified by Cizek and Burg (2006) as "wiggling or squirming in a chair, chewing on pencils, twisting hair, playing with clothes and complaining of tiredness" (p. 32), were noted, and comments were added about other observed physical signs of oral test anxiety.

In addition, observed anxiety-reducing strategies students used to prepare for their oral speeches in Part Two of the OPI, and observed strategies used to control anxiety were also noted, thus addressing research question number two, What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview? To answer research question number three, What do students report as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety?, an audiotaped follow-up individual semi-structured interview was carried out directly after the OPI to gather students' initial responses about the OPI. What is more, both research questions three and four were also addressed in observation of this interview: What do these students report as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety? and What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety? The semi-structured questionnaire

and the audiotaped semi-structured focused group discussion were also used to answer research questions three and four.

The Participants

To reduce interlocutor familiarity, the selected participants were from two IGCSE ESL classes I do not teach. The participants involved in the OPI consisted of 25 Emirati students (13 boys and 12 girls), whose first language is Arabic. These were the same participants in both the follow-up interviews and questionnaires. Participants in the interviews were identified by gender and number (e.g., Boy 1, Girl 1), to hide the identity of the students' names, while the questionnaire and discussion participants could only be identified by gender. However, in the focus group discussion only the first five boys and five girls who volunteered to participate were included. This was for practical reasons of keeping a smaller manageable and representative group discussion in one classroom.

All the participants were from the school where I teach. The age range of these boys and girls was between 15 and 17, and all of them had been studying English from kindergarten, from the age of four. Table 2 below summarizes background data about the participants. The term ESL, rather than English as a foreign language (EFL) was used in this study because the participants in this research are learning English in a language community where English is used as the language of instruction. However, it may be argued that EFL may also be used as outside the school the language community in which the students are placed may be a mix of Arabic and English.

Table 1: Background Data about the Participants

Participants	Age	L1	Number of Years Studying English	Gender
1-8	15	Arabic	11	Boys
9-10	16	Arabic	12	Boys
11-13	17	Arabic	13	Boys
14-21	15	Arabic	11	Girls
22-24	16	Arabic	12	Girls
25	17	Arabic	13	Girl

All participants involved in the study were given consent forms (see Appendix G) to take home for their parents to sign, explaining the purpose of the research and the confidentiality of the research findings. In addition, all students had been videotaped

before in classes, and thus videotaping during the OPI would not have been an unfamiliar experience for them.

The Setting

The whole research was conducted in one secondary school in an educational zone in the UAE. It is a coeducational school, and thus classes include boys and girls studying together. The school ranges from kindergarten through to secondary school and follows the British National Curriculum. The school has around 500 students who are diverse in terms of age, gender, and nationality. Of the 500 students, 80% are Emirati and the other 20% are Arab students from Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, and Egypt, and Western and Asian students (*School Handbook*, 2010, p. 5). According to the *School Handbook*, 90% of the students speak Arabic as their first language, and Egyptian Arabic is used as the language of instruction for Arabic and Islamic studies classes taught by Egyptian Arabic teachers. Currently, these two subjects are compulsory for Arabic first language students and are taught for 5 hours out of the total 36 hours a week. The remaining 25 periods are taught through English instruction with teachers from different English-speaking countries. In addition, the majority of the Emirati students at school started studying English either from kindergarten level or from the primary school, grade one.

The Edexcel IGCSE ESL Course

The Edexcel IGCSE ESL course is a one-year course conducted from August to June in the following year. The course is taught on four separate days a week for one hour. The students are graded for the course by one summative exam in June. This exam includes one two-hour reading-and-writing paper, a forty-five-minute listening paper, and one individual ten-twelve-minute oral proficiency interview (OPI).

The school policy is that all ESL students must take this exam before leaving the school. In addition, the Edexcel IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview is timetabled over two days in the middle of June every year, and the OPI is the first summative external exam students sit, before the other exam subjects in July.

The IGCSE Oral Interview

The students' only exposure to OPIs was when the students started studying the Edexcel IGCSE ESL course. Previous to the OPI in this research, students would have been assessed by their own teacher at the teacher's discretion with criteria determined by accessing the public Edexcel IGCSE ESL speaking marking guide from Edexcel website. In other words, it would be up to the individual teacher to decide what oral activity and what assessment instrument to use prior to the OPI to measure students oral ability. However, the IGCSE ESL OPI is the only standardized oral proficiency test that students would have been exposed to at the end of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL course.

Data Collection

The OPI Observation

Prior to the OPI, videotaping was begun before participants came into the examination room for two main reasons. Firstly, preparing the video would have drawn attention toward the camera, which could have distracted students. Secondly, I wanted to ask how participants felt before the OPI started. The purpose of doing so was to see if students verbally showed any signs of oral test anxiety before the OPI, felt tired, or revealed any non-verbal manifestations of anxiety.

The taping began before and continued throughout the OPI, only stopping at the end, before the semi-structured follow-up individual interviews began. The post-observation sheet (see Appendix B) was used to note physical signs from the participants of any manifestations of anxiety and/or any anxiety-reducing strategies used during the OPI. After watching the interview once, notes of such behaviors were made on the observation sheet, and these notes were checked by watching a second time.

Furthermore, the ten-twelve-minute OPI in this research followed the exact steps of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI. This included interlocutor-scripted lines, topics, and prompts previously used in an Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI conducted the preceding year. None of the participating students used in this research had been previously exposed to the OPI prompt cards used in this research.

The Semi-structured Follow-up Individual Interview

The follow-up interview was administered directly after the OPI, and as the video camera was turned off, the audio tape was switched on. Moreover, to change from the role of OPI interlocutor to that of a teacher/researcher, I switched off the video camera in front of the participants and stated that the OPI had finished. I then asked, in a "non-examiner voice," whether the participants would like to respond to some questions about the OPI for the purpose of my research. These questions were aimed at answering research questions three, four and five, What do these students report as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety? What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety? What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class? Observed physical strategies to reduce anxiety, as well as strategies manifested by the students in Part Two were then discussed with the individual students in the follow-up interviews. The thirteen interview questions (see Appendix C) also aimed at providing participants positive opportunities for washback and a chance to share their immediate experiences from the OPI, which is an extension of typical post-OPI interaction with students. I also stated that this follow-up interview was optional and that in no way would answering/not answering my questions affect their grades in the OPI.

The Questionnaire

For practical reasons the questionnaire was administered during classes the day following the OPI and follow-up individual interviews. To answer research questions three, four, and five, a ten-item questionnaire (see Appendix D) was aimed at obtaining wider student perspective of causes of oral test anxiety-reducing strategies used by the participants in the OPI and in classes. I asked the participants to identify themselves by name at the top of the questionnaires. The purpose of doing so was to identify the gender of the participant to see if there were any differences between boys' and girls' experiences and responses concerning oral test anxiety.

The questionnaire was administered by me in class with the participants. In addition to providing triangulation, one purpose of the questionnaires was to elicit observations of students who were hesitant to respond verbally during the previous semi-structured follow-up individual interviews. All students wrote their answers

individually, and I collected these questionnaires at the end of class. This procedure followed was for two main reasons: Firstly, to be able to explain any questions or terms that needed to be explained; and secondly, to make sure all the individual responses were handed back to me directly.

The Semi-Structured Focus Group Discussion

A semi-structured focus group discussion was held two days after collecting the questionnaires in class. This two-day gap provided time for me to review the students' responses and start data analysis. It also provided me with time to ask for ten volunteers from the two classes (five boys and girls). The first five boys and girls who volunteered were then selected to take part in the discussion. Only ten participants were selected for practical reasons of not disrupting lessons at school, and also, most importantly, a smaller group meant that it was easier to manage the responses from students.

The tape recorded ten-item discussion which included open-ended questions (see Appendix E) was aimed at answering research questions three, four, and five: What do these students respond as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety? What strategies do these students respond using to control oral test anxiety? What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class? This discussion was to provide participants opportunities to focus on oral test anxiety and the OPI, as well as ESL anxiety. In addition, these objectives were told to the students one day before, so that the students could have time to reflect and focus on the key discussion points. It also gave time for students to approach me and ask any questions concerning the discussion. Therefore, having one day before the discussion with clear objectives gave students time to prepare and reflect on the central issues of test anxiety and ESL anxiety, before the final focus group discussion took place.

Conservative Muslim seating areas for girls at one table and boys at the other table, which reflected normal classroom seating, was used. There was one round table for each gender group, with chairs located around the table, so all students could see me at the front of the class. In addition, each table had a microphone connected to one tape machine. Seats were also arranged round the table so that all participants could speak into the one microphone in the middle of the table. The recording was started

with an introduction and reminder of the topic and the objectives of obtaining information about the OPI oral and test anxiety. I then gave each student a handout of the same questions which had been given to them the day before (see Appendix E).

I then told each group that they had five minutes to review the questions and then five minutes to discuss them in groups, before the main recorded discussion (25 minutes) would take place. This initial 10-minute preparation time provided a chance for students to revisit their experiences, share ideas and clarify any questions with me. The following 25-minute discussion was also conducted in a non-judgmental way, allowing all participants to take part. With the shyer members in the groups, I tried to encourage them to respond by asking what they felt and using probing questions, such as “please tell me more about…” or “please give me an example of what happened…" Therefore, the purpose of prepared prompts (see Appendix F) was to gain deeper insights into students’ responses. These prompts were used in case conversation broke down or if a response needed clarifying.

