



## The Role of Teacher Emotional Support in Reducing English Speaking Anxiety among First-Year Students in the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University

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### دور الدعم العاطفي للمعلم في تقليل قلق التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية جامعة عمر المختار

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#### Abstract:

This research examines the extent to which instructor-provided emotional support mitigates foreign language anxiety, specifically targeting first-year English majors at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. Adopting a descriptive-correlational framework, the study utilizes empirical data derived from a purposive sample of 50 students. Methodologically, two primary instruments were employed: Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale and a specialized scale for teacher emotional support, synthesized from the theoretical contributions of Scrivener (2011) and Gkonou and Miller (2019). Following the administration of paper-based questionnaires, the gathered data underwent descriptive and inferential statistical analysis, including Pearson product-moment correlation. Quantitative results indicate that participants manifested moderate-to-high levels of speaking anxiety (M = 34.90 out of 50). Conversely, they perceived a significant degree of emotional support from their instructors (M = 13.06). The bivariate analysis yielded a weak yet statistically significant inverse correlation between these variables ( $r = -.28, p = .048$ ). These findings suggest that while pedagogical emotional support serves as a crucial protective mechanism against anxiety, it is not an exhaustive predictor of students' affective states. Consequently, the study posits that emotional support must be integrated with targeted, practical instructional interventions designed to manage linguistic frustration and situational performance pressure.

**Keywords:** teacher emotional support, speaking anxiety, foreign language classroom anxiety, EFL, first-year university students, Omar Al-Mukhtar University.

#### المخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استقصاء دور الدعم العاطفي الذي يقدمه المعلم في خفض قلق التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية لدى طلاب السنة الأولى بقسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة عمر المختار. واعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي الارتباطي، واستندت إلى بيانات جمعت من عينة قصدية مكونة من 50 طالباً وطالبة. واستخدمت أداتان في جمع البيانات: مقياس قلق تعلم اللغة الأجنبية داخل الصف لهورويتز وزملائه (1986)، ومقياس الدعم العاطفي للمعلم المقتبس من Scrivener (2011) و Gkonou and Miller (2019). وقد جمعت البيانات من خلال استبيانات ورقية، ثم خلّلت باستخدام الإحصاءات

الوصفية ومعامل ارتباط بيرسون. وأظهرت النتائج أن الطلاب يعانون مستوى متوسطاً إلى مرتفع من قلق التحدث، بمتوسط بلغ 34.90 من 50 وفي المقابل، أظهروا مستوى مرتفعاً من الدعم العاطفي المدرك من المعلم، إذ بلغ متوسط الدرجة الكلية للدعم 13.06. كما كشفت نتائج الارتباط عن وجود علاقة عكسية ضعيفة لكنها دالة إحصائياً بين المتغيرين ( $r = -.28, p = .048$ ). ويعني ذلك أن ارتفاع الدعم العاطفي يرتبط بانخفاض قلق التحدث، غير أن هذا الدعم لم يكن كافياً وحده لتفسير مستويات القلق لدى الطلاب. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الدعم العاطفي للمعلم يمثل عاملاً وقائياً مهماً، لكنه يحتاج إلى أن يُدعم بإجراءات تدريسية عملية تساعد الطلاب على التعامل مع لحظات التعثر اللغوي وضغط الأداء الشفهي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الدعم العاطفي للمعلم، قلق التحدث، قلق تعلم اللغة الأجنبية داخل الصف، اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، طلاب السنة الأولى، جامعة عمر المختار.

## Introduction:

English now functions as the dominant language of international communication. Its reach extends across higher education, scientific exchange, technology, and global commerce. For that reason, English language teaching no longer aims at grammatical knowledge alone. It seeks to develop communicative competence, and speaking lies at the center of that goal. Yet oral performance is shaped by more than vocabulary and grammar. It is also shaped by the learner's emotional state inside the classroom. In practice, effective speaking draws on control of form, structure, and meaningful language use in context, alongside the confidence to communicate under pressure (Emery, Kierzek, & Lindblom, 2002; Hedge, 2000; Leech & Svartvik, 2002).

