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**Using Humor as an Effective Strategy to Reduce  
Anxiety In EFL Classes**  
The Case of Third year Middle School Pupils

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in partial fulfilment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master**

*Submitted by:*

**Missoun DAHIA**

*Supervised by:*

**Ms. Dalel Omri**

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**Dedication**

*I dedicate this work to my superwoman and superman, my dear parents for making everything possible to me.*

*To my sweet and loving angels, my sisters: Darine and Belkiss.*

*To my strength, my brothers: Touhami and Omar Elfarouk.*

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*To all my uncles and aunts.*

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### Abstract

Anxiety is assumed to be the changes that take place in any creature's body at times responding to danger. This situation can even threaten the creature's well-being. In the field of education, it has been proved that anxiety plays a major role in reducing the learning productivity of the learners. This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of using humor in reducing the learners' anxiety. For this, the researcher tried to raise the following questions: To what extent can the systematic and purposeful implementation of humor contribute to decreasing anxiety among EFL learners? And what is the perception of EFL teachers towards the use of humor in classes? To answer the research questions, the researcher adopted the quasi-experimental method; in which she used the post-test-only design representing the 7-GAD scale, which were addressed to third year middle school pupils and a questionnaire was addressed to six Middle School Teachers. During three sessions, some humorous techniques, which have been proved to be authentic and valid, have been used to test their effectiveness on the learner's level of anxiety. The descriptive Statistical Method was used to analyze the data from 7-GAD Scale and teachers' questionnaire. Then, the findings were represented statistically as percentages to be analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Moreover, the results revealed a support to the research's hypothesis that using humor while teaching is so beneficial. At last, the researcher also suggested some recommendations by the end of the study.

**Keywords:** Learners' anxiety, 7-GAD scale, Humorous Techniques, Implement Humor, Learning Productivity, EFL.

**List of Acronyms**

**EFL:**English as a Foreign Language.

**GAD-7 Scale:** Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item

**SPSS:** Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

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**General Introduction**

### 1. Background of the Study

There is no doubt that all human beings experience anxiety in their lives. This biological phenomenon is normal to the extent that it does not cause problems in people's lives. But, when it becomes a way of distraction it may have negative results on people's physical and psychological health. One of the situations which people can experience anxiety is learning a new language.

Teaching a foreign language has always been considered as a challenging task. EFL teachers are not only required to transmit knowledge for their learners but they have to make it easier and understood.

As English became an international language, the language of technology and scientific research, the number of English learners is on the increase. This draws attention to the problem of anxiety among these learners. Based on researches and experiences in different universities inside Algeria. An investigation about the use of pedagogical Humor in EFL classrooms was carried out at University Dr Moulay Tahar particularly at the department of English Language and Literature some researchers suggest humor as strategy to alleviate anxiety.

### 2. Statement of the Problem

In EFL classes, many students when doing hard academic tasks and exams they suffer from anxiety and have difficulties in transforming and demonstrating knowledge in exams. However, teachers are not only concerned with transmitting knowledge to their learners but also with providing a suitable and an appropriate atmosphere that facilitates

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learning and makes it more effective and fruitful. Researchers tried to suggest techniques and strategies of humor that enable the teachers to create ideal EFL classes and eliminate anxiety effect on learners' performance. Since the problem is still encountered by learners nowadays, further research on these techniques and strategies of humor is required, but no studies focused on it in the Algerian schools in detailed instructions and description to the teachers to implement humor in their lesson plans.

### **3. Purpose of the Study**

The fundamental purpose of the study is to examine the impact of humor in reducing anxiety in EFL learners. It seeks to investigate how the systematic and purposeful use of humor in educational settings helps to make the atmosphere more relaxed and comfortable for the learners. Furthermore, it suggests some strategies; which had been approved to be valid and efficient; that can help teachers to create an anxiety-free classroom.

### **4. Research Questions**

Taking into consideration the mentioned problem, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent can the systematic and purposeful implementation of humor contribute to decreasing anxiety among EFL learners?
2. What is the perception of EFL teachers towards the use of humor in classes?

### **5. Hypothesis**

The researcher suggests these hypotheses as possible answers to the previous questions:

1. The implementation of humor systematically and purposefully would strongly reduce anxiety among EFL learners.

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2. EFL teachers might find that the use of humor in classes is beneficial but it is time consuming and they are limited by time.

### 6. Data Collection Tools

In the current study, a mixed-methods research is carried out through the use of both approaches: the quantitative and the qualitative. In this regard and following the quantitative approach, a quasi-experiment method is conducted to implement some techniques of humor on a sample of 33 third year middle school pupils in order to examine its effects in minimizing anxiety in this EFL classroom. The researchers used posttest-only design (7-GAD scale) and the descriptive method, for that, and observation were implemented as data collection tool, besides that, a questionnaire was addressed for 6 middle school teachers of English in order to know whether they use humor during their sessions or not and what they think about humor as a strategic tool . In addition, the statistical software SPSS was used as a tool of data analysis.

### 7. Structure of the Dissertation

The plan of the dissertation includes a general introduction, two chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction serves as a framework of the study. It provides a background of the research, presenting the problem, the purpose of the study; as well as the research questions and hypotheses. In addition, to the data collection tools and the structure of the dissertation and finally the significance of the study.

The first chapter of the proposed research project is concerned with the literature review of both variables. It addresses first a concise theoretical overview about anxiety. It begins with the definition of the term to make the reader familiar with the basic knowledge to understand the term. Following that, the main theories of anxiety are discussed. Then, types and characteristics of anxiety are stated in detail. After that, anxiety is presented as a

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hindrance to learning. Last but not least, a brief explanation of sources of anxiety is stated to make the reader aware of the different sources that anxiety may come from. The second part of the literature review indicates an overview of the second variable: humor. First, definitions of humor by some researchers are referred to, along with its functions. Then, theories of humor are outlined. After that, the importance of humor in educational settings is to be shaded the light on. Finally, implications of humor in educational settings are demonstrated.

The second chapter tackles the research methodology of the study. In addition, it states the research analysis of the collected data. The first part of this chapter begins with a description of the setting of the research. Then it moves to explain the research method being chosen for the study. After that, the research sample, variables and the data collection tools are explained. Finally, the concepts of validity and reliability are discussed. These are followed by ethical considerations. The second part of the final chapter is devoted to the practical side of the research. It shows the analysis and interpretations of the data gathered through the research tools mentioned in the previous part of the chapter. Following that, the SPSS software is used to analyze the results obtained statistically. It is used to confirm or disconfirm the hypotheses of the research.

## 8. Significance of the Study

This research paper is important because it investigates the effect of anxiety in foreign language and how can the effective use of humor reduce .It enriches what has been done in similar studies concerning its causes and effects on learners' performance and examines different techniques and strategies of humor and how we can deal with it. Those humorous techniques and strategies highlight the importance of creating an ideal EFL classroom and comfortable atmosphere for learners.

***Chapter One: Review of Literature***

### Introduction

All human beings experience anxiety frequently in their lives. It is a biological function and natural response that helps them to recognize danger and respond to it in appropriate ways. This response is known as: Fight-Flight Response or the adrenaline response according to Walter Bradford Cannon (1915). When the response is activated responding for danger, many changes take place physically, behaviorally and cognitively. However, anxiety can go even further to distract people's lives and provoke serious problems. As many students suffer from school anxiety, Teachers may face a lot of issues in the teaching process. Educators should implement some techniques of notably humor and strategies to help learners overcome this problem and create a relaxing atmosphere in the classroom.

This chapter is divided to two parts. The first part deals with definitions of anxiety, its sources, theories, types and characteristics. Besides, it sheds light on how serious the problem is in the EFL classroom. The second part, is concerned with humor and what it means, theories of humor, its types and the way we can implement some techniques it in EFL classes and the benefits of those techniques and strategies.

*Section One: Anxiety*

### 1. Definition of Anxiety

Szirmai (2011) outlined that the twenty first century is considered as a century of awareness concerning the psychological health. As the social media and technological changes contribute to the spread of the idea of psychiatric awareness among people. These seek to alleviate anxiety that might threaten their lives.

Anxiety according to the American Psychological Association (2000) is a subjective sense of fear, distress or worry that may exhibit both physical sensations, for example: nausea and headaches, and emotional symptoms like fear and nervousness.

Brown (2000) believes that anxiety is difficult to define in clear terms because it has to do with behavioral, cognitive and physical parts. Spielberg (1983) considers anxiety as: "The subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system". According to Spielberg, anxiety is correlation of personal feelings of insecurity that affect the work of the cognitive system.

Another researcher Mussenet al. find that anxiety is not a pathological condition itself but a necessary and normal physiological and mental preparation for danger [...] anxiety is necessary for the survival of the individual under certain circumstances. Failure to apprehend danger and to prepare for it may have disastrous results. Accordingly, anxiety is a normal and natural phenomenon occurs to anyone to prepare him to certain dangers that he may face in his life. (1956)

Pittman & Karle (2014) define anxiety as a complex emotional response that is similar to fear. As both emerge from similar cerebral processes and provoke approximately the same psychological and behavioral reactions. However, the writers differentiated between anxiety and fear in the sense that fear rises from a clear, justified and specific danger, whereas anxiety occurs when there is no clear present threat.

Freud (1905) views anxiety as a natural phenomenon and something felt that explains the cerebral functions. He claimed that humor can be seen as a way of saving energy generated by repression.

Batlas(2002) declares that anxiety is the feeling of unease about doing something and it can be characterized as a set of emotions and feelings in that it deals with people's fears of doing something.

Randal and Thornton (2001) believes that at certain level, anxiety can be a positive power or an obstacle.

In other words, when a person feels insufficient in dealing with demands and challenges faced in life, he/she experiences anxiety. Being harmed by this situation, or taking advantage of it mainly depends on the person because anxiety may either be a factor threatening the organism physically or psychologically, or a power which gives energy in dealing with life.

## **2. Foreign Language Anxiety**

Horwitz et al, (1986) defined Foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from uniqueness of the language learning process" (p.128) In other words, FLA is a specific type of anxiety that effects on the language learning process negatively and plays a major role on learners' desire and motivation to learning a new language.