I also asked each group to select a spokesperson, whom I initially called upon to gather general responses from others in the group and to make sure everyone was focusing on the task. After each spokesperson spoke from each group, I then asked individuals to raise their hands and share their thoughts. The purpose of having this controlled individual response was to avoid numerous voices and responses talking over each other, which would make it harder to analyze the tape recorded data at a later stage.

CHAPTER 4
DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The information gathered in this research came from four qualitative sources of data which were used in order to investigate ESL oral proficiency interview (OPI) anxiety. The first of these sources included an observation of 13 boys and 12 girls in an Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI (International General Certificate of Secondary Education English as a Second Language Oral Proficiency Interview). The second source of data included semi-structured follow-up individual interview questions conducted with all of the 25 participants directly after the OPI. These two sources of data addressed research questions one and two:

1. How is test anxiety manifested by Emirati secondary school male and female students in an IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview in one educational zone in the UAE?
2. What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview?

The third source of data came from the questionnaire that I gave to the 25 students the day after the OPI. The fourth and final source of data was the semi-structured focused group discussion that was held in a classroom with five boys and five girls two days after the questionnaires were administered. The questionnaire and the focused group discussion addressed research questions three and four:

3. What do these students report as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety?
4. What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety?
5. What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class?

Results

The results collected from this study are presented in two ways: 1) what was observed in the OPI and 2) what students reported in the follow-up interviews, questionnaires and focused group discussion. The data results which were collected from the OPI observation address observed test anxiety and anxiety-reducing strategies. The data collected from the follow-up interviews, questionnaires, and

focused group discussion address students' comments about causes of and strategies used to control oral test anxiety. Presented here are observed manifestations of anxiety, reported causes of anxiety, observed strategies, and reported strategies. Presented in their own words without editing are the students' reports of causes of anxiety and strategies to reduce anxiety. Follow-up interview comments and open-ended questionnaire responses are identified individually by designation, but focus group statements could not be identified individually.

Observed Manifestations of Anxiety in the OPI (Research Question One)

Test anxiety has many facets and can manifest itself in a number of physical responses. These physical signs, seen through observed behavior reactions, include "pencil tapping, staring, squirming, and fidgeting," as identified by Cizek and Burg (2006, p. 13). To record any behavioral signs of test anxiety in the IGCSE OPI, an observation sheet was used to collect data (see Appendix A). Manifestation of test anxiety was revealed in many observable signs from both boys and girls during the three parts in the OPI.

All of the participants involved experienced different kinds of test anxiety, both in terms of physical signs manifested at some point during the OPI and reported in responses about experiences in classes and test-taking assessment situations. Observation of the OPI showed both boys and girls had observable physical signs of test anxiety, which included touching or fiddling with clothes and fiddling with a pencil which was placed on the interview table for Part Two of the OPI. A summary of the number of students manifesting test anxiety observed during the three parts in the OPI can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Number of Students' Manifesting Observable Signs of Test Anxiety

IGCSE ESL OPI	Number of Boys	Number of Girls
Part One: Introductory Interview	13	12
Part Two: Student Talk	12	11
Part Three: Extended Discussion	4	7

Part One of the OPI

Part One of the OPI is designed to elicit information from the participant on a familiar topic, from the IGCSE course. In addition, each topic is selected by the OPI

interlocutor, and this question-and-answer part is also led by the interlocutor.

In Part One of the OPI, all 13 boys showed observable signs of test anxiety at some point during the OPI. Eleven boys wiggled in the chair and fiddled with a pencil and paper (which were already on the desk in preparation for Part Two of the OPI). The remaining two boys touched their faces off and on while speaking during Part One.

The girls also showed physical signs of test anxiety. In Part One of the OPI, 11 out of the 12 girls fiddled with the pencil which was on the table. In addition, other observed signs of test anxiety by the girls included the following:

Girl 1 covered her eyes and wiggled in her chair.

Girl 2 fiddled with the table, and her hands shook, and she also touched her mouth throughout the interview.

Girl 3 and Girl 12 kept rocking and squirming in their chairs while talking.

Girl 4, Girl 5, and Girl 11 fiddled with their head scarves while answering the questions.

Girl 6, Girl 7, and Girl 10 simultaneously fiddled with their headscarves and the pencil on the table at the same time.

Girl 8 and Girl 9 chewed their fingernails.

A summary of both boys' and girls' physical signs of test anxiety in Part One can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part One of the OPI

Observed Types of Test Anxiety	Number of Boys	Number of Girls
Fiddled with pencil during preparation	11	11
Fiddled with headscarf	0	6
Touched face	2	0
Covered eyes	0	1
Touched mouth	0	1
Hands were shaking	0	1
Chewed fingernails	0	2
Wiggled in chair	0	2
Rocked in the chair	0	2

Part Two of the OPI

In Part Two the interlocutor selects a task prompt on a topic which has been covered in the IGCSE course. The test taker then is told he/she has one minute to prepare and may use notes if he/she wants to. Subsequently, after one minute the test taker is then asked to speak for one-to-two minutes.

Observation of Part Two also noted high levels of observable signs of anxiety from both boys and girls. Similar to Part One, in Part Two students manifested the same observable types of test anxiety. However, all of the boys showed only two different observable signs of test anxiety in both the preparation and their oral presentation, whereas all the girls showed seven different observable signs of test anxiety during Part Two. In addition, one girl showed observable signs of test anxiety during the preparation stages, but not during their oral presentation. A summary of both boys' and girls' observed signs of anxiety in Part Two can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4: The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part Two of the OPI

Observed Types of Test Anxiety	Number of Boys	Number of Girls
Fiddled with pencil during preparation	12	4
Fiddled with pencil during presentation	12	3
Fiddled with headscarf	-	4
Covered eyes	0	1 (during the oral preparation stage, but not while presenting)
Hands were shaking	0	1
Wiggled in chair	4	0
Rocked in chair	0	1
Fiddled with table	0	1

Part Three of the OPI

Part Three is called the "extended discussion," which is led by questions from the interlocutor. The interlocutor selects questions which reflect the topic presented in Part Two of the OPI. In Part Three of the OPI, the signs of test anxiety observed were fewer than in Part One and Part Two. Moreover, fewer boys and girls showed anxiety (3 boys and 7 girls), and fewer types of anxiety behaviors were observed. All participants seemed more relaxed and at ease while talking during this part, compared to Parts One and Two (see Table 5).

Table 5: The Amounts and Types of Physical Signs of Anxiety in Part Three of the OPI

Observed Types of Test Anxiety	Number of Boys	Number of Girls
Fiddled with pencil during presentation	3	5
Fiddled with headscarf	-	2
Wiggled in chair	3	0

In summary, Part One of the OPI showed the highest amount of observable signs and types of anxiety from both the boys and girls. All the boys and girls were observed at some point to fiddle with a pencil which was placed on the desk for Part Two. Part Two also showed eight different signs of anxiety from the girls and boys, and these were (apart from one girl) both during the one-minute oral preparation and the one-to-two minute oral presentation. In Part Three, observable types and occasions of anxiety in both boys and girls were considerably fewer compared to Part One and Part Two. However, although both girls and boys seemed more at ease while talking in Part Three, there were seven different girls who showed observable types of anxiety, whereas the same three boys manifesting anxiety in Parts One and Two showed the two different types of observable signs in Part Three.

The observation also revealed that students used two types of objects when anxiety manifested itself during the OPI. These two main objects were either body parts (touching mouth/eyes, chewing fingernails, shaking hands) or objects in the test (a pencil, headscarves, table, and chair).

Reported Causes of Anxiety

As Howitz et al (1986) point out, there are many types of anxiety, for example, negative evaluation and communicative apprehension which relate to learning and using English as a foreign language (EFL). These types of anxiety can also be experienced by English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students.

Having students comment on causes of anxiety prior to the OPI observation and during the follow-up interviews, questionnaires, and focused group discussion was aimed at gathering data on the causes and types of oral test anxiety which the students in this study experience during oral activities in class and the OPI. The students reported causes of anxiety: not having time to prepare for tests, problems with retrieving information, vocabulary and pronunciation, the exam being externally

marked in the UK, code switching between Arabic and English, being negatively evaluated in class and the type of oral class activity.

Causes of Oral Anxiety in Class

The reported causes of oral anxiety in class were identified. This was to address research question 5, What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class? Firstly, this included difficulties with retrieving and pronouncing words. The second reported cause of anxiety was the type of class activity used in class and the third reported cause students reported as a cause of anxiety was being evaluated by other students in class.

One other reported cause of anxiety in class (from the follow-up interviews and questionnaires) was problems with oral preparation in class. 15 students from the questionnaire, 12 from the interviews and all students from the discussion reported that not having enough time to prepare and not being able to express themselves naturally in class was a cause of anxiety.

Cognitive difficulties caused by anxiety were reported as a cause of oral anxiety in class. Three students in the interviews, twelve students from the questionnaires, and eight students from the discussion, reported difficulty with processing when retrieving and using appropriate vocabulary. The following responses were typical of all 25 students in this study. These comments are the students' own words:

Girl 4: "Not knowing words that I should know…for example long words."

Girl 6: "Getting words mixed up. Sometimes you can't remember the words you want to use. You can't really explain what you want to say, so that it has some meaning."

Boy 4: "Little low on vocabulary…sometimes I try to use vocabulary I don't know meaning."

Another cause of anxiety in class which three students reported in the interviews was difficulty with pronunciation of English words when experiencing anxiety.

Boy 1: "Words that twist my tongue."