Within this context, foreign language anxiety has emerged as a major concern in language education research (Horwitz et al., 1986). Speaking anxiety is especially disruptive because it appears at the very moment learners are expected to perform publicly. Students who know the language may still hesitate, fall silent, or lose control of their speech when they fear error or negative judgment (Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). The problem, therefore, is not simply linguistic. It is also affective, social, and pedagogical.

This is where teacher emotional support becomes analytically important. A supportive teacher does more than explain content. Such a teacher builds rapport, normalizes mistakes, and creates conditions in which students can speak without humiliation or panic (Scrivener, 2011). Recent research has likewise shown that emotionally responsive teaching can strengthen learners' engagement and reduce the affective pressures associated with classroom participation (Alrabai & Algazzaz, 2024; Gkonou & Miller, 2019).

The issue is particularly acute among first-year students in the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. This stage marks a demanding transition from general schooling to disciplinary study. Students are no longer asked merely to understand English; they are expected to use it as a medium of academic interaction inside the department. When emotional support is limited, this transition may intensify speaking anxiety rather than ease it. The present study therefore examines how teacher emotional support may help reduce English speaking anxiety in this specific university context.

## Research Problem:

The core research problem addressed herein stems from a significant disparity between students' extensive academic background and their practical communicative performance. Despite having studied English for several years prior to their enrollment, many freshman students within the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University demonstrate a notable lack of communicative self-assurance upon commencing their university studies. This struggle is frequently manifest in pedagogical settings through observable markers, such as pronounced hesitation, prolonged silences, limited engagement, or the strategic avoidance of oral tasks. These recurrent behavioral patterns suggest that the underlying issue is not a deficiency in linguistic competence, but rather the manifestation of entrenched speaking anxiety.

The problem becomes more serious at university level because students are expected to move from passive reception to active verbal engagement (Doğan et al., 2023). They must discuss, respond, present, and interact in English as part of their academic formation. However, instructional attention often remains directed toward grammar, vocabulary, and formal accuracy, while the affective dimension receives less systematic consideration (Attia & Algazo, 2025; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021). This imbalance matters because classroom anxiety can restrict participation even when learners possess the linguistic resources needed to speak.

A further issue concerns the local research context. Studies have shown that teacher support can shape engagement, confidence, and anxiety in language learning environments (Li et al., 2024; Tauchid, 2025). Recent work has also shown that speaking anxiety is influenced by multiple predictors and moderators rather than by a single classroom factor (Lau, Adi Badiozaman, & Leong, 2025).

Nevertheless, there remains a limited body of research in the context of Omar Al-Mukhtar University that examines teacher emotional support as a central factor in reducing speaking anxiety. A teacher may be academically competent, yet still intensify student anxiety if patience, encouragement, and tolerance of error are absent from classroom interaction. This gap gives the study both its rationale and its urgency.

#### **Research Questions:**

Based on the aforementioned problem, **the main research question of this study is:**

- "What is the role of the emotional support provided by English language teachers in reducing the severity of speaking anxiety among first-year students in the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University?"

To make the problem more specific, **the study addresses the following sub-questions:**

- What is the prevailing level of speaking anxiety among first-year students in the department?
- How do students perceive the emotional support practices provided by their teachers?
- Is there a difference in the level of speaking anxiety between students who perceive a high level of emotional support and those who lack it?

#### **Significance of the Study:**

**This study derives its significance from several academic and practical aspects:**

- **Theoretical Significance:** The study extends discussion of affective variables in EFL learning, with particular attention to the relationship between emotional support and speaking anxiety in the Libyan university context.
- **Practical Significance:** It offers insights that may help lecturers and academic administrators create a classroom climate that lowers fear, encourages participation, and supports oral performance.
- **Target Group:** The study addresses first-year students, a transitional group for whom early academic and emotional support is especially important.
- **Research Gap:** It responds to the shortage of local studies that connect teacher emotional support with students' speaking performance, rather than treating language learning as a purely cognitive process.