## **3. Theories of Anxiety**

The major approaches set up their views towards anxiety; these views are similar in ways and different in other perspectives. They provide variety of explanations which may

help to understand anxiety from different perspectives and point of views. The major theories that have been dealt with are the following theories:

### 3.1 **Psychoanalytic Theory**

Freud, the founder of this school, is considered among the first researchers who highlighted the concept of anxiety in psychology. This concept was spread thanks to Freud's works. Freud explained anxiety in two theories respectively. In the first theory, he viewed anxiety as the result of the transformation of libido due to sexual repression. However, in the second theory (1936), Freud inverted his first view and claimed that repression is the outcome of an experience of anxiety. In this case, anxiety is a signal of a present threat from the ego. (Strongman, 1995)

### 3.2 **Cognitive Theory**

According to this theory, anxiety is the receptivity to exaggerate any danger that an individual may encounter. Eysenck (1995) claimed that the cognitive system and the physiological system are associated. He also added that people who are high and low in trait anxiety are different in their cognitive system. It emphasizes the irrational thinking and the confusion of reality as a reason for anxiety. (Strongman, 1995)

It is argued that emotional reactions are not immediate responses for the stimulus. Instead stimuli are being tested and analyzed in the cognitive system. This might result in inconsistency between the cognitive system and the external stimuli which may cause anxiety. (Beck, 2005)

Ohman(1993) suggested two types of anxiety which are distinguishable from fear. According to him fear is a feeling that has a relationship with conscious avoidance and escape. Anxiety results if such responses are blocked.

### **3.3. Behavioral Theory**

Pavlov's conditioning paradigm (1927) was the first referent and the key to account for anxiety from a behavioral perspective. His theory assumed that the conditioned response can intervene with the permanent behavior.

Mower (1953), Dollard and Miller (1950) were the pioneers of this perspective. According to their view, anxiety is to be built through neurotic conflicts. This happened early in childhood and paved the way for anxiety to be developed later in life. Eysenck (1995) categorized human beings' personalities into three types: extrovert, introvert and neurotic. This latter is more sensitive to anxiety than the others. His theory about anxiety is a bit different as he claimed anxiety to be both: learned and inherited. . (Strongman, 1995)

Explaining punishment is the principle function of this theory. The reasoning is that human beings learn to avoid noxious stimuli through mediating mechanism, this mechanism is called anxiety.

### **3.3 Existential Theory**

This theory is proposed by Kirkegard (1844). Accordingly, anxiety is a natural state; this view is derived from the idea that considers freedom as the independent source of maturity and development. This freedom is to be resulted from the awareness in life. Being aware requires anxiety to be involved.

### **3.4 Physiological Theory**

Physiological expositions of feelings comes from Panksepp(1982, 1992) even though he did not experience anxiety in particular. Nevertheless, other theories focused on what part of the second part of the central system might be as a participant in feelings in general and

anxiety in particular. Those theories make a link between learning and physiology in accounting for anxiety.

### **4. Types of Anxiety**

The psychology of the individual controls anxiety so that it is natural and healthy to be anxious sometimes, this mainly helps to do things well and enables people to solve problems and escape from dangerous situations. But, when anxiety gets out of control, it distracts people's lives and becomes a serious problem. Thus, Anxiety can be classified into different types:

#### **4.1 Trait Anxiety**

According to Brown (2000), at the deepest level anxiety is a more ongoing tendency to be anxious, and generally people feel anxious about a lot of things. Spielberger et al. (2005) considered trait anxiety as a distinctive feature of an individual's personality. People, who suffer from this type, have a set of reactions and attitudes which reflect their understanding of the nature of some environmental stimuli and anxious moments and they are so sensitive to less dangerous stimuli. In other words, those who experience trait anxiety may already be shy and self-conscious naturally. In this way, this type of anxiety is rather a tendency than a short-term event.

#### **4.2 State Anxiety**

Brown (2000) considered state anxiety as an experience with a particular event or act. People who experience this type of anxiety cannot be comfortable in any event and feel nervous and stressed. State anxiety is a combination of negative feelings which seriously can affect the individual's ability to live the moment positively and deal with any situation normally. In other words, state anxiety is a temporary disturbing emotional alertness caused by recognition of a disturbing stimulus.

### 4.3 Situational Anxiety

According to Brown (2000), situational anxiety is related to certain situations and general tendency of anxiety or may be in contextual learning in which the learner loses his capability to be proficient in learning a second language. According to Morreal, Spitzberg and Jarger(2007) Speakers feel afraid to discuss in particular context.

## 5. Sources of Anxiety

According to Rector et al. (2011), there is a combination of factors that may develop an anxiety disorder, and it is important to recognize them in order to deal with it; those factors are including:

1. **Biological Factors:**It includes problems with brain chemistry and brain activity by excreting hormonelike Serotonin, Norepinephrine and GABA. When the mood regulating neurotransmitters do not function, people suffer from anxiety disorder.
2. **Genetic Factors:** People who have a familial history, and one of their relatives suffers from anxiety disorder, they are more likely to have it.
3. **Medical Factors:** Medical and psychiatric conditions, taking medications and illicit substances.
4. **Personality:** People with low self-esteem, shy, sensitive personality are thought to be more anxious.
5. **Pregnancy and Childbirth:** during pregnancy period and after it women feel anxious.
6. **Other factors:** Problems in childhood and stressful life events may lead to anxiety problems.

## **6. Characteristic of Anxiety**

Anxiety's symptoms are generally short-lived in the case of the normal one and do not disturb people's lives. However, when the symptoms are ongoing, strait and effect individual's life to the point that he loses his ability to practice his daily social life. Here are anxiety disorder symptoms:

### **6.1 Behavioral Changes**

According to Rector et al. (2011), people tend to behave in certain ways when recognizing danger in order to protect themselves from being anxious. These attitudes and actions are to be the symptoms or the characteristics of anxiety.

### **6.2 Psychological Changes**

These changes can be presented in thoughts and feelings. In facing danger, our thoughts become so focused. That is, thoughts and feelings prepare the individual to respond either by facing the danger or escaping from it. (Kennerley, 1997).

### **6.3 Physical Changes**

Kennerley (1997) outlined the symptoms the body shows during the fight flight response or responding to a dangerous situation. These are to be presented in forms of headaches, pain felt in the chest, neck, or shoulder. In addition to the increase in the breathing rate which might lead to dizziness.

## **7. Anxiety as an Obstacle to Learning and Teaching**

The effects of anxiety have been explained by Spielberger (2005) based on the idea that anxiety deflects the attention that might be effective for learning performance. He suggested three variables of anxiety that affect the process of learning. The first is trait anxiety, the other one is the state anxiety. Furthermore, Spielberger (2005) claimed the final

variable to be the learners' perception to their communicative competence. These students comparing to less anxious learners, underestimate their skills.

Spielberger et al. (2005) suggested that language anxiety occurs when the learner is not fully qualified in the language he has to use. Anxious learners show nervousness when working in groups and hesitation to express themselves in the target language.

Krashen (1982) suggested the affective filter theory of second language acquisition. This theory outlines the relationship between the foreign language process and affective variables. Anxiety is one of these. It assumes that learners with high affective filter are more anxious and tend to perform poorly in the acquisition process. Whereas, low affective filter seems to help the learners in the acquisition process due to low anxiety.

Learning any foreign language is paired with learning its culture, this latter made learners encounter several problems. Many educators and learners believed anxiety to be a major hindrance in learning a foreign language. Many researchers highlighted the importance of alleviating anxiety in foreign language learning in order to have more relaxed atmosphere for teaching and learning. (Brown, 2000).

Lambert et al,(2009) viewed that teacher's anxiety negatively impacts the relationships that teacher develop with their students and also impacts students' learning. It is hard to control all the factors that lead to anxiety, Humor is an area that we can intervene.

***Section Two: Humor***

## 1. Definition of Humor

In everyday life, people experience pleasant feelings of mirth after hearing or telling a joke. All of us might think that we have already understood what it is meant by humor because it is agreed that humor is vivacious and pleasurable activity, but to know humor we need to research in Psychology, Terminology and Etymology to explain it scientifically.

According to Augustyn et al. (1998) the word humor is brought from the Latin word « Humorem » which means fluid or liquid. Hippocrates (Fourth century BC) viewed that the good health relies on the balance of four fluids, or humors, in the human body: blood, phlegm black and yellow bile.

The Oxford English Dictionary (1984) defines humor as “that quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement; Oddity, jocularly, facetiousness, comicality, fun.” Moreover, Simpson and Weiner (1989) define humor as “the faculty of perceiving what is ludicrous or amusing, or of expressing it in speech, writing or other composition; jocose imagination or treatment of a subject “(p, 44). Apparently, from these definitions we find that humor as a term is so capacious and it refers to verbal or written saying by which it tends to spread laughter and fun. According to the psychological perspective, humor process has four essential components: a social context, a cognitive perceptual process, an emotional response, and the vocal-behavioral expression of laughter.

Romero and Cruthirds (2006) view humor as an amusing interactions which produce positive emotions.

Crawford (1994) defines humor as the communication that procreates a ‘positives cognitive or affective response from listeners’.

Lower(2011) defines humor differently, he viewed that humor is not restricted only on that fact of saying laughable jokes but also it is about being friendly with others.

Clearly, from these definitions we find that humor is an acceptable universal phenomenon that spreads positive feelings. It is the power to evoke laughter and having the ability to be funny and appreciate the different types of humor.

## **2. Theories of Humor**

Humor is a common feature of human's experience, appearing in all cultures. It has been studied as a part of human feelings .To find out the influence of these feelings on people's behavior. Many theories emerged to explain humor from various perspectives. (Critchley, 2002)

### **2.1 Relief Theory**

This theory is based on the idea that people experience anxiety reduction when they engage in humorous situations. Accordingly, nervous energy reduction is assumed to be the result of laughter. (Critchly, 2002). This relief could be physical or cognitive. Dossey and Keegan added that various health issues are aggravated by anxiety and laughter can be the solution for reducing these issues' symptoms. (2009).

### **2.2 Incongruity Theory**

It suggests that people laugh at situations different yet non-threatening to the accepted norms. The incongruity theory however, stresses cognition. Individuals experience humor only when they can tell a difference between a normal situation and the situation where there is a violation to the normal pattern. (Critchly, 2002). This view has been supported by neuroimaging research in which the part of the brain responsible for incongruities have been shown to be activated when possessing cartoons. (Mobbs, Greicuis, Abdel-azim, Menon& Reis, 2005).

### **2.3 Superiority Theory**

This theory purports that laughing is a result of feelings of superiority of some people over others. This theory can be traced to Plato and Aristotle. (Critchly, 2002) Accordingly,

the superiority laughter is important to maintain the social order like laughter for individuals who refuse to conform to the rules. Superiority laughter will help in enhancing unity among them. (Long&Graessen, 1988)

According to this theory, exaggerated foolishness is funny, especially for those who are not part of it .Hence, this became as a shared experience as viewers or observers.