Boy 6: "Wanted to say words but I didn't know how to say them."

Girl 8: “Nervous when I pronounce things not well.”

Also, students (one in the interview, six in the discussion) reported as a cause of anxiety in class was the problem understanding some English speaking teachers accents. The response from Girl 9 in the interview was typical of student responses:

Girl 9: “The accent is different with teachers, and sometimes my teacher’s accent don’t understand and I get told off. This makes me feel a little angry at first.”

In terms of oral anxiety, students also reported (in the follow-up interviews and questionnaire) five types of activities which cause anxiety in class. Five girls and six boys from the interviews responded that individual presentations in class were the oral activity which caused them the most anxiety, and they also added that speaking in front of an audience in class was also a cause of nervousness. The following statements were typical of student responses in the interviews and questionnaires:

Girl 2: “Speaking in front of others”

Girl 7: “Presentations make me nervous, although I know people from years ago, I feel nervous.”

A second cause of oral anxiety was speaking in front of an audience. Feelings of being evaluated and others not taking the oral task seriously were also reported causes of anxiety in class. The following unedited statements from Boy 8 and Girl 8 were typical of 11 student responses.

Boy 8: “People around makes a difference.”

Girl 8: “What disturbs me most is that students don’t take it [oral class activities] seriously and distract me.”

A third aspect of test anxiety reported was being apprehensive in class when communicating in English as a second language.

Boy 1 (in the interview): “feeling of having to speak in [a] language which is not my own.”

Boy 6 also pointed out the difficulty and the problems of using Arabic and English together with the school policy of limiting Arabic use in the classroom.

Boy 6: “being told off when using Arabic in class and said, some teachers tell me not to use Arabic, and I get stuck.”

The way English is perceived by other members in the class in terms of status was also mentioned by four boys in the discussion and one boy in the interview, as a

fourth cause of oral test anxiety. Boy 11, in a comment typical of the other responses from the discussion, reported about when performing in front of others:

Boy 11: "people say, 'hey, he's talking in English and showing off.'"

Talking too much English means, for students in class, that students are showing off.

Other types of oral activity causing oral anxiety also mentioned by Boy 3 and Girl 6 (from the interviews) included group role play tasks, discussions and debates. Moreover, all students reported from the discussion that using English in group work was less stressful because in groups anxiety caused by a given oral task can be shared amongst the group. One participant replied that he feels "confident in groups, because the stress is less and kind of shared, but if you are alone and if everybody's eyes on you, it's kind of like you feel anxious more."

Students also reported (in response to question six in the interview) being anxious in class when making mistakes and also when feeling negatively evaluated from others in class, which was a fifth cause of oral test anxiety. Apart from Boy 12, Girl 9, and Girl 12, who did not think it would matter; the remaining 19 students replied others would react negatively. Comments made from Boy 5, Boy 7 and Boy 9 were representative from the data collected:

Boy 5: "Some will criticize me"

Boy 7: "Make fun of me"

Boy 9: "They will laugh."

Likewise, all of the girls gave longer responses to this question about being afraid of making mistakes and gave more details. For example, two girls commented thus:

Girl 3: "Yes it does. Some students are mature and don't say anything; they understand, but some students, they laugh, this affects me."

Girl 5: "I think that if, for example, [I] say a word wrong, I think I get, like I get more nervous, or if I see people laughing."

14 students from the questionnaire and 9 students from the discussion observed that the effects from the reactions from others in class may also be not clearly seen by and may be out of the control of the teacher. Because the teacher does not speak or understand Arabic, if students tease or react in Arabic with other students, then the English teachers will be unaware of what students are saying about their classmates that is negative. The response from Girl 7 was typical of the feelings reported by students in the questionnaire and discussion:

Girl 7: “Student start making fun of you and making comments in Arabic.”

All but three students reported from the questionnaire that they would not worry about communicating with native speakers. This response may mean that students feel comfortable using English with native speakers, but other responses indicate they may feel differently when being evaluated by other Arabic-speaking students in front of the teacher.

However, three boys responded that making mistakes would not cause them anxiety, as they felt that others in the class would be supportive and assist with any correction. When asked about this in the interview, they responded:

Boy 1: “Not really as someone will be around to fix mistakes.”

Boy 4: “I don’t think they will notice. If big mistakes, then they will tell you in class.”

Boy 6: “No, not in my class.”

Nine students also reported that it depends on the kind of mistake made. The following responses were typical of all the participants involved:

Boy 5: “If it is a small mistake, no, but big one, then others may criticize me.”

Boy 7 also responded that it was all right “as long as I can correct them because I feel if I can correct them, I can get a better mark.”

Girl 6 responded that “if I do make a mistake and fix it, I think it will be ok.” Another personal response was open minded response came from one of the girls.

Girl 1: “No, because everyone makes, like me, makes mistakes.”

Oral Anxiety in the OPI

Student reports from the interviews, questionnaire, and discussion indicated that preparation, processing, and the interview itself were also causes of anxiety in the OPI.

When asked what disturbed them most about oral interviews, two boys and three girls in the interview reported not being prepared for the OPI. Also, in the discussion four boys and two girls made similar comments. The following five comments from the interviews which were typical of the five students from the interviews and six students from the questionnaires:

Boy 5: “Because I don’t know what is ahead of me, don’t know what

topics, and I have to be mentally prepared for it."

Boy 12: "Not studied well, not prepared."

Girl 3: "Because we don't know what is going to happen and we have to improvise."

Girl 6: "Because I don't know what will be in the exam and not prepared and don't know what to talk about."

Girl 9: "I think that when I get nervous my mind goes blank I forget everything. I try and say to myself it is a normal interview."

Another area two students reported in the discussion as a cause of test anxiety was the preparation time in the OPI. The one-minute preparation time in Part Two was reported as not being enough time to process and activate ideas on unfamiliar topics in both Part Two and in Part Three of the OPI. One student in the discussion also added that making notes meant that he only focused on what he had written and also this meant he had limited flexibility to discuss anything beyond the topic presented on the card. He said, "I just concentrated only on the bullet points [on the task card]." Moreover, observations of students during the OPI documented limited note taking two-three lines from students, which may suggest that students had difficulty with processing information possible due to anxiety and the pressure of time in Part Two of the OPI.

In addition, all students but one in the discussion, nine students from the questionnaire, and four students in the interviews reported that anxiety caused them to forget and not be able to access enough topic vocabulary when trying to explain themselves throughout the OPI. Code switching between Arabic and English, and vice versa, was also reported by four students in the interviews when they did not know the English words they wanted to say. Girl 12 pointed out problems with code switching from one language to another and also suggested listening and reading more may help.

Girl 12: "I know it in Arabic, but I don't know how to say it in English. I think reading more and listening to radio will help to think in English."

Five boys and one girl in the discussion also thought processing topic-related information and the preparation stages of the OPI were problematic when code switching from Arabic to English and vice-versa. The response from one girl reflected the other comments made during the discussion: "I need more time... I think in Arabic

and try to change it into English, more time to process."

The difficulty with processing information due to test anxiety was also reported in the questionnaire statement 3: "In oral exams I can get so nervous I forget things I know." Of the 25 students, 10 students felt that test anxiety can affect cognitive processes in that students forget things they know. Boy 10 and Girl 9 also felt that in the interview limited time and processing vocabulary are affected by test anxiety. This point was explained in Girl 9's comment:

Girl 9: "Thinking on the spot I need more time, I need to think before I speak."

Problems with retrieval of target language and vocabulary on a selected topic or question presented in the OPI were also a cause of anxiety for three students:

Boy 1: "Sometimes I have to think of it [the topics] in both languages and then I have to convert into English."

Girl 8:"Most of the time I don't find the right word."

Girl 9: "Not knowing words."

Grades were also a cause of anxiety for students in the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI, mentioned by four students in the interviews, five students in the questionnaire, and four in the interviews. Firstly, two students mentioned in the discussion that the effect of grades in the OPI was also a cause of test anxiety. The following student reports in the discussion were typical from the students responses collected in the interviews and questionnaires:

Boy 4"Getting a good grade, I feel sad if I don't get good grades."

Girl 1 "Because of grades, it seems natural to be stressed which doesn't help."

Six out of the ten students, four boys and two girls, in the discussion also believed that the pressure caused by the test, being that it is at the end of the year and a summative test, was a cause of anxiety. Three students also reported that because Edexcel marks this test in the UK, they felt very anxious. An example of this feeling was summed up by the spokesman in the boys' group: "Because you would expect they would want you to do better, or talk more. This made us more anxious. If it were teachers who know us and understand us, it may be fairer. Someone from outside who don't know us maybe mark it harder."

Thirdly, not being confident about their language skills and the sense of failing in the OPI were also reported in the interviews, five students in the questionnaires and

four students from the discussion. The following responses were typical of all the data collected from both the interviews and questionnaires

Boy 1: "Just the thought of that I am the only one who has the weakest English skills."

Boy 8: "Will you be good in it, negative if something is gonna happen which make you fail."

Girl 3: "It's about confidence. I am not really confident about myself and the exam conditions, but it is more personality."

Girl 12: "Having a lack of confidence, just that."

Another effect test anxiety had on students was the worry five students in the questionnaires four students in the discussion, and one girl in the interview felt towards teachers and the school. The following reported point from Girl 5 was typical of those reported in the discussion:

Girl 5: "you can make a mistake and feel intimated by the teacher, examiner… at school lots of pressure and afraid of making mistakes."