#### **Literature Review:**

Over the last few decades, research in second language acquisition has undergone a marked conceptual shift. Earlier work often privileged cognitive processing and linguistic competence. More recent scholarship, however, has drawn sustained attention to affective factors and their role in shaping language learning outcomes. Within this line of inquiry, anxiety and emotional support stand out as two closely related variables. They can either constrain or facilitate the learner's ability to engage with the target language in meaningful ways.

#### **Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA):**

Foreign language classroom anxiety has long been recognized as a distinct construct in language education. Horwitz et al. (1986) defined it as a unique combination of self-perceptions, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors associated with classroom language learning. What gives this form of anxiety its analytical importance is its situation-specific nature. A student may perform confidently in other academic subjects yet become visibly tense in the foreign language classroom. The anxiety, then, does not simply arise from general academic weakness. It is rooted in the particular demands of using a language that is not one's mother tongue.

The literature commonly identifies three central dimensions of this anxiety. The first is communication apprehension. This appears when learners struggle to express meaning or to interpret others in the target language. The second is fear of negative evaluation. Here, students worry that teachers or classmates will judge their linguistic performance unfavorably when they make errors. The third is test anxiety, which emerges in formal assessment contexts and is tied to fear of academic failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). More recent quantitative work suggests that classroom speaking anxiety is shaped by interacting predictors and moderators, which confirms the complexity of the phenomenon (Lau et al., 2025). Together, these dimensions help explain why speaking often becomes the most stressful aspect of foreign language learning.

#### **Teacher Emotional Support:**

Teacher emotional support may be understood as the set of relational and pedagogical practices through which the teacher creates a psychologically secure learning environment. It includes warmth, respect, patience, sensitivity to student needs, and the ability to maintain a positive classroom climate. From this perspective, the teacher is not only an instructor of linguistic forms, but also a stabilizing presence who can reduce the emotional costs of classroom participation. When students perceive the classroom as safe, they are more likely to take risks, speak, and remain engaged in interaction.

This view is closely aligned with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis. Krashen argued that emotional variables mediate the extent to which language input reaches the mechanisms of acquisition. When learners feel anxious, threatened, or discouraged, the affective filter rises and blocks input from being processed efficiently. When the classroom atmosphere is supportive, that filter is lowered, and language input becomes more accessible. Teacher emotional support is therefore not peripheral to language learning. It is one of the conditions that make learning possible.

#### **The Relationship Between Emotional Support and Anxiety Reduction:**

The relationship between teacher emotional support and anxiety reduction is well established in the educational literature. In practical terms, emotionally supportive teachers help students reinterpret error. Mistakes are no longer treated as evidence of failure; they become part of the learning process. This shift is crucial because it weakens fear of negative evaluation and gradually builds trust between teacher and learner. Once trust is present, students are more willing to speak, even when their language remains imperfect.

Emotional support also contributes to self-regulation. Continuous encouragement, calm feedback, and respectful interaction help learners manage tension during oral tasks. Over time, students may develop greater control over the emotional responses that typically accompany speaking in a foreign language. Classroom climate matters here as well. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) argued that foreign language enjoyment operates alongside anxiety rather than outside it. A supportive teacher can actively shape this climate of enjoyment through reassurance, responsiveness, and encouragement. Research also shows that teachers use a range of coping practices to address classroom anxiety, while teacher and peer support can influence both speaking anxiety and proficiency (Tauchid, 2025; Zarei, Alibakhshi, & Nezakatgoo, 2024). In this sense, emotional support does not simply reduce anxiety; it also creates the positive conditions under which speaking can develop.

To sum up, the literature suggests that foreign language anxiety is a widespread and persistent phenomenon. It may not be eliminated entirely, yet it can be managed in pedagogically productive ways. Across these studies, one point remains consistent: teacher emotional support is among the most effective means of transforming the classroom from a site of psychological threat into a space that enables linguistic experimentation, confidence, and meaningful communication.