### 2.4 Comprehension- Elaborative Theory

This theory attempts to explain the circumstances under which people engage in laughter. Accordingly, the difficulty and the amount of humor analysis are the key to determine how much someone will enjoy and engage in humorous event. (Critchly, 2002)

## 3. Types of Humor

Janet (2019) claimed that humor is a way for interaction between human beings in a joyful manner and people laugh often when they are in groups more than when they are alone. So, the teacher should implement humor in the sessions in order to get the attention of the students and bring life to the classroom, but humor should be used with clear objectives. Humor in EFL classroom can be classified into four major categories:

### 3.1 Textual

It is a kind of stories or jokes by which it should be implemented in the classroom. According to Gatt (2000) jokes should be used in the lesson but not to over expand the concentration of the students. Another researcher called Shannon (1993) considered stories and written books as interesting sources for young children.

### 3.2 Pictorial

Cartoons and comics are so attractive, Weggers, Grooters and Tormo (1996) thought that pictures are helpful and facilitative to memorize the language's structure and encourage creativity.

### 3.3 Action / Games

Vadillo (1998) considered learning using games as a beneficial way for students without any kind of stress or anxiety. He viewed that students would focus on vocabulary and grammar and enjoy learning.

### 3.4 Verbal

According to Gatt (2000) EFL students face difficulties in understanding the meaning of jokes because of taking words' meanings literally, so they are dead serious and can't even laugh. It is so beneficial to use word games and acronyms even it is risky somehow.

## 4. The Importance of Using Humor in EFL Classroom

Humor is assumed to be a facilitator of learning (Berk, 2002). It strengthens the relationship between the teacher and the students. Humor can remove all the pre-existing boundaries that might set the teacher apart from his students. As it opens communication clear of fear, and provides more relaxed, positive, and effective communication. Therefore, humor leads to a relationship based on respect, confidence, and joy. This relationship is necessary for the students' learning and development. The lack of a strong connection, however, leads to a high level of dropout. (Berk, 2002). Moreover, Berk (2002) indicates another factor for the importance of humor. It is the student's engagement.

Thanks to technological advancement that people's brains nowadays are hardwired for a light-speed world, where anyone could reach any information he needs or talks to someone who is far away from his country. This resulted in classrooms filled with learners with attention spans shorter than goldfish. (Hollis, 2016). The teachers' job become even more challenging; as they have to compete with technology in order to grasp the students' attention. According to Hollis (2016), laughter activates the release of dopamine, the hormone of pleasure and attention, by the brain.

James (2004) outlined: ‘‘Humor is the characteristic of the best and most effective teachers’’. Accordingly, a strong and effective rapport can be built when the instructor use humor strategically and accurately.

The importance of humor does not only strengthen the relationship between the teacher and the learners, but also aids with fostering the relationship among the students themselves. (Anderson, 2011)

### **5. Benefits of Humor in Classroom**

According to Brown (2000) using humor in the classroom enables the teachers to be aware of managing their classes easily and create a relaxed-productive-atmosphere.

According to Comiskey at al. (1980) there is a link between teachers’ use of humor in their classes and teaching effectively, because the use of humor enhances the students’ creativity, encourages the critical thinking, supports the change process and facilitates the effective communication in the classroom.

### **6. Humor and Motivation**

According to Gardner (1985) using humor in EFL classroom increases the students’ motivation and desire to learn a Target language easily and do the tasks with love. Gilberston (1992) declared that the more the teacher use humor in effective way the most learners will be motivated, because unmotivated learners are a real challenge for the EFL teachers. Acquiring a foreign language needs to be in a relaxed-atmosphere full of enjoyable activities.

### **7. The Implementation of Humor**

Students enter the classrooms with cargoes of personal issues. Hence, the teacher’s most difficult task is to grab their attention and keep a high level of engagement throughout the class time. (Berk, 2002).

## Chapter one: Review of literature

The first thing teachers have to know is to ensure that the use of humor fits the course and is not out of the context. In addition, this instructional tool should be used carefully as the teachers are not comedians. Thus, the teacher can vary in forms of humor; from riddles, jokes, and quotes to cartoons to make and keep the learners engaged. Difficult topics can be facilitated using humor. Besides, instructors can add a more relaxed atmosphere using a sense of humor when answering the questions and during grading. However, the instructors should abstain from humor that inversely impacts the connection between the teacher and the students and among the students themselves. Such humor may include degrading signs to any race, religious beliefs, or any physical, mental, or psychological ability. (Sol&Park, 2017, pp.241-262).

Minchew (2010) suggested humor to be used in teaching grammar. He recommended the use of metaphors, for example an independent clause is similar to a grown up person who can stand by himself whereas a dependent clause is like a young child who is in need for assistance.(Sol and Park,2017, pp.241-262).

Another way to apply humor is what Medgyes proposed, the story chain in which the teacher suggests the topic of the story and learners constitute write them down. After that they read it wholly. (Sol&Park, 2017, pp. 241-262).

### **Conclusion**

It is quite natural and biologically normal for humans to feel anxious at times. It, for a certain degree, what keeps people prepared for important appointments and deadlines, and most importantly, responding to danger appropriately. Anxiety becomes a serious issue when it interferes people's lives negatively, and prevents them from doing the normal, daily tasks. Feeling anxious is accompanied with physical, cognitive, and behavioral changes. As many people suffer from anxiety, students are of no exception. Teachers, however, encounter with a

## Chapter one: Review of literature

challenging task dealing with students with a high level of anxiety. Hence, psychologists have suggested some strategies and practical guidelines for teachers and educators to implement humor to alleviate anxiety in their classrooms in effective and fruitful ways that ensure a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for the learners.

This chapter is devoted to review of literature concerning the independent variable anxiety in classroom and the dependent variable the use of humor. Therefore, a set of necessary information were presented to point out some details related to anxiety, focusing essentially on its influence on the learning process. In addition to, an overview about humor and its impact. To achieve this, the first chapter aims at showing how the use of humor strategically and carefully can alleviate anxiety in classroom and provide a more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere for the learners.

***Chapter Two: Methodology and Data  
Analysis***

### Introduction

The second chapter is concerned with the practical side of the research. The first part deals with the research methodology. It starts with the research setting. After that, the method being used is discussed. It also highlights the sample being chosen for the research, along with the variables. Furthermore, it discusses the tools for data collection. It also discusses the experimental procedures and explains the concepts of validity and reliability. The second part shows the analysis of the data collected through the research tools demonstrated in the previous part of this chapter along with the interpretation. This includes the analysis of the 7-GAD scale and teachers' questionnaire. The results of the 7-GAD scale obtained are analyzed statistically through the SPSS software. The purpose of using the statistical analysis is to prove or disprove the research hypotheses so as to provide practical and pedagogical guidelines. In addition to recommendations for further research.

***Section One: Methodology***

### 1. Research Design and Data Collection Tools

According to Kothari(2004) the research design is the outline and the plan of what the researcher do to obtain the answers to his research questions and verify the hypothesis. In this regard, Poraho (1997) claimed that the research design is the heart of the study, it refers to the strategies used logically in order to integrate the components of the study.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of using humor in reducing anxiety in EFL classes; in this concern, explicit research design, method, sampling technique and data gathering tools were chosen to achieve the purpose of this paper.

### 2. Methods

The quantitative approach according to Macdonald and Headlam (1986) is concerned with statistics and making use of numbers and mathematical operations. That is, it seeks to quantify the information gathered and elicits results from the sample of the population being part of the study, Kumar (2011) described the quantitative approach as predetermined, rigid, and structured. The data collected in the qualitative method is presented in form of description. It tries to understand certain actions and behaviors.

According to Kumar (2011) the quantitative method's designs are classified into three categories: Descriptive non-experimental design; Quasi-experimental design and experimental design. In this study, the researchers adopted the quantitative method, in which they used the non-experimental design and the descriptive design as well. The quasi-experimental method is generally used to demonstrate a cause-effect relationship. It looks like an experimental design but lacks the key feature of random assignment. That is, there is no randomization in sampling due to ethical or practical considerations. The researchers adapted a posttest scale and a questionnaire as a gathering data tools, which is convenient to the quasi-experimental method. In addition, the descriptive method had been also adopted by

the researchers. The quasi-experiment had been used to reduce time and resources needed as the true experiment requires much time and resources which was not available. Besides, pre-selection and randomization is usually not easy, especially in the social sciences. Furthermore, it is used to eliminate the problem as the independent variable is manipulated before the dependent variable is measured.

### **3. Research Setting**

The present research project points out at Mohamed Yaken Elghassiri Middle School in ELhamel, wilaya of M'sila in Algeria during the academic year 2020 /2021. 21 teachers provide education for 273 pupils in this school that was founded on September 2002.

### **4. Research Sample**

In any research, the number of the elements of any given population is so large that the researcher cannot cover them all as he/she is restricted to time. Hence, he/she can use the sampling process. Kumar defined the sampling as ‘‘ the process of selecting a sample from the sampling population.’’(2011, p.164). Accordingly, it refers to choosing a set of individuals or elements from a bigger community that is referred to as the sampling population.

The researchers in this study adopted the non-random or non-probability sampling design; in which the selection of the elements of the population is dependent on different considerations. (Kothari, 1990). Accordingly, under this type of sampling, the researchers deliberately selected the precise units of the population to constitute the sample, based on the idea that the small selected mass will represent the whole properly. However, this design is to offer advantage of time and money and considered to be convenient and appropriate for small researches and inquiries as the current research. In addition, the sample being chosen was accessible and available for the researchers. Therefore, the study is not a randomized

## Chapter Two: Methodology and data analysis

controlled trial or in other words, it does not have a random sample. This availability and accessibility of the sample is known as the convenience sampling.

In this regard, the sample of this study is Third year middle school (3MS). The number of the participators in the sample is (14) pupils: (03) males (11) females. Their ages vary from (12) to (16). The reason behind selecting this sample is non-random.

Besides that', six middle school teachers were asked to fill in the questionnaire in order to know their opinions toward using humor in teaching English.

### 5. Research Variables

The experiment focuses on knowing the relationship between variables and how they affect one another, According to Kumar (2011), the variable is any concept the researcher can measure. Kerlinger (1986) stated that: "A variable is a property that takes on different values, putting it redundantly, a variable is something that varies... A variable is a symbol to which numerals or values are attached" (p.83). In other words, a variable is a concept that shows or exhibits different qualities. Kothari (1990) claimed that there are two types of variables: dependent variable and Independent variable. The former relies on or the result of the other variable. The latter, however, is as the term suggests, autonomous from the independent variable. Moreover, Nunan (1992) claimed that a dependent variable is a variable that is a consequence of the other one, and the variable that it is antecedent to the dependent one is called independent variable.