Fifth, the formal tone used by the examiner was also reported as a cause of test anxiety by four boys and three girls in the discussion, as revealed in a typical comment made by one boy in the discussion: "Most of the time they [the examiner] have a robotic tone asking questions maybe if they change the tone, make it seem like natural more, more friendly, less formal." This student's observation could suggest that the standardized script may seem unnatural and off putting for students who are used to listening to a less formal style of teaching instruction.

Sixth, four boys and four girls in the interviews, eight students from the questionnaires, and seven students from the discussion reported that another cause of anxiety was the unnatural feeling of speaking to one person (the interlocutor) and the way questions were asked to elicit information in interviews, a view summed up by Girl 10:

Girl 10 "These questions sound not natural."

Seventh, the way the interlocutor responds to students through the use of non-verbal behavior when interviewing was also a reported cause of test anxiety in the interviews.

Girl 2: "Person who interviews me, to show me that I am doing well and to feel comfortable. The way they look at me. He acts… eye contact and

nod head."

The way an interlocutor responds and behaves toward students at the beginning of the OPI was also reported both in the interview by two students and in the discussion by all students, apart from one girl, as a cause of test anxiety. The response from the interview was best summed up by Boy 8:

Boy 8: "The examiner should try and make you relax when we come in cause we get stressed and need to relax."

All Boys (in discussion): "The examiner should have more of a positive approach and try to calm down the students before the exam."

An eighth cause of test anxiety, which relates to the physical environment of the OPI, was also reported by one boy in the interview as a cause of test anxiety.

Boy 10 stated, "No AC, I get hot and nervous."

A summary of the causes and strategies from interviews, questionnaires and discussion can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: A Summary of the Reported Causes of Anxiety.

Reported Causes of Anxiety	Follow-up Interviews		Questionnaires		Focus Group Discussion	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Short of preparation time in Part Two	2	3	8	7	5	4
Problems with remembering topic vocabulary, retrieving and processing topic vocabulary	6	4	1	1	5	3
Summative test. Exam marked externally in the UK	4	0	4	6	5	3
Not preparing for the OPI ahead of time.	5	2	3	2	0	4
Code switching from Arabic to English	2	2	6	0	2	4
Interlocutor behavior	2	0	0	0	5	5
Interlocutor tone	0	0	0	0	4	3
Unnatural feeling of OPI	4	4	5	3	3	4

Students Suggestions

Two female students from the interviews also suggested changes to Part Two of the OPI which would help them control test anxiety:

Girl 5: "More topics that I am familiar with,"

Girl 7: "Pictures, visuals, if I look at a picture and maybe I can talk about it, for example (the topic about) being abroad, I won´t be able to talk about it (the word abroad) if I didn't know the words on the card."

Limited flexibility to communicate naturally in the oral tasks and the structured feeling of an interview were also reported by two boys and one girl in the discussion.

Boy 2: "not being able to express myself naturally,"

Boy 5: "not having enough time to fully express myself,"

Girl 11: "test too rigid. I can´t bring in more ideas and talk much more in oral interviews."

The last response may suggest that the test taker feels that the test does not provide much flexibility to allow her to show a repertoire of speaking skills.

The content of the topic also caused test anxiety for the students in the OPI. Three girls and three boys also responded in the questionnaire that Part Two was the most anxious for them. Girl 5's response was typical of the replies gathered in the discussion between the boys and girls:

Girl 5: "we never experienced the topic you gave us, for example, the topic I had never experienced was travelling much and this made it hard in Part Two and then when I talked about it in Part Three."

Interestingly, this response reminds us that Part Two and Part Three of the Edexcel are interlinked, and the topic presented in Part Two will be subsequently discussed in Part Three. Therefore, this test taker was required to discuss this unfamiliar topic (the theme of travelling) in two sections, and this factor may have influenced her anxiety levels and oral output. As the interlocutor is responsible for selecting topics, the topics may cause test takers problems and subsequently stimulate anxiety from the test takers.

Gender and Anxiety

Concerning whether girls and boys experience anxiety differently (questionnaire, question 6), seven responses were neutral, seven agreed, and two strongly agreed. Only four students felt there was not a gender difference. All students in the discussion, apart from one girl, reported that they felt girls get more nervous in test-taking situations. When asked why, students agreed with one girl's response that

"girls get more nervous because some girls back down from what they want to say." Another girl responded that "boys are more confident and verbal." The remaining one girl commented that girls do not necessarily get more stressed in testing situations and felt that "it depends on the personality of the person."

A summary of the results from the questionnaire on the causes of anxiety both in class discussion and in the OPI can be seen in Table 7.

Table 7: The Causes of Anxiety in English Classes and Oral Exam Assessments (Reported in Questionnaire)

Causes of Anxiety	Type of Activity	Number of Student Responses	Number of Responses
Lack of time	OPI	5 Boys, 6 Girls	14
Not preparing enough for the test	OPI	5 Girls, 3 Boys	17
Unnatural feeling that interviews have on students	OPI	4 Boys, 5 Girls	16
Test not being flexible enough with topics and tasks	OPI	7 Boys, 5 Girls	13
Not being able to express myself naturally	Class	4 Boys, 4 Girls	17
Not having enough time to fully express myself	Class OPI	5 Boys, 4 Girls 4 Boys, 4 Girls	16 8

Reported Test-Taking Strategies

The purpose of observing test-taking strategies used in the OPI was to discover whether there were differences between what test-taking strategies students were observed using in the OPI and what students reported in the interviews, questionnaires, and discussion were strategies that reduced anxiety. To assist, therefore, with answering research question numbers 2 and 4, What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview? What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety?, the observation of the OPI and any notes that the students made were gathered and analyzed before students reported comments in the questionnaire and focused group discussion. The results of the observation, interviews, questionnaire and discussion can be categorized into two areas: what strategies were reported as being used prior to the OPI and what strategies were used by students during the OPI.

Observed Test-Taking Strategies

Observable test-taking strategies were also noted during the OPI observation. In both Part One and Part Three of the OPI there were no visible, observable signs of students using strategies to reduce anxiety. However, in Part Two students showed three test-taking strategies to prepare their oral presentations which students reported in the follow-up interview as having assisted with reducing test anxiety. The most frequent type of test-taking strategy used by the students was note taking, used by seven boys and nine girls, which consisted of writing sentences of no more than two to three lines. The second most frequent strategy used by an equal number of boys and girls was using bullet points. Also, one girl used a spider-gram. However, three boys chose not to use any visible strategies to prepare for their oral presentation in Part Two. Overall, the girls showed slightly greater range of test-taking strategies to prepare for their oral presentation in Part Two than did the boys. The number and types of test-taking strategies observed in Part Two from the girls and boys are illustrated in Table 8.

Table 8: Number of Students' Test-taking Strategies Used in Part Two of the OPI

Number of Students Who Took Notes	Number of Students Who Wrote Bullet Points	Number of Students Who Wrote Spider Grams/ diagrams	No Strategy
7 Boys	3 Boys	0	3 Boys
8 Girls	3 Girls	1 Girl	0

Strategies Reported Being Used Prior to the OPI

12 out of the 25 students mentioned in the follow-up interviews and discussion four anxiety-reducing strategies which assisted them in reducing test anxiety preparation for the OPI: confidence, breathing, and being familiar with the marking criteria. These are explained by the following unedited student responses:

Boy 3: "I think that preparing, because this is the first [interview] I do and now I have a kind of idea, the flow and how it is done, because I didn't do it before and because if I keep doing it I will get used to it."

Girl 11: "Prepare potential questions and answers so I can get prepared for the exam."

Boy 5: “Know what things I am being marked, on like tenses.”

Boy 3: “Being confident and believing in my skills can make me forget about my anxiousness.”

Similar feelings about confidence were also mentioned by two girls and one boy in the discussion: “think positive about it, rather than negative” and “try to think of it [OPI] as a normal class exam.”

Breathing exercises and counting were also reported in the OPI and the questionnaires as strategies to reduce test anxiety, and this was summed up by the Boy 5’s response:

Boy 5: “Try to take deep breaths.” “I usually count from ten backwards and this helps me forget it’s an exam.”

In addition, five girls and four boys from the interviews reported that it would be useful if teachers would provide test-anxiety-reducing strategies in class before the OPI. Students thought that referring to vocabulary books may help them remember difficult words. Other student responses were to try and maintain a positive outlook about the OPI and to realize that it was a test, not a lesson.

Anxiety-Reducing Strategies Reported Used During the OPI

These students also reported what anxiety-reducing strategies they used during the OPI. Three students in the interviews, two students in the questionnaire, and four in the discussion reported four strategies. These strategies were to try and have confidence about doing the test, use breathing techniques, be creative when addressing oral tasks, and take notes. These assisted them with test anxiety during the OPI. These reports are exemplified in comments by the following three students:

Girl 12: “Act confident about what you are saying.”

Boy 12: “Always try and relax, take deep breaths when you feel the need to. Be confident about yourself and just go for it. If you make mistakes, ignore it and carry on.”

Girl 8: “Try to use my imagination as much as I can.”

8 boys and 9 girls in the interviews, 13 students from the questionnaires, and 3 students from the discussion also reported that notes can help oral preparation in Part Two of the OPI The process of writing notes as an anxiety-reducing strategy was also reported by one student.

Boy 3: “I write so I don’t get mixed up. I don’t use notes, but it makes me feel confident writing them down.”

Notes during Part Two of the OPI were also reported as a strategy to activate previous knowledge and reduce test anxiety. A summary of the reported strategies used from interviews, questionnaires and discussion can be seen in Table 9.