#### **Methodology:**

##### **Research Design:**

This study adopts a descriptive correlational design. This design is appropriate because it allows the researcher to describe the phenomenon under investigation and to examine the relationship between two variables—foreign language speaking anxiety and teacher emotional support—without intervening in the natural classroom setting. Since the purpose of the study is not to manipulate instruction, but to identify patterns of association, the descriptive correlational approach is methodologically suitable.

##### **Population and Sample:**

The population of the study consists of students enrolled in the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. The sample was purposively selected and included 50 first-year male and female students. This group was chosen because first-year students are directly and regularly exposed to classroom situations that require oral participation in English, making them particularly relevant to the aims of the study.

##### **Research Instruments:**

For the purposes of this study, data were gathered primarily through two validated instruments. The first questionnaire was a specialized adaptation of Horwitz et al. (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), with a specific emphasis placed on constructs pertaining to oral communication apprehension and evaluative stress. Regarding the second instrument, it was designed to assess the emotional support provided by instructors. The items for this measure were synthesized from established indicators of pedagogical rapport, the cultivation of a secure classroom environment, mutual respect, and student psychological well-being, incorporating the theoretical frameworks proposed by Scrivener (2011) and Gkonou and Miller (2019).

##### **Data Collection Procedures:**

The questionnaires were distributed to the selected student groups in paper form. Participants were informed that the information would remain confidential and that participation was entirely voluntary. They were also told that the data would be used only for scientific research purposes. These procedures were followed to encourage transparent and reliable responses.

##### **Statistical Analysis:**

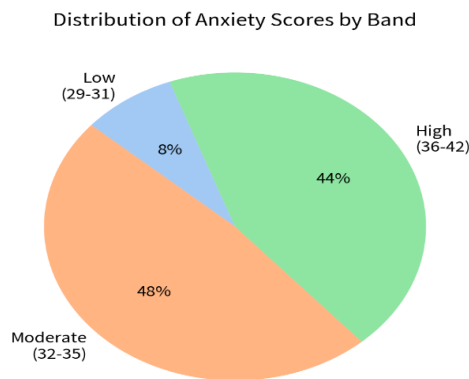
The data collected from the 50 participants were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation coefficient. Means and standard deviations were used to identify the general levels of speaking anxiety and teacher emotional support. Pearson's  $r$  was then used to determine the direction

and strength of the relationship between the two variables. The study relied on this analytical framework because it is consistent with the nature of the research objectives.

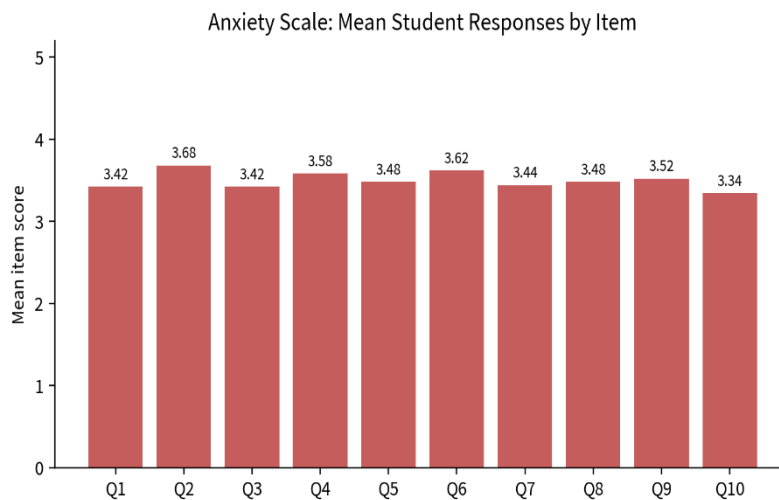
**Results Related to the Level of English Language Anxiety:**

The findings indicate that the participants experienced a moderate to relatively high level of English language anxiety. Based on the responses of the 50 students, the mean total score for anxiety was 34.90 out of 50. This result suggests that anxiety remains a noticeable feature of students’ classroom experience, especially in situations that require speaking in front of others.