In this study, researcher wants to know whether the implementation of humoristic techniques and strategies has an effective role in reducing EFL learners' anxiety. The dependent variable in this study is EFL learners' anxiety, whereas the independent variable is the use of humoristic strategies and techniques. In any experiment, the knowledge about the

variables is of high importance. As the research's aim is to find out the relationship between the two variables: the dependent variable and the independent variable.

### **6. Data Collection Tools**

Usually, any kind of research requires a set of instruments that can help the researcher to collect the needed data. (Cohen et al., 2007) A good scientific research requires choosing the appropriate tools to gather the data necessary for the study. Kothari (1990) stated that the research problem is of high importance to decide which tools of data collection are to be used in the study. In this research study, the research problem is to know how much using humoristic techniques can reduce the level of the EFL students' anxiety. Hence, to measure the pupils' anxiety level, the 7-GAD scale was used, which had been proved to be reliable, as pupils' questionnaire in order to get answers from our informants to know the degree of anxiety of each one of them. Moreover, to know to what extent the teachers think that using humor in their classes may reduce pupils' anxiety.

#### **6.1 Post-test Only Design Description**

It is one of the designs used in the quasi-experimental method. It suggests the inclusion of a comparison group. This latter had not been exposed to the independent variable unlike the other group; which received strategies of humor during three sessions. In the end of the third session, both groups had been tested to 7-GAD scale to compare the two results and find out whether or not the independent variable affects the dependent variable.

#### **6.2 Description of 7-GAD Scale**

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder scale-7, is a self-rated scale that Spitzer and his colleagues developed in 2006, it is a practical scale but cannot be a replacement for the clinical diagnosis. It uses a system of measurement which each question describes the severity of anxiety over the past two weeks as below:

- Not at all (0 points)
- Several days (1 point)
- More than half days (2 points)
- Nearly every day (3 points)

7-GAD total score for the seven items ranges from 0 to 21.

### 6.3 Description of Teachers' Questionnaire

According to Wilson and McLean(1994) “the questionnaire is a widely used and useful instrument for collecting survey information, providing structured often numerical data, being able to be administered without the presence of researcher and often being comparatively straightforward to analyze.” In this regard, the questionnaire is helpful in this case to inquire about the teachers' opinions of using humor in teaching English and how it can reduce pupils' anxiety. Consequently, this instrument is mainly used for (06) six middle school teachers who are teaching in different middle schools in Algeria.

The teachers' questionnaire is consisted of two sections; first section was devoted to personal information in which teachers were kindly required to answer questions related to their age, gender, years of teaching English , teaching hours per week and their types of personality. Whereas, the second part was related to anxiety in classroom and using humor in teaching, it is consisted of five multiple choice questions.

**First question:** Yes \ No question about pupils' anxiety during the session.

**Second question:** Yes \ No question about pupils' need for having a short time of fun during the lesson.

**Third question:** about teachers' opinion toward using humor in classroom.

**Fourth question:** Yes/ No question about the effectiveness of using humor as a tool for language teaching

**Fifth question:** about the forms of humor that may the teacher prefer to use.

### 7. Observation

One tool of collecting the primary data is observation. It does not refer to the observation through which we observe things we are surrounded with. Rather, it refers to the scientific observation. (Kothari, 1990). "It is a purposeful, systematic and selective way of watching and listening to an interaction or phenomenon as it takes place". (Kumar,2011). In this study, the researchers used observation without getting involved in the phenomenon. This kind of observation is used to get a detached view of the phenomenon being observed. (William, 1989). Hence, it is considered as the most appropriate for the study as the researcher recorded the reactions and attitudes of the students during and after the implementation of the systematic strategies of humor by the teacher.

#### 7.1 Description of Observation Sheet

The researcher used an observation sheet to record all the changes remarked concerning the learning anxiety level during three sessions. This sheet is used to make the observation process well-organized and to save time and effort. It is made up of two sections. The first one tackles the general information including the subject, the teacher, the date, the time, the topic of the session and the number of the pupils. However, the second part of this sheet involves the main points to be taken into consideration during the process of observation: the physical symptoms of anxiety, sources of anxiety; in addition to the reactions of the pupils towards the humor strategies being used by the teacher. These points are organized in a table in order to facilitate the observation process.

### 8. Reliability and Validity

In order to make the research more authentic and the results more trust and believable, the concepts of validity and reliability are to be taken into account in any study. Kumar (2011) claimed “Validity is the ability to measure what is designed to be measured” (p.153). Accordingly, validity ensures that the instrument of the research measures what the researcher believes it measures. Nevertheless, reliability is the extent to which the research instrument is accurate and precise. (Kumar, 2011). Mose&Kalton (1989) claimed “A scale or test is reliable to the extent that repeat measurement made by it under constant conditions will give the same result”. In other words, reliability occurs when repeating the study or experiment reveals the same outcomes.

Validity and reliability in the current research are given a high level of importance, taking into consideration many sides of the research. The experiment being conducted in this research gives the results more credibility in the sense that it assures, as much as possible, the decrease of the impact of any external factors. Moreover, the adaptation of the quantitative method gives the research even more authenticity, as statistical results with numbers, graphs, and mathematical operations are to be more trusty than a the description that is based on impressions and opinions. In addition of the standardized test, the (7-GAD) scale, is proved to be reliable and it measures the severity of an anxiety for both clinical and research setting.

***Section Two: Data Analysis***

### 1. Description of the Sessions

#### 1.1 The First Session

The first session was on Sunday, April the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 from 10:00 – 10:45 am. The researcher met the pupils for the first time. Hence, she introduced herself. Firstly, the teacher seemed to be strict with the pupils. Hence, some of the pupils showed some anxiety symptoms when they were presenting themselves. After that, the teacher started to use some strategies of humor; which the researcher had provided her with. First, she used a personal story that is related to the topic. After some time, she applied a joke in which she used a humorous definition that is related to the topic of the lesson as well. The pupils seemed to be comfortable and relaxed after the use of each strategy; along with the teacher who became flexible with them.

In the end, both: the teacher and the pupils seemed to like the way of linking humor to course content .When the researcher asked them about their feelings after using the strategies ,most of them expressed their admiration; only two of them found them not so interesting.

#### 1.2 The Second Session

The second session took place on Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 from 01:30 – 02:45 pm. The researcher aimed through this session at having a good relationship with the pupils; so that they would not feel anxious in her presence. This gives a clear view about the pupils' real anxiety. In this session, two of the pupils had to present a biography about Belkacem Haba. This time, the pupils' had a discussion after each presentation. When the pupils' points of view differ, they split into proponents and opponents of some ideas. The teacher interfered by using some of the strategies.

This time, she indicated a recent event that had to do with the topic. In addition, she made funny responses of mistakes of the different sides. This helped the pupils to be less

disobliging and more accepting to the other ideas. Therefore, the general atmosphere could be alleviated again.

### 1.3 The Third Session

The third session took place on Sunday 02<sup>nd</sup>, May 2021 from 10:00-10:45 am, the pupils welcomed the researcher heatedly and they seemed so happy and lovely, in this session, the teacher asked the pupils to work in groups. After presenting their corrections of the tasks, the pupils' points of view differ, and the teacher used some the strategies while interfering. She told them her personal story related to the topic in order to make a relaxed atmosphere and tried to use jokes and made funny responses of mistakes, this encourage pupils to participate without feeling of shyness because of their wrong responses, they accepted the other ideas normally.

By the end of the session, the researcher gave the pupils the 7-GAD scale and explained to them how to answer and it was translated into Arabic for the pupils while being exposed as their first language is Arabic, after 5 minutes pupils returned the papers back for the researcher.

## 2. Teachers' Questionnaire Results

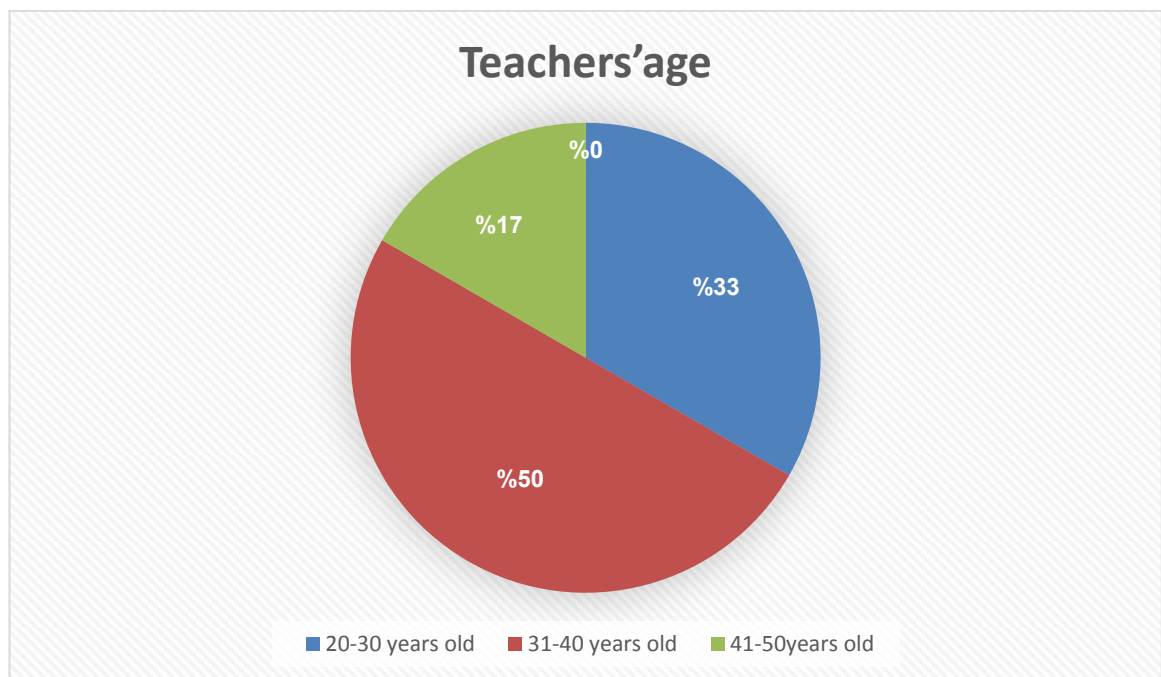
The teachers' questionnaire has been distributed on six middle school teachers of English during the second term of the year 2021. The questionnaire begins with an introduction that presents the aim of this study to the participants. More specifically, it consists of two sections; The first section is devoted to personal information in which were teachers kindly required to answer five questions related to their age, gender, years of teaching, hours of teaching and their type of personality. Whereas, the second section is merely related to anxiety and their opinion toward using humor in teaching English. It consists of five questions.