Table 9: A Summary of the Anxiety-reducing Strategies

Reported Anxiety-Reducing Strategies	Number of Responses in Interviews	Number of Responses in Questionnaires	Number of Responses in Focus Group Discussion
Deep breathing	1	4	None
Writing notes during the OPI	8	13	3

Miscellaneous Responses

Other comments concerning test-taking strategies were in response to the first question in the questionnaire, What are your feelings about learning English and using English in classrooms and why? These comments addressed what students thought about using English in class and showed that students had positive feelings towards learning and using English in the classroom (see Table 10).

Table 10: Feelings about Learning and Using English in the Classroom

Positive	11 Boys	12 Girls
Neutral	2 Boys	0 Girls
No Response	0 Girls	1 Girl

The positive responses from the 11 boys included comments on how English language is used as an important currency for travelling outside the classroom. The following responses were typical of the responses from the students:

Boy 1: “It’s a good language to learn, as you need it in all cases.”

Boy 7: “Really helpful, the more I travel the more I meet people.”

Boy 11: “Learn English because it’s global.”

The girls also responded similarly in the interviews with how important English is for

studying and employment:

> Girl 2: "Although Arabic is my first language, if I travel abroad I will be able to talk to other people."
>
> Girl 4: "I think it is a great thing for studying in the future."
>
> Girl 12: "I think it is a important because if I want to get a good job it have to be in English."

Two other responses were positive about the use of English, but these students were surprised that English is dominant as the language of instruction, compared to the use of Arabic:

> Boy 3: Very surprised that I would never expect to use English as [a] language for communication so much, it takes me [a] while to get used to it."

Another response, which was from Boy 4, was concerned with the use of English and Arabic in the class:

> Boy 4: "I want to talk English but my friends all want to talk Arabic…we need to talk some Arabic so we don't forget our first language and some teachers tell us off when we use it."

21 out of 25 of the students understood how English is recognized as an important and valuable language in the world, for travel, study, and employment. Moreover, students' perceptions were mostly positive, and they were instrumentally motivated towards learning and using English. However, there was also some concern about how English is more dominantly used over Arabic in class and the way that students are scolded if they use Arabic in class.

To sum up, observational notes addressed research questions 1 and 2: How is test anxiety manifested by Emirati secondary school males and females in an IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview in one educational zone in the UAE? What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview? These notes revealed physical types of anxiety that participants had during the three stages of the OPI. Similarly, notes from the observation also revealed the three types of anxiety-reducing strategies used by the students, note taking, bullet points and spider gram. The following interviews, questionnaires and focused group discussion identified what students report as the causes of anxiety in class and in the OPI. Thus, the interviews, questionnaires and focused group discussion addressed

research questions 3, 4 and 5: What do these students report as factors in them experiencing oral test anxiety? What strategies do these students report using to control oral test anxiety? What do these students report as factors causing them oral anxiety in class and strategies used to reduce oral anxiety in class?

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter discusses conclusions drawn from the physical types of anxiety, test taking and anxiety-reducing strategies observed in the OPI and the causes of anxiety in class and in the OPI reported by the students in this study. The results were collected from the four qualitative sources of data. 1) initial observation of the OPI, which studied test-taking symptoms and preparation; 2) the individual follow-up interviews, which investigated test takers strategies used, if any, and how test takers orally prepare themselves and how test anxiety affects their preparation; 3) the questionnaire which investigated the causes of anxiety, both in class and in the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI (International General Certificate of Secondary Education English as a Second Language Oral Proficiency Interview); and 4) the semi-structured focus group discussion which was aimed at probing what anxiety-reducing strategies students use in the classroom and in the OPI. First, an objective summary of the study's findings are provided, followed by the limitations of this study are discussed, and directions for further research are suggested. Finally, implications for teachers, students, and schools, based on these findings, are pointed out.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study confirm to a large extent much of the literature on anxiety and test anxiety with second language learners. All of the 25 students in this study experienced and showed physical types of anxiety during class and in the OPI. The girls showed a wider range of physical types of anxiety in all three parts of the OPI. However, both boys and girls showed more physical signs of anxiety in the first two parts of the OPI, the initial question and answer section and the two minute individual presentation compared to the final part, Part Three of the OPI. The types of anxiety pointed out by Howitz et al (1986) were also significant in recognizing categories of anxiety in class reported by these students who are learning another language (communication apprehension, fear of evaluation, learners self-esteem and test anxiety). The point that Weir (2005) makes, that when students are more relaxed they will show a greater sample of language, draws attention to the importance of assessing student's oral progress in class and how it can reduce student-related

reliability in OPIs. The negative impact anxiety had on the participants of this study influences their oral performance, which in turn affects grades. As the Edexcel IGCSE OPI is a high-stakes test for secondary Emirati students at the school where the study took place, then anxiety-reducing and test-taking strategies are important because when "we test students we are not necessarily testing their subject matter knowledge or understanding" (Coombe & Al-Hamly, 2002, p. 304), but instead are evaluating student performance.

The main focus of this study was to discover more about ESL oral anxiety and specifically oral test anxiety with 25 Emirati secondary school students. The purpose, therefore, was to help my own students, and in addition, share my findings and help Emirati secondary students prepare for present and future high-stakes oral tests and identify strategies to assist them with test anxiety.

Results from the initial OPI observation addressing research question 1, How is test anxiety manifested by Emirati secondary school male and female students in an IGCSE ESL oral proficiency interview in one educational zone in the UAE?, showed that all students, 13/ 13 boys and 12/12 girls in this study, had observable signs of test anxiety during the OPI. These signs, coinciding with Cizek and Burg (2006) observations, included fidgeting in the seat and tapping the pencil which was placed on the desk for Part Two of the OPI. The videotaped OPI showed a wider range of physical signs of anxiety by seven individual girls who showed more observable signs of test anxiety compared to only two different signs of anxiety from three boys. Furthermore, the physical signs of test anxiety amongst all the students observed in this study were either manifested through handling objects placed in the OPI, such as a pencil/table, or through the physical actions of shaking and fidgeting.

Part One and Part Two of the OPI showed the most physical signs of test anxiety from the boys and the girls, while test anxiety was less frequent in Part Three. The reasons that there were more observable signs of test anxiety in Part One of the OPI may be due to the unnatural feeling of being interviewed (Woodrow, 2006). Alternatively, Part One may be more stressful for students as there is no warm up (Canale, 1984) and within the Edexcel exam guidelines rubric no time is provided to talk to the students before the OPI.

Students reported that one reason Part Two in the OPI was a cause of anxiety was the limited one-minute preparation time. This limited time, for either the

preparation time in Part Two or as whole for the OPI, may suggest that students do not orally perform well with anxiety and under timed constraints in tests. Another reason that the presentation part in Part Two was reported as the most anxious part of the OPI was that students needed to speak for the longest time (up to two minutes) and that students found the topic on the task prompt unfamiliar. Speaking at length may seem unnatural (Woodrow, 2006) for students in an OPI, and, as the topics are selected by the interlocutor who may not teach the students, and may not know what are suitable, appropriate topics for students may be problematic in terms of validity and gaining reliable results (Weir, 2005).

Although girls showed a greater range of observable signs of test anxiety, the data from the interviews and questionnaires proved inconclusive in answering the question of whether girls experience more anxiety than boys. However, in the focus group discussion all but one student agreed that girls experience more anxiety than boys. The students reported that the reasons girls showed higher levels of observable test anxiety are that they find the test environment more threatening than do the boys, which coincides with the observations of Cizek and Burg (2006).

Data gathered from the interviews, questionnaires, and discussion on student reports on the causes of anxiety showed that students with anxiety have problems processing and retrieving information, accessing appropriate vocabulary and pronunciation, thus agreeing with the observations of MacIntrye (1995) and Chen, (2005). Another cause of anxiety students reported was difficulty activating appropriate content knowledge (schemata) from the tasks presented in the OPI. Furthermore, as the topics in Part Two and Part Three are thematically linked, then this also would mean that the students would be disadvantaged to answer questions in the following discussion in Part Three in the OPI if they were unfamiliar with the topic discussed in Part Two.

The problems of code switching between languages, Arabic and English, students reported, caused anxiety in class and in the OPI. The problems stemming from code switching were activating and processing information on a topic, retrieving and using topic vocabulary, and problems with English pronunciation.

Being negatively evaluated by other Arabic students in Arabic in class was also a reported cause of anxiety. As English teachers (like myself) where the study was undertaken do not speak Arabic, when students are negatively evaluated by other

students, the English teachers may not be fully aware of what is being said, and therefore this cause of anxiety for students may be overlooked. Moreover, the severity of these negative comments can also cause communicative apprehension and affect learning the target language, English. In addition, students being told off if they use Arabic in class to communicate was also reported as a cause of anxiety. The use of Arabic can be therefore a cause of anxiety both if it is used to express negative evaluation and also if students use Arabic in class to communicate ideas with other students. It is school policy for these students not to use Arabic in class, but it is up to the individual teacher's discretion to determine the amount of Arabic allowed, so the policy may not be fully transparent for both students and teachers. The use of Arabic in some situations and code switching between languages may assist students to learn effective processing strategies to think in both languages, and this may prove beneficial in oral assessments in class and the OPI.

One other cause of anxiety reported in the interview by Girl 5 was the intimidation felt due to the examiner (interlocutor). In addition, students also suggested in the discussion that the examiner (interlocutor) should adopt a more positive and supportive approach towards students at the beginning of the OPI. In addition, students also reported that the formal tone used by the interlocutor and the scripted lines used in the OPI seemed unnatural and a cause of test anxiety for them.