Variable	N	Mean	Total Score	Level
English Language Anxiety	50	34.90	50	Moderate to High



**Figure (1):** Distribution of anxiety scores across observed score bands.



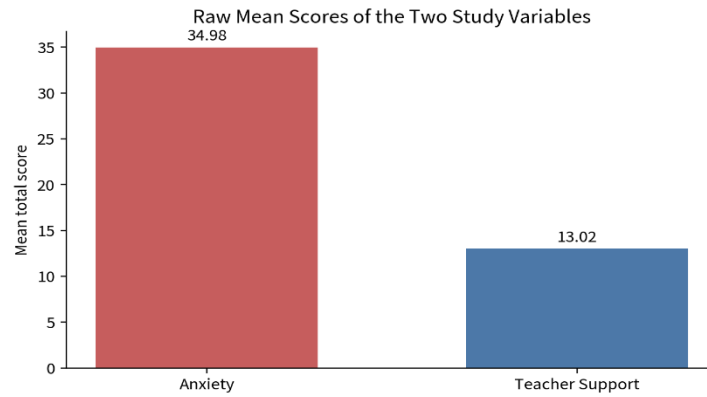
**Figure (2):** Mean student responses for the anxiety scale items.

**Note.** Anxiety appears to be concentrated mainly in situations that involve speaking in front of others and in fear of having errors corrected publicly.

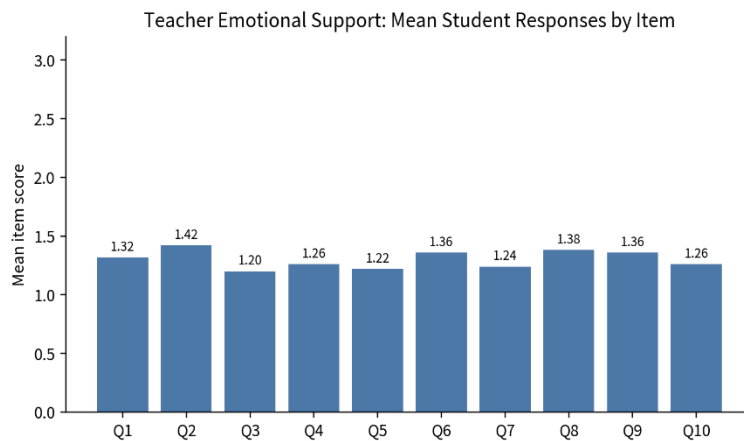
**Results Related to the Level of Teacher Emotional Support:**

The results further show that the students perceived a very high level of emotional support from their teachers. Based on the responses of the 50 participants, the mean total score for teacher support was 13.06. Because the scale was coded in a direction where lower scores reflect stronger agreement with positive support statements, this result indicates a very high level of perceived teacher emotional support. In general, the participants viewed their instructors as respectful, approachable, and emotionally supportive.

Variable	N	Mean	Response Trend	Level
Teacher Emotional Support	50	13.06	Strongly Agree / Always	Very High



**Figure (3):** Raw mean scores for anxiety and teacher emotional support.



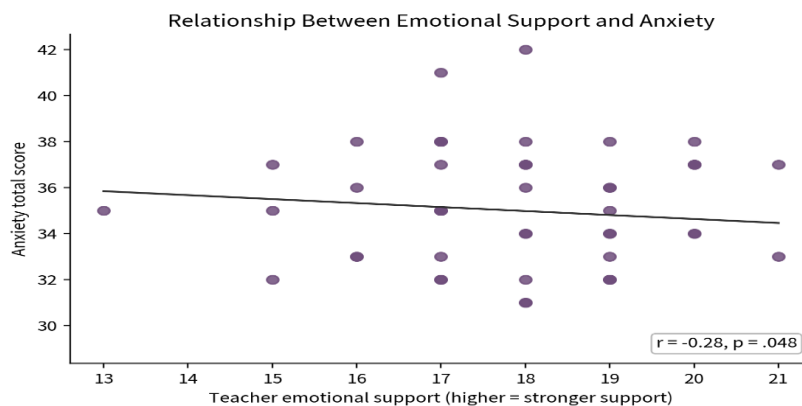
**Figure (4):** Mean student responses for the teacher emotional support items.