## 2.1 Section One:

This section is concerned with teachers' personal information. It consists of five questions including age, gender, period of teaching, teaching hours per week and their type personality.

### Teachers' Age

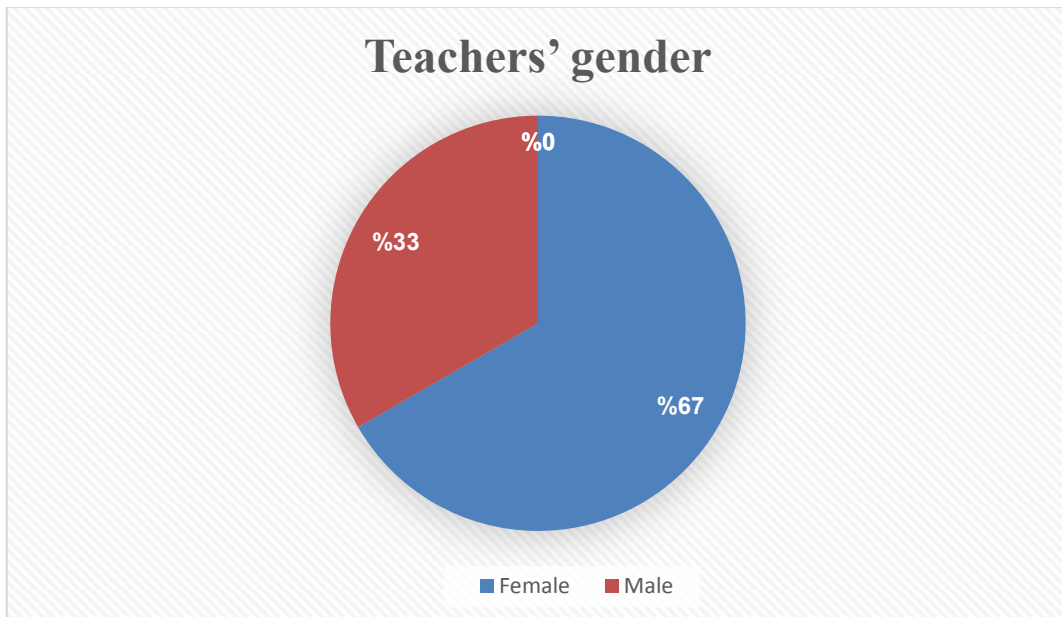
As shown in **Figure1**, there are two teachers between the age of 20 and 30 years old, and three of them are between 31-40 years old. However, only one of them whose age is between 41-50 years old. This indicates that most of the participants of this study are young teachers.



**Figure 1 :Teachers' age**

### Teachers' Gender.

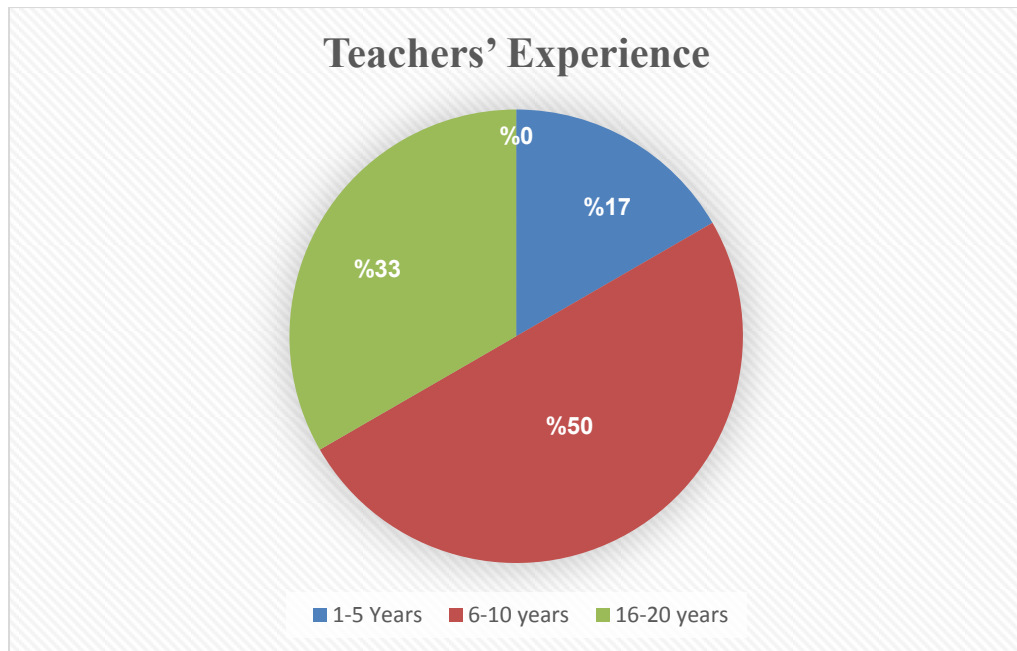
According to **Figure02**, the participants of this study consist of six teachers including 4 females and 2 males. This indicates that the majority of the participants are females.



**Figure2: Teachers' gender**

### Teachers' Experience.

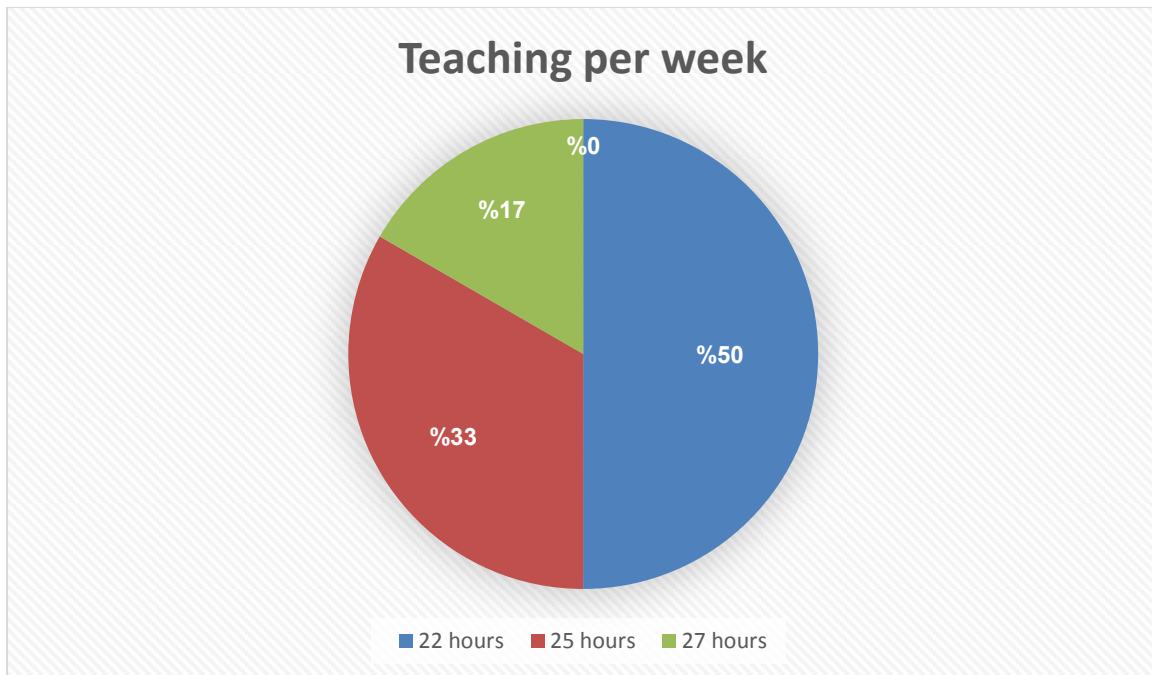
According to **Figure3**, there is only one teacher who has been teaching English for five years, and 03 teachers' have been teaching English for ten years. However, only two teachers who have been teaching English for more than 15 years and they have the experience of teaching English. This means that most of the participants of the study are novice teachers.



**Figure 3: EFL Teachers' experience**

**Duration of Teaching per week.**

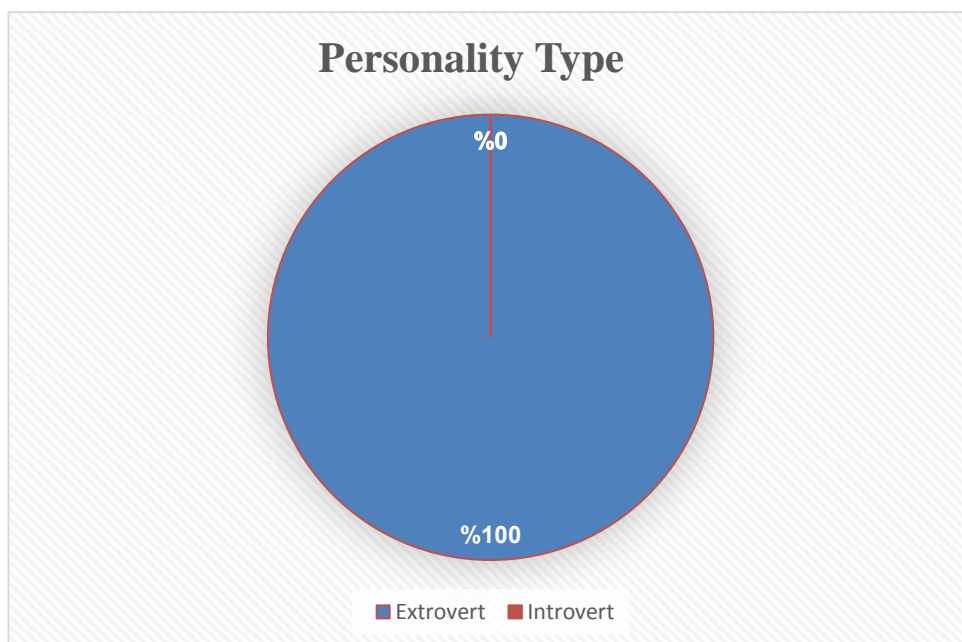
As shown in **Figure04**, there are 03 teachers who are teaching English for 22 hours per week which represents 50%, and two teachers are teaching for 25 hours per week which represents 33%. However, only one teacher who has 27 hours of teaching per week which represents 17%.