The type of oral activity in class which students reported caused the most anxiety was individual presentations in front of a class. Furthermore, all participants were observed showing physical signs of test anxiety when individually presenting a topic in Part Two of the OPI. However, all students reported in the discussion that group work was less stressful when using English because students feel more comfortable speaking in groups and students also felt that the stress is shared. This report agrees with Legar and Storch (2009).

Grades and the impact of the Edexcel summative oral test were also reported as a cause of anxiety for Boy 10, Girl 5, and Girl 11 in the interviews. My findings also added to previous studies of how high pressure felt from the impact of test grades was also a cause of student's anxiety (Loyd & Davidson, 2007; Weir, 2005). Furthermore, students also reported in the discussion that another cause of test anxiety was that the test was evaluated in the UK and students thought that this may have an impact on the way the test was graded.

Students having the perception that grades will be unfairly marked in the UK draws attention toward how standardization from global exams can be definitely more anxiety provoking for test takers. Moreover, grades and lack of feedback, which is not currently given with the grades from Edexcel, were reported as a cause of anxiety, and this factor may also cause students to focus on results, rather than the learning opportunities which may be presented in feedback. Therefore, the impact on grades for students and the importance of test transparency may become a cause of test anxiety before sitting the Edexcel OPI. Furthermore, to reinforce test validity the grades for students need to be meaningful (Luoma, 2004), and as this is a cause of anxiety reported by students, it may suggest that students are not fully aware of how their oral performance in the OPI is graded by Edexcel.

In answer to research question 2, What anxiety-reducing strategies are these students observed using during the oral proficiency interview?, the results showed strategies students use prior to the OPI and strategies students use during the OPI. Students reported the anxiety-reducing strategies used prior to the OPI were to prepare for the test (interview practice), try and believe in themselves, use breathing exercises and familiarize themselves with the OPI marking criteria. Somewhat similarly, anxiety-reducing strategies during the OPI included believing in oneself, confidence, breathing techniques, and being creative when addressing oral tasks. In addition, taking notes (bullet points of 1-3 lines) also was a strategy used in the one-minute preparation time in Part Two of the OPI. Girls, however, showed a greater range of different types (writing notes, bullet points, and a spider gram).

Students also reported some suggestions on test-taking strategies which may assist them with test anxiety. Students reported that having the OPI be about culturally appropriate and familiar topics which students could identify with would be useful, as well as less rigidity from the interview structure and tasks. However, the practicality of selecting familiar topics and the importance of standardization balanced with reducing nervousness may provide difficult for test designers to meet, as individuals and global contexts are different.

Out of the 25 students, 23 students reported in the questionnaire that they understand the importance and value of learning English. Yet this study points out that factors of student-related reliability with oral anxiety are an obstacle for them to achieve this goal. Therefore, providing a range of test-taking and anxiety-reducing

strategies for students may not only help students gain better grades in oral assessments in class and in OPIs tests, but also reinforce reliability and validity in test results.

Implications of the Study

The results from this study show that ESL anxiety and oral test anxiety do affect these 25 Arabic secondary students in the Edexcel OPI and in class. The results from the study have implications for the teachers, the schools, and the Edexcel examination board.

Implications for Teachers

The findings of this study highlight the importance of recognizing physical signs of anxiety in students, and that doing so can provide teachers with early indications of the levels of anxiety experienced by students. They then can seek and introduce anxiety-reducing strategies. The study also shows ESL teachers how oral test anxiety can manifest itself in Emirati secondary students. Furthermore, identifying the causes and types of anxiety shown and reported by students in this study can also help teachers better prepare students for tests with anxiety-reducing and test-taking strategies, which may lead to better grades and positive washback. In addition, the students in this study reported on more than one occasion that one of the major causes of oral test anxiety was that they were poorly prepared for the OPI. Teachers therefore should consider implementing within the curriculum test preparation, test-taking strategies, and anxiety-reducing strategies to assist students with test anxiety. Teachers who are also interlocutors, reported by the students as a cause of test anxiety, should practice taking on an interlocutor role with the students during exam preparation classes. Practicing interview role plays will familiarize students with OPI and also demonstrate interlocutor procedure, e.g., taking on a more formal role and a formal tone, which was reported as a cause of anxiety. Moreover, if teachers are provided with training on how to implement these strategies effectively, as well as explicitly incorporate them through oral class assessments in the IGCSE ESL course, then students would gain experience practicing them before and then implementing them in the summative OPI. Most importantly, through the process of being exposed to different types of test-taking strategies, students can independently

select their own appropriate strategies for learning English and develop strategic competence when speaking English.

In addition, teachers should also reinforce and practice reviewing topics and appropriate vocabulary for test takers, which may help with the processing problems students reported in class and the OPI. One way teachers could do this is to have and make sure students keep and use a vocabulary book regularly in which they make families of words or words/phrases for different topics or subjects. Moreover, if students also reinforce definitions and words in both languages (English and Arabic), this may help with code switching between both languages and also help test preparation. Moreover, the use of visuals with topics and target words in vocabulary books may also assist when reviewing key topics, as one student mentioned that visual prompts would help in the oral preparation stages of the OPI. Furthermore, reinforcing topic and content vocabulary in both English and Arabic may also assist students when anxiety affects the processing stages of oral preparation and when students have difficulty processing in Arabic then English.

In preparing students for OPIs, teachers can also practice and record timed oral responses on varied appropriate test topics which students can later listen to and reflect on with the teacher and the schools interlocutor. This practice, under exam-like conditions may also include a wide range of different test-taking preparation activities for OPIs such as using effective bullet points and brain storming on key topics in one-minute time frames. Moreover, more collaborative group and class discussions on these central topics before the exam may also reduce individual pressure before taking OPIs.

The results from this study also highlight the importance of encouraging students not to feel judged and discouraging students from making inappropriate comments in either English or Arabic. Therefore, the way teachers manage Arabic student comments is important during class. One way to reduce and/or prevent inappropriate comments is to make sure a class contract is agreed upon in class before oral activities are introduced and that all students fully understand the seriousness and consequences if they make any comments in Arabic. Moreover, teachers can also introduce anxiety-reducing strategies before oral activities are introduced to assist those students who experience communicative apprehension.

Implications for Schools

Schools in the UAE should also provide and seek opportunities for interlocutor training. Schools and educational institutions that subscribe to the Edexcel examination board as a benchmark for students' progress need to work more closely together. One reason for this, as the study found, was that students were unfamiliar with the grading process in the UK (a problem with test transparency). Another reason more collaboration is needed is that the study found that the interlocutor could help lower anxiety in the test by taking on a more supportive role at the beginning of the OPI. Edexcel can therefore research and review having a warm-up section (as suggested by Canale, 1984) to help assist test anxiety. Currently, these factors are not part of the test procedures for the interlocutor from the Edexcel IGCSE OPI. Therefore, working closer together, Edexcel and schools can benefit by insuring that the type of oral tasks and content used are appropriate for the students in the UAE.

Schools who undertake Edexcel IGCSE ESL exams also need to work together and set up teaching communities, which can help ESL teachers/interlocutors and ESL students share information and provide useful resources. These communities may also provide students opportunities to speak and counsel other IGCSE learners who also experience ESL oral anxiety.

Schools who adopt the policy of using English as the main means of instruction also need to review the policy of monolingual English teachers' unfamiliarity with learning in an L2. More openness and transparency towards the benefits of code switching and bilingualism in two languages is needed. Also, strategies for code- switching between Arabic and English and vice versa for both classroom oral activities and test-taking situations in OPIs may assist with cognitive processing and retrieval difficulties caused by anxiety. This approach may help Arabic ESL students develop their own appropriate strategies for both the processing and production stages of learning.

The way students obtain grades and how feedback is given also needs to be addressed to reinforce positive washback. Currently, the school's policy about giving out grades where I work is that at the end of term only students who complete a signed clearance form from all subject teachers can get an individual password to get access to the Edexcel website, which in turn enables the students to get their exam

grades via the internet. It is my observation that students simply often accept the grades they are given and do not understand the process of inquiring about grades with the Edexcel examination board in the UK. If, however, students fail to get the clearance form signed for any reason, then the password is not released, and instead they will get the grades through the post in July-August. Furthermore, the first time teachers see the grades at my school is normally when they return and start the new academic year in August/September. As there is no student or interlocutor feedback, reason, or clarification given for scores or indication of strengths and weaknesses in oral performance, this reduces positive test experience and produces negative washback. Moreover, if teachers are not provided with feedback, then this will affect how teachers can prepare and improve students' continuous learning and grades.

Implications for Edexcel

Edexcel needs to actively provide local level training and transparency on marking for teachers, as well as reinforcing feedback with the marks given to students, which may lower the students' anxiety raised by grades. Edexcel should also provide on-going interlocutor training and interviewing practice for teachers who teach the IGCSE ESL course and monitor performance by those interlocutors who are selected internally within schools.

Currently the Edexcel IGCSE ESL OPI is held once at the end of a course, and so a review of alternative methods of assessment is needed. Oral assessments administered throughout the course may lessen the pressure and anxiety stemming from a one-shot interview. It may also, most importantly, elicit fairer and more representative oral repertoire from the individual IGCSE ESL students. Edexcel also could provide student course book material about the skills and exam practice, as well as interactive websites, as currently there is no course book written by Edexcel for the IGCSE ESL.