**Note.** The strongest indicators of support appeared in the items related to respect and friendly treatment. The item concerning help during moments of frustration was comparatively lower, though it still pointed to a positive level of support.

**Correlation Between Anxiety and Teacher Emotional Support:**

To answer the central research question, Pearson’s correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between anxiety and teacher emotional support. The analysis yielded a weak negative correlation ( $r = -0.28$ ,  $p = .048$ ). This means that as perceived teacher emotional support increased, students’ anxiety tended to decrease. Although the relationship is not strong, it is statistically significant and points to the potential value of emotional support in reducing speaking anxiety among first-year students.

Correlated Variables	Pearson’s r	p -value	Type of Relationship
Anxiety ↔ Teacher Emotional Support	-0.28*	0.048	Weak Negative Correlation



**Figure (5):** Scatter plot showing the negative relationship between emotional support and anxiety.

### **Interpretation of the Result:**

The result indicates an inverse relationship between the two variables. In other words, as teacher emotional support increased, students' anxiety tended to decrease. The correlation, however, was weak from a statistical perspective. This suggests that emotional support, despite its clear importance, is not the only factor shaping speaking anxiety. Other variables, such as task difficulty, limited proficiency, or social shyness, may also influence students' anxiety independently of the teacher's behavior.

### **Findings Summary:**

- English language teachers at Omar Al-Mukhtar University appear to demonstrate strong emotional support skills that help create a safe classroom environment.
- Despite this supportive atmosphere, speaking anxiety still represents a significant challenge for first-year students, which means that instructional strategies are needed alongside emotional support.
- Teacher emotional support appears to function as a protective factor that helps prevent anxiety from developing into withdrawal or academic disengagement.

### **Discussion:**

This investigation sought to analyze the correlation between perceived teacher emotional support and the manifestations of oral communication anxiety among freshman students within the English Department at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. The empirical findings underscore a compelling narrative that aligns with existing scholarly discourse while offering significant pedagogical implications. The data indicated that while participants experienced moderate-to-severe levels of speaking apprehension, they concurrently perceived an exceptionally high degree of emotional support from their instructors. Although these results might initially seem paradoxical, a more nuanced analysis reveals that they do not necessarily indicate a failure in the instructional environment. Instead, this dynamic illustrates the multifaceted, intricate nature of foreign language anxiety, suggesting that support systems and anxiety markers coexist as distinct, yet interrelated, dimensions of the learning experience.

The persistence of speaking anxiety despite strong teacher support indicates that anxiety in this context cannot be reduced to a single cause. This interpretation aligns with Horwitz et al. (1986), who treated foreign language anxiety as a distinct and situation-specific construct. It also supports more recent work showing that speaking anxiety is shaped by multiple interacting variables, including classroom demands, learner beliefs, and contextual pressures (Lau et al., 2025). In the present study, first-year students appear to be experiencing exactly this kind of tension. They are working within a generally supportive environment, yet they still feel pressure when they are expected to speak publicly in English.

### **Discussion of the First Finding: Speaking Anxiety Remains Salient:**

The anxiety means of 34.90 suggests that speaking continues to be a difficult aspect of language learning for many students. This result is consistent with the argument that oral performance is especially vulnerable to fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension (Horwitz et al., 1986; Mouhoubi-Messadh & Khaldi, 2022). The students in this study seem to be particularly affected by situations involving public speaking and visible error correction. Such contexts expose learners to immediate judgment, whether real or imagined, and this can interrupt fluency even when the learner has sufficient linguistic knowledge.