**Figure 4: Duration of teaching per week**

### Personality Type

**Figure 05** reveals that all the teachers claimed that they have an extrovert personality. None of them have stated that they are introvert.

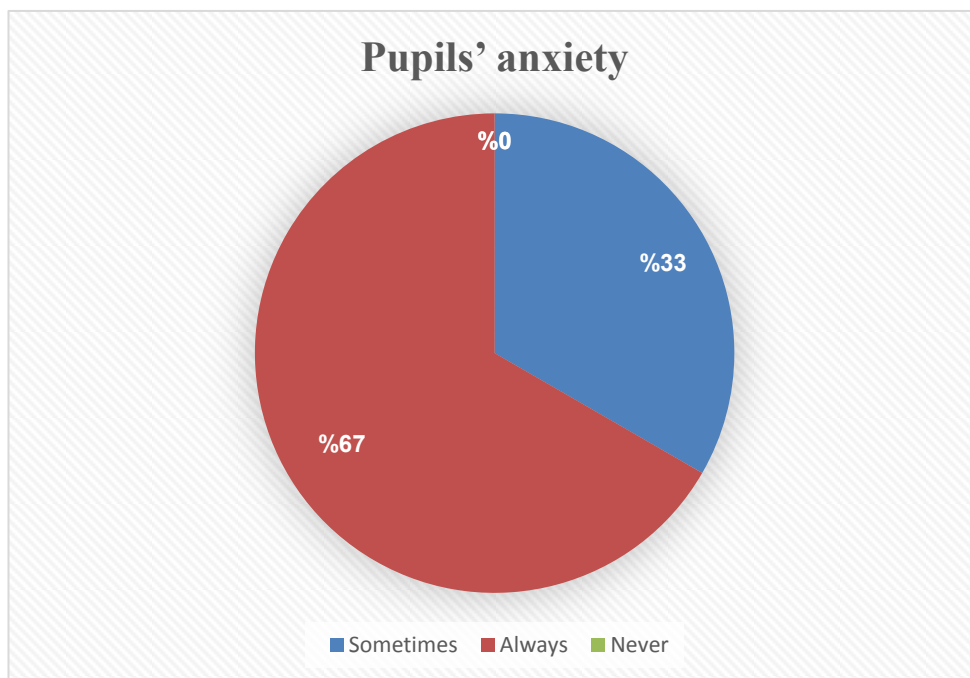


**Figure 5: Personality Type**

2.2 Section Two:

"Pupils' Anxiety

As shown in **Figure06**, All the teachers claimed that their pupils feel anxious during the sessions, 04 of them said that their pupils always feel anxious, on the other hand, two of them viewed that their pupils sometimes feel anxious while learning English.



**Figure 6: Pupils' anxiety**

**Pupils' need for break.**

According to **Figure07**, most of the teachers viewed that their pupils do not need to have short time of fun during the lesson and only two teachers said that it is important to have a break from time to time. This may be due to time's limitation.

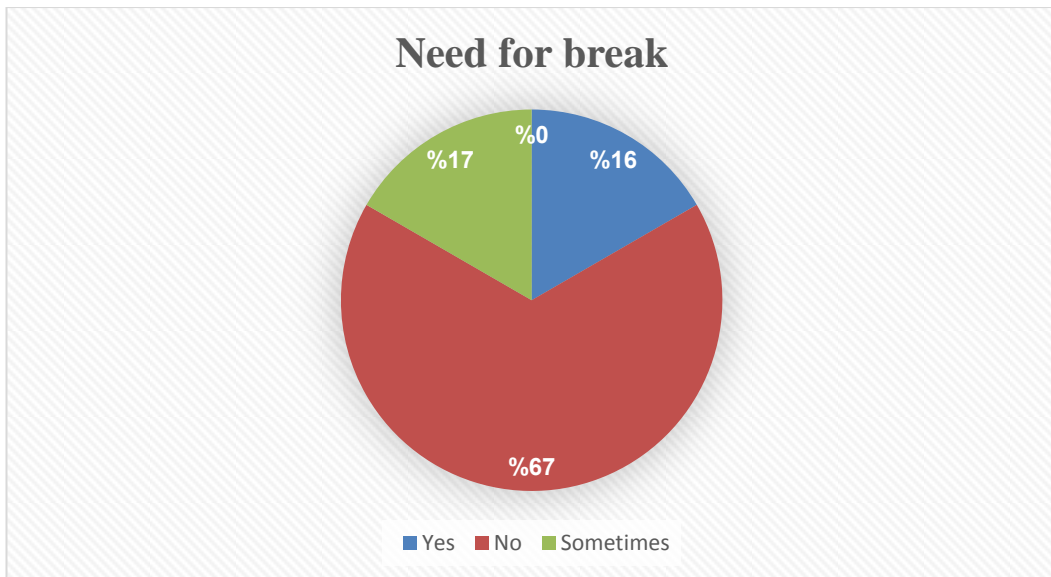


Figure 7: Need for break

### Using Humor in Classroom.

According to **Table08**, Three teachers said that using humor in classroom is waste of time, but two of them claimed that it makes the pupils enjoy the lesson and only one teacher says that it reduces pupils' anxiety. This indicates that the culture of using humor in teaching is noninvasive.

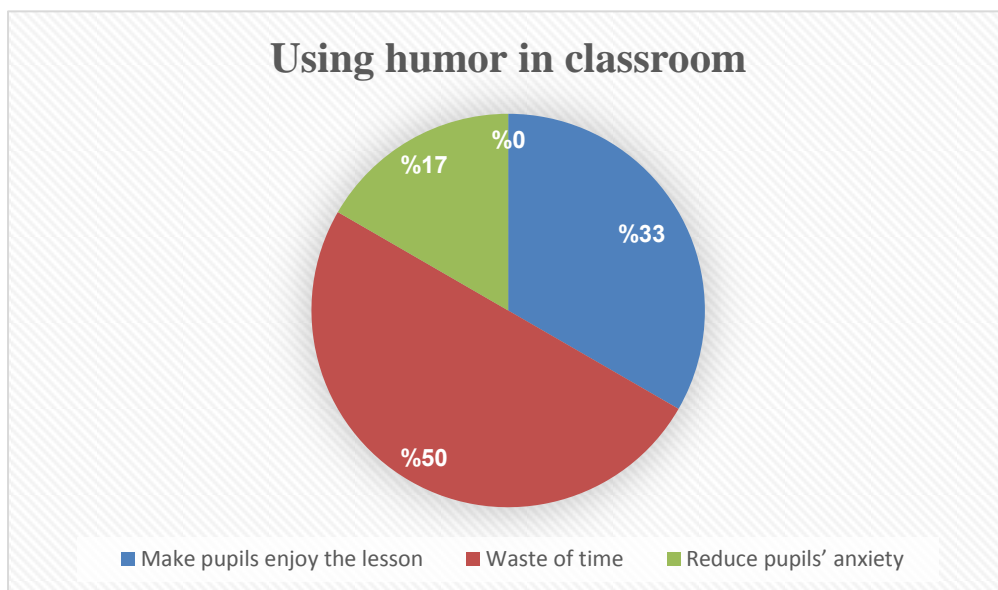


Figure 8: Using humor in classroom

### The Effectiveness of Using Humor in Teaching

As shown in **Figure09**, Half the number of teachers viewed that using humor in teaching is an effective tool. The others said the opposite.



**Figure 9: The effectiveness of using humor in teaching English**

### Forms of Humor

According to **Figure10**, Four teachers said that they use music during their session and one teacher chooses funny stories and one teacher said that he uses other forms of humor.



**Figure 10: Forms of humor**

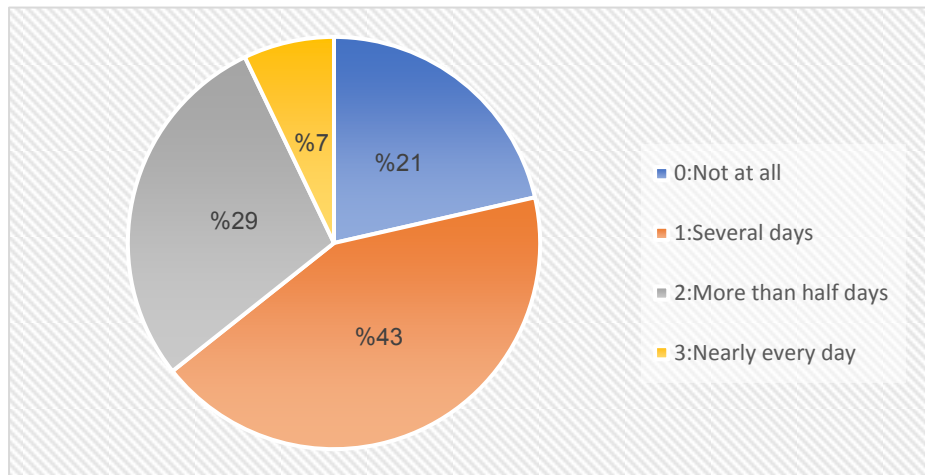
### 3. Analysis of the 7-GAD Scale

Figures below represent the analysis of the 7-GAD scale questions' scores.

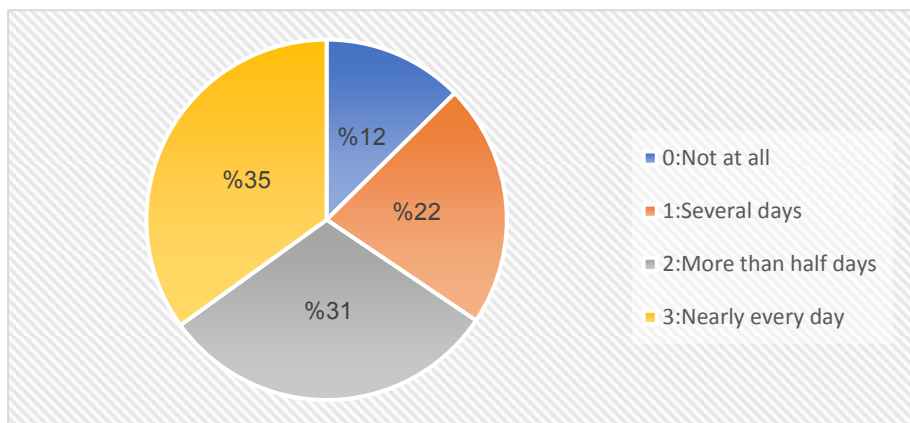
#### Question One: Feeling Nervous, Anxious or on Edge

The first question of the 7-GAD scale aims at knowing how often the pupils have been bothered by feeling nervous, anxious or on edge over the past two weeks. In the first figure which represents the experimental group 21% of the pupils said that they have not been bothered by these feelings over the past two weeks; whereas 43% voted for the second choice « several day »; while 29% of them answered by saying that they have been bothered by these feelings more than half days; besides that only 7% of them said that they feel like that nearly every day. On the other hand, in the second figure which represents the results of the control group, 12% of the pupils said that they have not been bothered by those feelings; whereas 22% answered that they had these feelings several days ago; while 31% said that they have been bothered by them more than half days; the remaining 35% declared that had the feeling of anxiety or on edge nearly every day. It is apparent that the members of the

control group have these feelings much more than the experimental group and this may be due to the teacher’s methods and how they present their lessons.