To sum up, the IGCSE ESL is an important, integral part of these 25 secondary students' educational and language development, which will play a major factor whether students re-sit the year again at school or be motivated to learn English and also lay the foundations for other compulsory high-stakes tests for university entrance they must take while at school to enter an English-speaking university.

Limitations of This Study and Directions for Further Research

The main purpose of this study was to understand the experiences and perceptions of anxiety these 25 students have in class and in an OPI, and addition, what test-taking and anxiety-reducing strategies these Emirati secondary boys and girls use to control oral anxiety. Although a wide range of data gathering tools were used in this study, there were some limitations.

The first limitation of this study was that oral test anxiety was investigated at the end of the Edexcel IGCSE ESL course. While observations, follow-up individual interviews, semi-structured questionnaires, and the focus group discussion provided rich, plentiful opportunities to triangulate data, ideally it would have been interesting to see if oral test anxiety and test anxiety changed during the course. In addition, while the study was conducted at the end of the course and during the summative test reviewing, investigating anxiety and its effects during the course may emphasize also how and whether oral test anxiety and anxiety-reducing strategies change towards the final oral OPI.

Longitudinal or cross-sectional investigation could also explore whether anxiety levels or types change at different ages or with gender. In addition, although girls were observed to suffer more with anxiety than boys (and students also so reported) deeper analysis as to reasons why was not done. Furthermore, although the gender of the interlocutor was not mentioned as a cause of anxiety, it was a limitation. Using both males and female interlocutors in the OPI may provide more insightful information towards the interlocutor effect on anxiety.

One final limitation of this study was that the study only used self-reporting to identify factors causing oral test anxiety, and there was limited observation of strategies to control oral test anxiety. Therefore, using other quantifiable ways to collect data may reinforce the results from the study. Further research into comparing OPIs with different formats, such as having a warm up and warm down part incorporated or having two test takers with one interlocutor may also provide more information about test anxiety observed and experienced in an OPI. In addition, further study could include whether having two test takers of different genders in an OPI has any effects on test anxiety and oral performance. Alternatively, studies into use of varied task prompts, e.g., culturally appropriate visuals, could be useful. Also,

whether or not visual prompts in tests assist students with processing information and test anxiety may also be worth investigating.

Final Thought

As OPIs are very prominently used in the UAE and in particular are used in high-stakes testing, then a review of how to provide students with learning and test-taking strategies becomes essential when teaching English. If an OPI is used to measure students' oral proficiency in English, and it is a fundamental requirement for admission to an English-speaking university, then strategies in test-taking and controlling anxiety are essential for students to enable them to fulfill their educational journeys. There also needs to be closer coordination between examination boards, schools, teachers, and students in recognizing oral anxiety as a factor affecting learning and testing. If this coordination is met, it may reduce the factors that influence student-related factors of reliability and reinforce positive washback for all those involved in the test.

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OBJECTIVE

ESL teacher and Cambridge ESOL/IELTS examiner, with over 9 years' experience in secondary/higher educational Foreign Language classroom teacher. Extensive instructional experience includes beginners to university level students in different international institutions. Exceptional classroom management skills and an outstanding ability to build, manage English courses and curriculums. As well as highly motivated, I am also flexible, open minded and willing to try new teaching approaches and methods. In addition, I am strongly committed to fostering and nurturing learning and teaching language so that learners can reach their full potentials as individuals and achieve their educational goals. Masters in TESOL 2011.

STRENGTHS

-Develop high standards with academic and personal strengths of each learner, using a teacher and student-centered communicative holistic approach, with a focus on nurturing oral and written foreign language proficiency in a strong conversational curriculum.
- Experienced to teach and employ a variety of instructional approaches and teaching methodologies including task based teaching, communicative approaches, cooperative learning, and motivational strategies. Also, creative and experienced using and adapting technological resources and authentic cultural appropriate materials.
-Maximize meaningful personal achievement, enhanced participation, and individual accountability.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

• Skilled in all aspects of classroom operations, curriculum development, evaluation of learner progress, coordination with faculty, parents, and administration, facilitation of positive learning environments, and related administrative duties.
• Communication skills demonstrated through design of classroom presentations and

lectures, teaching observations, creation of detailed written lesson plans and student evaluations, and the ability to establish and maintain professional relationships.
• Experienced in diverse educational settings, working with students from all learning levels and cultural backgrounds.
• Highly committed to teaching to meet individual learner's needs, and keeping parent/, directors informed of student progress. Offer ideas and materials to continue the educational process in the home.
•Experienced and managed a learner center for over 100 students, organized learning programmers, recruited staff and was responsible for quality assurance.

CAREER HISTORY

English Language Teacher, Fujairah Private Academy, Fujairah, UAE
2006-Present • Teaching English language skills to mixed levels, teach IELTS and TOEFL, as well as academic and specific English skills. Develop and implement strategic study plans and strategies for underperforming students to improve English language skills, subject matter comprehension, and improve Exam grades.

Cambridge IELTS Examiner, University of Wollongong in Dubai
2007 Present •Examining both the general and academic speaking and writing exams. Currently certified and examined to date over five hundred speaking and writing candidates.

English Teacher, ESOL Examiner and Language Coordinator
2002-2006
• Taught English at various levels and specific courses, IELTS, general English, English for Work and business English. Successfully managed and in charge of quality assurance in an outreach language center and administered Cambridge ESOL exams.

EDUCATION

American University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE
M.A., TESOL (Spring 2011)

Greenwich University, United Kingdom
Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (2006)

Cambridge University, United Kingdom
(CELTA) Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (2006)

Winchester University, United Kingdom
BA Hon's Degree English Language and

Literature (2002)

Recent Continuing Education & Workshops
• TESOL Arabia Conferences
•UAE Curriculum Design and Material Development and presentation at American University of Sharjah
• Ongoing IELTS Examiner Training

Publications
•Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab: TESOL Perspectives March 2010

Teaching Certifications and Studies
• CTELT: Teacher Development in Language Assessment 2009
• International TESOL Arabia Conferences 2008-2010

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL & COMMUNITY PROJECTS

Traveled to various countries including: Oman, USA, Canada, India, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Australia, Indonesia, Cuba, Malaysia, and Paris. Chairman and participant for Operation Rally Youth development.

REFERENCES

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Appendix A: Edexcel Oral Interview Test (taken from Edexcel, 2010)

Paper 3: Speaking

Content overview

Below are the Assessment Objectives (AOs) for the optional speaking assessment of the Edexcel IGCSE in English as a Second Language (ESL).

Students should demonstrate the ability to:

Speaking

AO16 communicate in speech comprehensibly and clearly

AO17 show the ability to cope with a range of topics at different levels of complexity

AO18 use a range of vocabulary, grammar and structures appropriately.

Assessment overview

- Total assessment approximately 12 minutes.
- Recorded interview between student and interlocutor, based on task cards supplied and marked by Edexcel.
- Single tier of entry.
- The total number of marks available is 20.

Specification – Edexcel IGCSE in English as a Second Language (ESL) (4ES0)

Detailed content

Students may take a speaking test in addition to Papers 1 and 2. Speaking tests will be recorded

and the audiotapes/CDs for all students will be sent to Edexcel for external assessment.

Students will be assessed individually.

The interlocutor will need a supply of task cards (provided by Edexcel), pens and paper for students to make notes, and a clock to time students.

The instructions provided to the interlocutor by Edexcel are precise and the interlocutor is required to follow them exactly when forming questions and presenting tasks, and so on, to the students.

The test will be divided into three parts.

Part 1: Introductory interview with student (2–3 minutes)

The interlocutor introduces him/herself and asks the student a set of simple introductory questions. These questions are centred on a familiar topic, such as home or leisure, and the interlocutor works from a set of prompt questions provided by Edexcel.

Part 2: Student talk (1 minute preparation, plus a talk of 1–2 minutes)

The interlocutor gives the student a task card containing a topic, some bullet points to stimulate

ideas, and a question relating to the topic. The student is also given some paper and a pen to make notes if they wish.

The student has one minute in which to prepare for the talk, during which they may make notes.

These notes are collected by the interlocutor at the end of the test and destroyed at the end of the testing day by the centre. They are not assessed.

The student is then asked to talk about the given topic. The talk should last no more than two minutes.

The student does not need to address all the bullet points, but they are expected to address the specific question on the task card in the allotted time.

Part 3: Extended discussion (maximum 5 minutes)

The interlocutor will lead the student into an extended discussion on the presentation topic used

in Part 2. The interlocutor will ask questions that start with the more familiar and everyday

contexts, and then, with more able students, move on to questions on abstract themes related to

the chosen topic.

Assessment arrangements

All speaking tests will be recorded on a date chosen by the centre within a period specified annually by Edexcel. For the June examination series, the speaking tests may be

completed at any time from mid-April up to, and including, the date of the written examinations in June.

The tests will be externally marked by Edexcel. All tapes/CDs must be sent directly to the Edexcel examiner.

The test will be conducted by an interlocutor selected by the centre. This will normally be a teacher from the centre, but could be someone from outside the centre.

Centres are responsible for providing their own audiotapes/CDs to record the speaking tests.

Tapes/CDs must be clearly labelled using the template in Appendix 4 of this specification.

Audiotape/CD cover sheets (which give student details) must be despatched directly to the Edexcel examiner on the day the tests are conducted.

More detailed instructions for the conduct of the speaking test are available in Appendix 2.

Reporting of Paper 3

Paper 3 will be graded A* to G, and will be reported separately on the student's certificate.