This finding may also be explained by the transitional position of the sample. First-year students are entering a new academic discourse community. They are expected to use English not only as a subject of study but also as a tool of participation, response, and presentation. That shift is demanding. It requires linguistic competence, but it also requires confidence, self-regulation, and willingness to take communicative risks. As Hedge (2000) notes, successful language learning depends not only on knowledge of the system but also on the learner's readiness to use language meaningfully in context. When that readiness is weakened by anxiety, performance can decline.

### **Discussion of the Second Finding: Teacher Emotional Support Is Strong:**

The teacher support findings are equally significant. The very high level of perceived support suggests that the teachers are already creating a respectful and emotionally safe classroom climate. This result agrees with Scrivener's (2011) emphasis on rapport and with Gkonou and Miller's (2019) view that emotionally engaged teaching plays a central role in working with anxious learners. It also corresponds with Alrabai and Algazzaz (2024), who found that teacher emotional support can positively influence learners' emotions and engagement.

In the present study, students appear to recognize their teachers as supportive figures rather than as sources of threat. This is an important result because it suggests that the department already possesses a strong human foundation for language teaching. The highest-rated aspects of support were respect and friendly treatment. These are not minor interpersonal details. They are central to lowering emotional barriers and creating the psychological conditions necessary for oral participation.

In terms of Krashen's (1982) framework, such practices help lower the affective filter and make language input and classroom interaction more accessible.

#### **Discussion of the Correlation Finding:**

The correlation result adds an important layer to the interpretation. The statistically significant negative correlation indicates that as perceived teacher emotional support increased, speaking anxiety tended to decrease. This finding supports the general claim that emotional support functions as a protective factor in language learning. It is broadly in line with studies showing that teacher support is associated with lower anxiety and stronger engagement (Li et al., 2024; Sadoughi & Hejazi, 2021).

At the same time, the relationship in this study was weak. This matters. It means that emotional support helps, but it does not fully determine student anxiety. This interpretation is compatible with Tauchid (2025), who shows that support interacts with other dimensions of performance, and with Zarei et al. (2024), who emphasize the need for specific classroom strategies to address anxiety. In practical terms, the result suggests that supportive teachers can reduce pressure, but they cannot eliminate all sources of fear when students still face linguistic difficulty, unfamiliar tasks, or social inhibition.

#### **Pedagogical Meaning of the Findings:**

Taken together, the findings suggest that emotional support should be treated as a necessary but not sufficient condition for speaking development. It creates the emotional safety that allows students to attempt communication. However, safety must be accompanied by instructional design that gradually builds speaking confidence. This point is especially relevant in the first year, when learners are still adjusting to the expectations of university study. Pair work, guided oral tasks, and feedback that prioritizes meaning before form may help bridge the gap between a supportive climate and successful speaking performance.

The findings therefore lead to a balanced conclusion. Teacher emotional support at Omar Al-Mukhtar University appears to be real, visible, and valued by students. Yet speaking anxiety remains present because it emerges from a broader network of academic and personal pressures. The task for pedagogy is not simply to maintain kindness in the classroom, but to connect that kindness with structured speaking practice, carefully staged participation, and anxiety-sensitive instruction.

#### **Recommendations and Suggestions:**

In light of the findings, which revealed a very high level of perceived teacher emotional support alongside a moderate to high level of speaking anxiety, the study proposes a set of practical and research-oriented recommendations. These recommendations are intended to strengthen the existing supportive environment and address the remaining sources of student anxiety more effectively.

##### **Procedural Recommendations for Faculty Members:**

- **Provide stronger instructional support during moments of frustration:** Since this aspect received comparatively lower ratings in the questionnaire, teachers are encouraged to offer immediate and positive feedback that focuses first on meaning and content rather than only on grammatical error when students become hesitant or distressed.
- **Use gradual desensitization strategies:** Speaking tasks should begin in pairs or small groups before moving to whole-class performance. This progression may reduce communication apprehension and help learners gain confidence step by step.
- **Promote a culture in which error is treated as part of learning:** Students should be reminded explicitly that making mistakes is a normal and necessary part of language development. Such a classroom ethos may reduce fear of negative evaluation and encourage more active participation.