**Figure 11: Feeling Nervous, Anxious or on Edge “G01”**



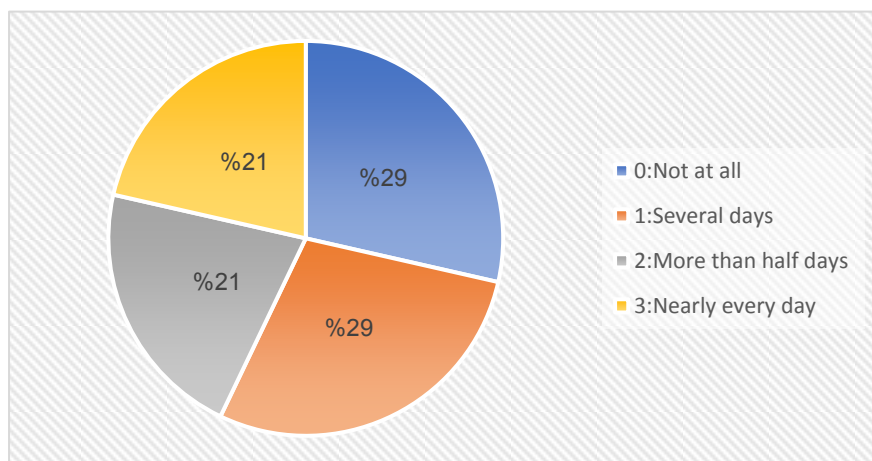
**Figure 12: Feeling Nervous, Anxious or on Edge “G02”**

### **Question two: Unability to Stop or Control Worrying**

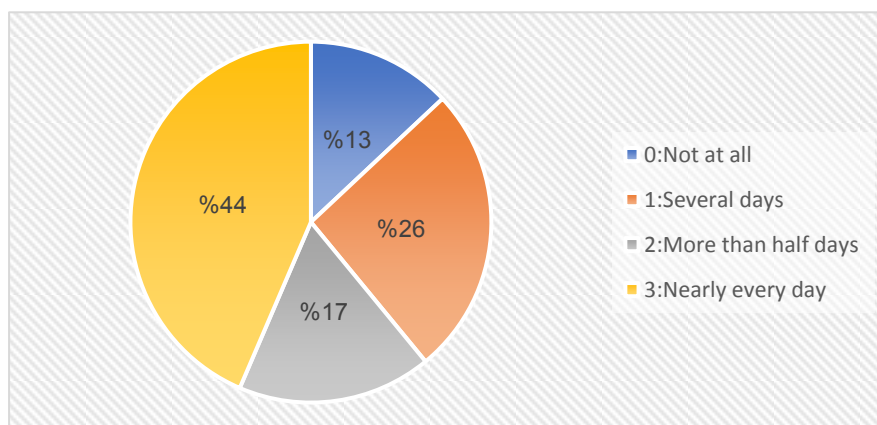
The second question of the 7-GAD scale aims at knowing whether the pupils are unable to stop or control their worrying over the past two weeks. In the third figure which represents the experimental group 29% of the pupils said that they were able to stop or control worrying; whereas 29% voted for the second choice claiming that they were not able to stop or control worrying several days; while 21% of them answered by saying that they were unable to stop it more than half days; besides that 21% of them said that were unable to

## Chapter Two: Methodology and data analysis

stop or control worrying nearly every day. On the other hand, in the fourth figure which represents the results of the control group, 13% of the pupils said that they were able to stop and control worrying over the past two weeks; whereas 26% claimed that they were not able to stop it several days ago; while 17% said that they were unable to control worrying more than half days; the remaining 44% declared that were not able to stop worrying nearly every day. It is obvious that the members of the controlling group were not able to control worrying much more than the experimental group members, perhaps because of the atmosphere in the classroom.



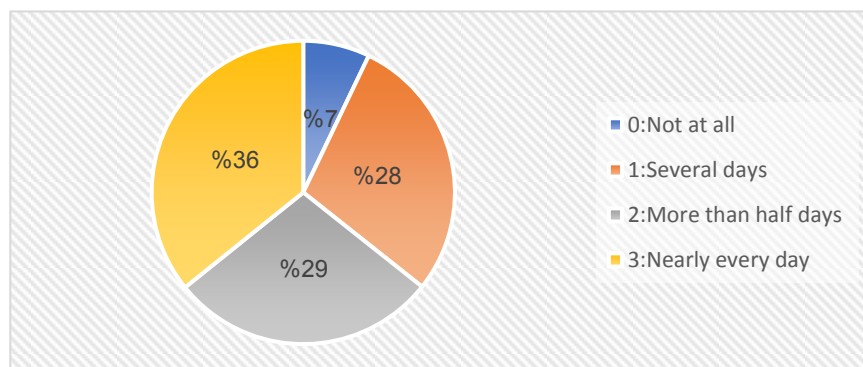
**Figure 13: Pupils' inability to Stop or Control Worrying "G01"**



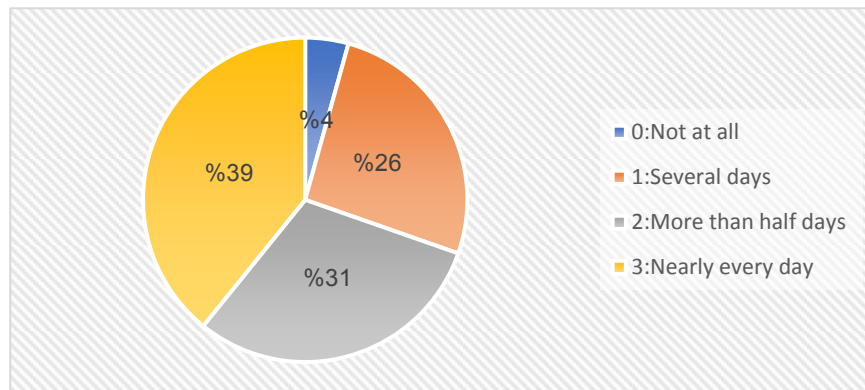
**Figure 14: Pupils' inability to Stop or Control Worrying "G02"**

**Question 03: Worrying About Different Things**

The third question of the 7-GAD scale is concerned with pupils' worrying about different things. In the fifth figure, which represents the experimental group only 7% of the students said that they didn't have the feeling of worry over the past two weeks; whereas 28% voted for the second choice claiming that they worried about different things several days; while 29% of them answered by saying that they worried about different things more than half days; Moreover, 36% of them said that were unable to stop that feeling nearly every day. On the other hand, in the sixth figure which represents the results of the control group, only 4% of the pupils said that they were able to stop worrying over the past two weeks; whereas 26% claimed that they were not able to stop it several days ago; while 31% said that they worried about different things more than half days; the remaining 39% declared that were worried nearly every day during two weeks.



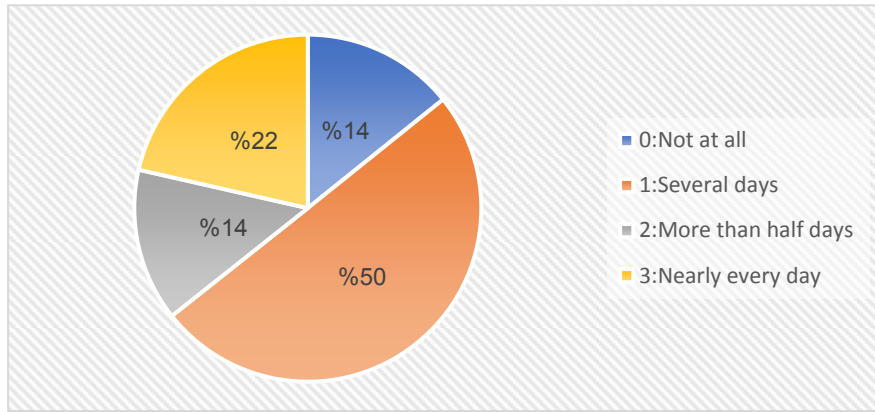
**Figure 15: Worrying About Different Things ‘G01’**



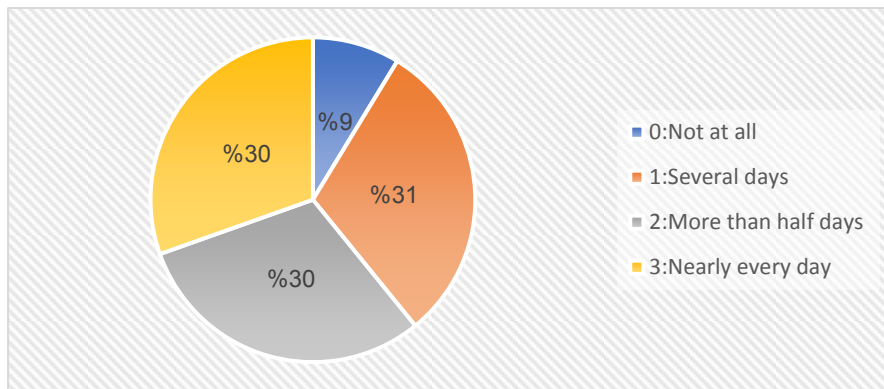
**Figure 16: Worrying About Different Things.' 'G02''**

**Question Four: Relaxing Trouble.**

The fourth question of the 7-GAD scale is concerned with pupils' trouble of relaxing. In the seventh figure which represents the experimental group, 14% of the pupils said that they were relaxed over the past two weeks; whereas 50% voted for the second choice claiming that they had trouble relaxing several days; while 14% of them answered by saying that they suffered from trouble relaxing more than half days; besides that 22% of them were unrelaxed nearly every day. On the other hand, in the eighth figure which represents the results of the control group, only 9% of the pupils said that they were relaxed over the past two weeks; whereas 31% claimed that they had trouble relaxing several days ago; while 30% said that they were unrelaxed more than half days; the remaining 30% stated that they had that problem of relaxing nearly every day during two weeks. It is clear that trouble relaxing is dominant in the controlling group and that's perhaps due to the teachers' personality and way of facilitating the learning process.