Centres should note that:

 the speaking test cannot be taken as a separate qualification. It can be taken only with the Edexcel IGCSE in English as a Second Language (ESL)

 achievement in the speaking test will not affect the grade awarded on Paper 1 and Paper 2

 a student must achieve at least Grade G on Paper 1 and Paper 2 in order to be awarded a grade for the speaking test

 a student who achieves at least Grade G on Paper 1 and Paper 2, but who is awarded Ungraded on Paper 3, will not have the Paper 3 grade reported

 there will be an additional fee for each student entered for the speaking test.

Appendix B: Edexcel Speaking Marking Guide (Public Version)

Communicative ability and content	**Mark**
Student produces no language worth rewarding	0
Offers little relevant information and is unable to formulate clear opinions. Produces minimal responses and is unable to maintain interaction.	1
Opinions are limited to basic questions and relevant information provided is limited. Answers are short and student shows little or no initiative	2
Expresses simple opinions and offers some personal responses, conveying some relevant information. Generally responds well but rarely expands on ideas under discussion. Student has difficulty with more complex questions. Student needs help to interpret the question.	3
Expresses opinions without undue difficulty and conveys a significant amount of information. Responds well to a range of questions and expands on some questions.	4
Confidently expresses opinions and attitudes, and conveys a lot of information. Responds well to all questions and frequently takes the initiative to expand on ideas under discussion.	5

Pronunciation and fluency	**Mark**
Student produces no language worth rewarding	0
Pronunciation is poor and inconsistent and communication is hesitant and disjointed.	1
Pronunciation and intonation are generally poor and inconsistent, and may impede communication. Accent regularly impedes communication. There are patches of speech which cannot be understood. Student is hesitant.	2
Pronunciation and intonation are generally accurate though errors may interfere with communication. Accent may impede communication. Student hesitates occasionally.	3
Pronunciation and intonation are generally comprehensible and clear. Accent is noticeable but does not impede communication. Student generally responds without undue hesitation.	4
Pronunciation and intonation are consistently comprehensible and clear. Accent in no way impedes communication. Student is able to sustain the conversation with ease and without undue hesitation.	5

Lexical accuracy and range	Mark
Student produces no language worth rewarding	0
Only uses the most basic vocabulary. Student is unable to overcome problems.	1
Range of vocabulary used is limited and repetitive. Student rarely attempts complex language and often lacks the resources to overcome problems.	2
Student uses an adequate range of structures and vocabulary. Some attempts to use complex language though not always successfully. Student may occasionally lack the resources to maintain interaction.	3
Uses a relatively wide range of vocabulary, generally used appropriately and accurately. Occasional errors impede communication though generally student has resources to maintain interaction.	4
Uses a wide range of vocabulary appropriately, accurately and precisely. Student has appropriate linguistic resources to be able to overcome problems and maintain interaction.	5

Grammatical accuracy and range	Mark
Student produces no language worth rewarding	0
Consistently inaccurate use of structures.	1
Generally inaccurate in basic language. Errors impede communication and student is unable to use any complex structures.	2
Generally accurate using simple, basic language. Less accurate in more unfamiliar language situations. Errors are at times significant and impact on communication.	3
Generally accurate in straightforward language. Some errors evident, particularly when using more complex language.	4
Uses a wide range of complex structures accurately and appropriately. Full range of tenses, subordinate clauses etc. are used very competently and appropriately to convey information.	5

Appendix C: Initial Observation Sheet: Test-Taking Symptoms and Preparation

Participants Boys-B Girls-G	Any observed anxiety? PART 1 of the OPI (General questions)	Any observed anxiety? PART 2 of the OPI (The 'long individual turn)	Any observed anxiety? PART 3 of the OPI (Discussion Questions/ Answers)	Physical Signs of Anxiety	Wiggling/ Squirming in a chair	Chewing on a pencil	Twisting hair	Playing with clothes	Other	Test-Taking Strategies Used
										Part ---
										Part ---
										Part ---

NOTES_____

_____

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Follow-up Interviews

1) What are your feelings about learning English and using English in classrooms? Why?

2) What disturbs you the most about speaking English in the classroom? Why?

3) What disturbs you the most about speaking English in oral interview exams? Why?

4) What kinds of situations cause oral anxiety for you while learning English? Why?

5) How do you think people in your classroom will react if you make mistakes?

6) Are you afraid of making mistakes or errors while speaking English? Why?

7) What happens to you when you are in a stressful situation when speaking English?

8) What kinds of oral situations make you feel less anxious when speaking English?

9) In stressful situations, do you seek solutions from others for help? Who? How?

10) What do you think are the reasons why you get nervous or anxious before or while using English in oral interview exams?

11) Do you think that stress can be sometimes positive?

12) What suggestions would you like to see in oral interview exams to control or reduce oral anxiety?

13) Did the strategies you used while preparing for part two of the interview affect your anxiety in anyway?

Appendix E: Questionnaire

Circle one below.

1) I am usually at ease during oral assessments in language classes.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

2) I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language classes or exams.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

3) In oral exams I can get so nervous I forget things I know.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

4) I would ***not*** be nervous speaking English with native speakers.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

5) I can feel my heart pounding during the interview.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

6) Girls and boys experience the same test anxiety in exams

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

7) Make a list of what could cause you anxiety when speaking English in classes and/or during an oral exam or assessment.

CLASSES	ORAL INTERVIEW EXAMS
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)

8) What oral situations or activities make you the most anxious in an oral interview exam? Why?

_____

____

9) What could help you when you get anxious in these situations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

10) Are there any useful strategies which you use to help you with oral interview assessment?

Please explain.

_____

_____

_____

_____.

Appendix F: Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion (Student Version)

1) What did you feel most anxious about during the oral exam?
2) When and how did you start feeling anxious?
3) Can you think of ways anxiety can be reduced or controlled during an oral exam or classroom activities?
4) Did the preparation time in Part Two of the exam cause you anxiety? How?
5) What were you thinking when you prepared?
6) Can you think of any ways that could help with this?
7) What ways or strategies could help reduce anxiety in the oral exam?
8) Which cause you the most oral anxiety: group work, pair work, role play?
9) Who do you think has more anxiety when doing an oral interview, boys or girls? Why?
10) Can you suggest what makes someone good at communicating in an oral interview or a with an audience?

Appendix G: Semi-structured Focus Group Discussion (Teacher Version)

1) What did you feel most anxious about during the oral exam?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

2) When and how did you start feeling anxious?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of what happened…

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

3) Can you think of ways anxiety can be reduced or controlled during an oral exam or classroom activities?

Please give me an example of…

What can someone else tell me about this?

4) Did the preparation time in Part Two of the exam cause you anxiety? How?

Please give me an example of…

What can someone else tell me about this?

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

5) What were you thinking when you prepared?

What can someone else tell me about this?

What can someone else tell me about this?

6) Can you think of any ways that could help with this?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of…

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

7) What ways or strategies could help reduce anxiety in the oral exam?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of…

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

8) Which cause you the most oral anxiety: group work, pair work, role play?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of why…….

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

9) Who do you think has more anxiety when doing an oral interview, boys or girls? Why?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of why you think this…

What can someone else tell me about this?

Does anyone feel differently about this issue?

10) Can you suggest what makes someone good at communicating in an oral interview or a with an audience?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of…

What else?

11) What does being good at communicating in an oral interview or with an audience mean for you?

Please tell me more about…

Say a little bit more about that.

Please give me an example of…

What else?

Anything else?

How is that for you, (person's name)_____ and for others?

Appendix H: Consent Form

American University of Sharjah Office of Research

Consent Form

For questions about the study, contact: Dr. Betty Lanteigne, Office: Lan 240, Department of English/MATESOL, American University of Sharjah, PO Box 26666, Sharjah, UAE blanteigne@aus.edu, 06- 515-2523.

Your son/daughter is invited to participate in a research study on how anxiety affects English as Foreign Language (EFL) students. The research project is part of a Master's course in TESOL (Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Language). The study is being conducted by Christopher Blake (an MA student at the American University of Sharjah, Sharjah, UAE).

Your son/daughter is being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide about his/her participation, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read carefully the following information before making a decision. The purpose of the research is to examine anxiety for ESL English language learners and in particular in oral interviews. Your son/daughter will be invited to participate in an oral proficiency interview, individual interview, questionnaire and a focus group discussion. The oral interview, interview and group discussion will be recorded.

All information, which will be collected during the research, will be kept strictly confidential and not shown to anyone, except the student. Your son/daughter's name will be removed and he/she will be identified by a number and either F for Female or M for Male. This procedure will mean that your son/daughter's identity will not be recognized by others.

There are no risks involved to the students during this research. However, the benefits will provide opportunities for oral exam practice and to discuss oral test anxiety.

Time Involvement: 1 hour approximately, during class and school time.

Your Rights: If you have read this form and have decided to allow your son/daughter to participate in this project, please understand his/her participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without

any penalty.

Your son/daughter has the right to refuse to answer particular questions. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

If you do not want your son/daughter to participate in this research, then please sign this form at the bottom and return it to Mr. Chris (English Department).

If you have questions about your son's/daughter's rights as a study participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact—anonymously, if you wish— the Office of Research, American University of Sharjah, Main Building, Mezzanine Floor, P.O. Box 26666, Sharjah, UAE; Tel: +(971) 6 515 2208.

The extra copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Protocol Approval Date: _____
Protocol Expiration Date: _____

Print Name_____
Son's/Daughter's Name_____