##### **Institutional Recommendations for the Department of English:**

- **Offer workshops on emotional intelligence and classroom anxiety:** The department is encouraged to organize training sessions for faculty members, especially those who teach first-year students, on how to manage classroom anxiety and provide targeted emotional support that enhances academic performance.
- **Develop speaking courses more carefully:** The content of speaking courses should be reviewed so that it includes activities that simulate real-life communication and reduce dependence on highly stressful, test-centered speaking tasks. This recommendation is consistent with work on materials development that stresses the value of meaningful, learner-centered tasks in language classrooms (Tomlinson, 2011).

##### **Suggestions for Future Research:**

- Conduct a longitudinal study that follows students from the first year to graduation in order to examine how speaking anxiety develops over time and how sustained emotional support may influence that development.
- Conduct a comparative study of speaking anxiety and writing anxiety and investigate how both are related to teacher emotional support within the university context.

- Examine whether variables such as teacher gender or years of teaching experience affect the nature and degree of emotional support provided to students.

**Conclusion:**

This study has addressed one of the most significant issues in teaching English as a foreign language: the relationship between speaking anxiety and teacher emotional support. Its focus on first-year students in the Department of English at Omar Al-Mukhtar University is especially important because this stage represents a crucial transition in the students' academic trajectory. At this point, learners move from receiving English as a school subject to using it as a medium of participation within a specialized university setting.

The findings revealed an important pedagogical pattern. The participants reported a moderate to high level of speaking anxiety, with a mean score of 34.90 out of 50. At the same time, they reported a very high level of perceived teacher emotional support, reflected in a mean score of 13.06 on the support scale, where lower scores indicate stronger agreement with positive statements. This apparent tension suggests that the learning environment in the department is emotionally supportive, yet students still face considerable difficulty when asked to speak English in demanding academic contexts.

The central conclusion of the study is that emotional support should not be viewed as simple kindness or personal courtesy. It functions as a strategic pedagogical resource that helps lower the affective burden placed on novice learners. First-year students are often highly sensitive to public correction and negative evaluation. Within this context, relationships built on respect, reassurance, and rapport can operate as a form of psychological safety. They help prevent anxiety from developing into chronic frustration, silence, or academic withdrawal.

At the same time, the study also shows that emotional support alone is not sufficient. The statistically significant but weak negative correlation between the two variables ( $r = -0.28, p = .048$ ) suggests that other factors also shape speaking anxiety. For that reason, emotional support needs to be reinforced by more focused instructional practices, especially in moments of linguistic difficulty and student hesitation. Progress toward oral fluency begins not only with knowledge, but also with confidence. That confidence emerges most clearly when the classroom is both emotionally safe and instructionally responsive.

In conclusion, the study hopes to contribute to the improvement of the educational environment at Omar Al-Mukhtar University. It affirms that investment in the human dimension of the classroom is no less important than investment in textbooks, curricula, and formal course design. An anxious learner rarely performs at full potential. A learner who feels emotionally supported, by contrast, is more willing to risk error, learn from it, and move steadily toward communicative competence

**Appendix: Data Tables:**

The following tables present the raw data used in the study in written form. Table A shows the students' responses on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), and Table B presents the responses related to perceived teacher emotional support.

**Table (A): Anxiety\_FLCAS Responses**

Student	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	Total
Student 1	3	5	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	36
Student 2	2	5	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	33
Student 3	4	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	2	33
Student 4	4	3	2	5	5	4	3	2	4	3	35
Student 5	3	3	2	5	3	4	3	4	4	3	34
Student 6	5	4	5	4	4	5	2	3	2	3	37
Student 7	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	4	2	5	34
Student 8	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	33
Student 9	4	4	3	2	3	3	4	4	4	3	34
Student 10	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	2	3	34

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