**Figure 17: Relaxing Trouble. "G01"**

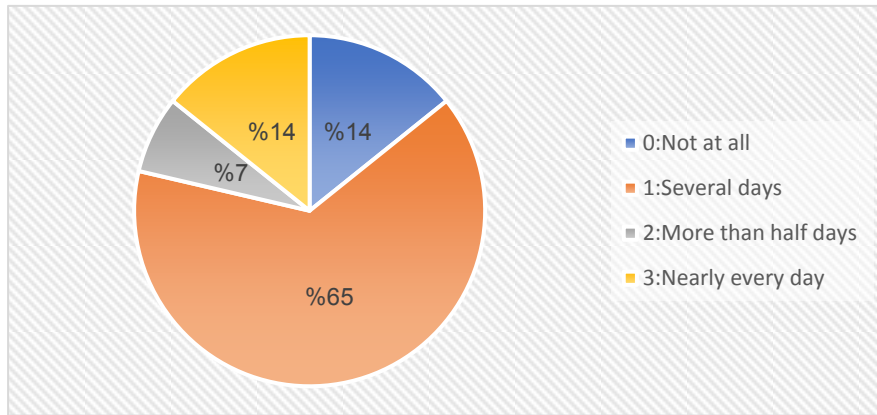


**Figure 18: Relaxing Trouble "G02"**

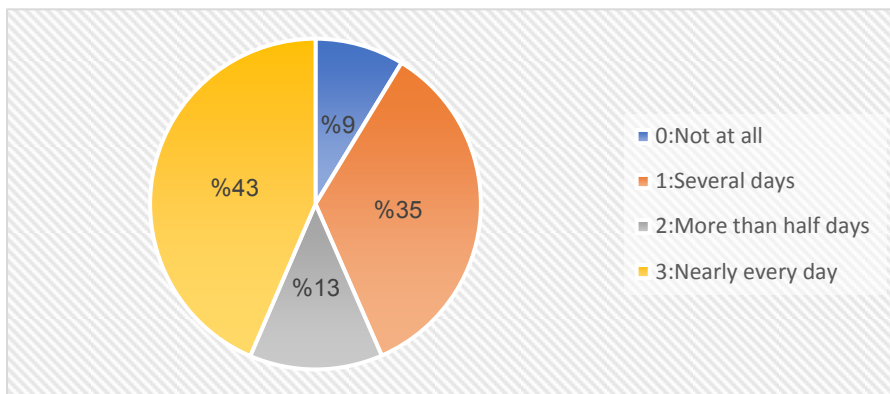
### Question Five: Being Restless

The fifth question of the 7-GAD scale is concerned with being restless during two weeks. In the ninth figure which represents the experimental group 14% of the pupils said that they could get a rest easily over the past two weeks; whereas 65% voted for the second choice claiming that they had a problem in having a rest several days; while only 7% of them answered by saying that they were restless more than half days; Furthermore, 14% of them were restless nearly every day. On the other hand, in the tenth figure which represents the results of the control group, only 9% of the pupils said that they could have a rest normally over the past two weeks; whereas 35% claimed that they had trouble in having a rest several days ago; while 13% said that they were restless and it is hard for them to sit more than half days; the remaining 43% declared that they had that were restless nearly every day during

two weeks. We can notice that the control group members had a problem which is about being restless and that is maybe because that they had tests and because of fasting Ramadan.



**Figure 19: Being Restless ‘G01 ‘**



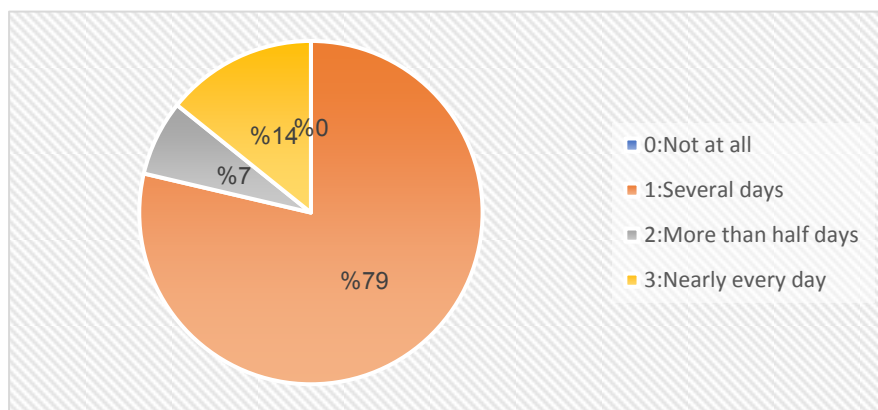
**Figure 20: Being Restless ‘G02’**

### **Question Six: Becoming Easily Annoyed or Irritable**

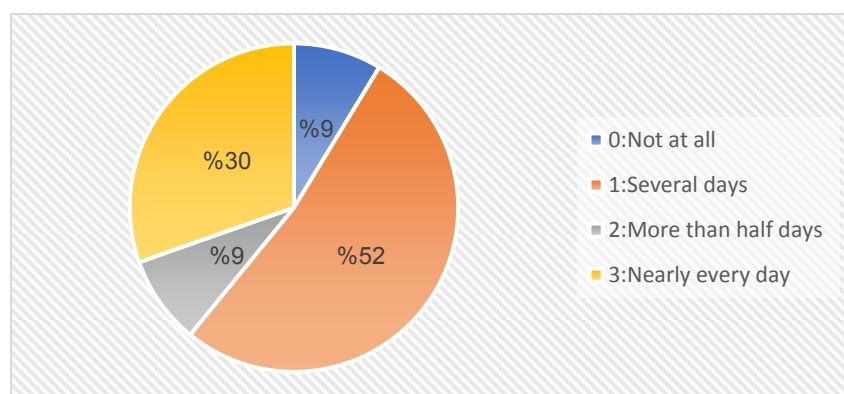
The sixth question of the 7-GAD scale is concerned with the ability to control their irritability during two weeks. In the eleventh figure which represents the experimental group, all the pupils claimed that they could not control their irritability over the past two weeks but in different degrees; 79% of the pupils said that they had a problem in controlling their anger and they become easily annoyed rest several days; while only 7% of them answered by saying that they were irritable more than half days; whereas 14% of them became easily

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annoyed and irritable nearly every day. On the other hand, in the twelfth figure which represents the results of the control group, only 9% of the pupils said that they could manage their irritability normally over the past two weeks ; whereas 53% claimed that they had trouble in controlling their anger several days ago ; while 9% said that they could not manage their anger and irritability emotions more than half days ; the remaining 30% declare that they had that problem nearly every day during two weeks . It has been observed that both groups had the problem of controlling their emotions and that is perhaps due to the adolescence's emotions.



**Figure 21: Becoming Easily Annoyed or Irritable. ‘G01’**

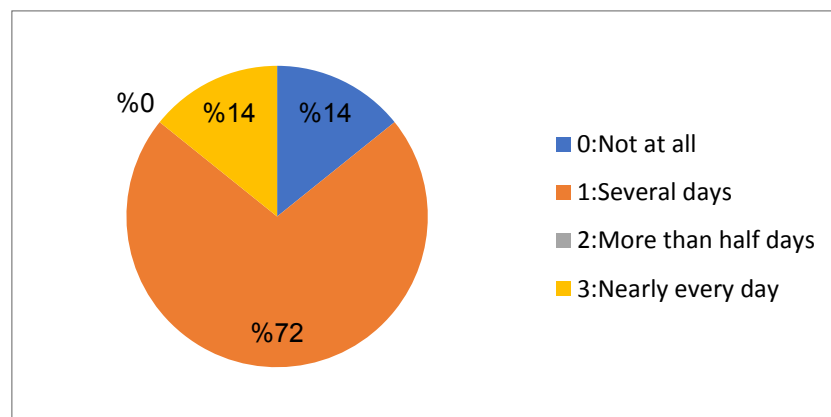


**Figure 22: Becoming Easily Annoyed or Irritable ‘G02’**

**Question Seven: Feeling Afraid as if Something Awful Might Happen.**

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The seventh question of the 7-GAD scale aims to know whether the pupils felt afraid as if something might happen over the past two weeks. In the thirteenth figure which represents the experimental group, 14% of the pupils claimed that they did not feel afraid as if something awful might happen over the past two weeks; whereas 72% of them said that they felt afraid several days; while 14% of them had that feeling nearly every day. On the other hand, in the fourteenth figure which represents the results of the control group, only 4% of the pupils said that they did not feel afraid over the past two weeks; whereas 48% claimed that they had trouble in controlling their that feeling several days ago; while 24% said that they were afraid as if something bad might happen more than half days; the remaining 24% declared that they had that problem nearly every day. It has been observed that both groups had the problem of controlling their emotions and that's perhaps due to the general atmosphere and Covid19.



**Figure 23: Feeling Afraid as if Something Awful Might Happen.”G01”**

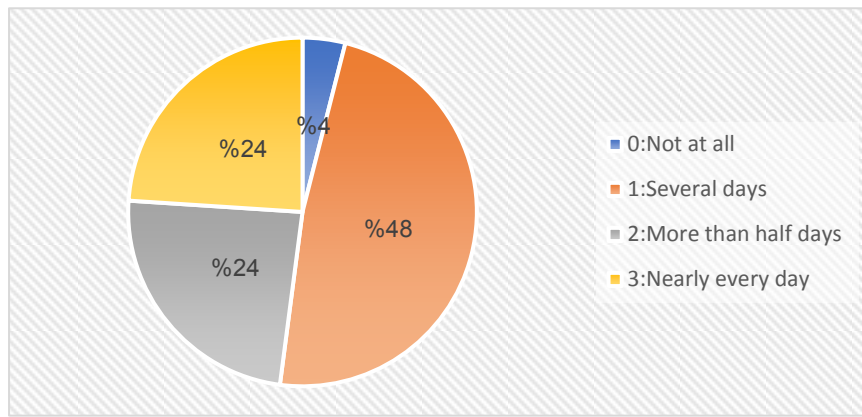


Figure 24: Feeling Afraid as if Something Awful Might Happen.”G02”

#### 4. The Analysis of the Mean

Tables below “11 and 12” represent the analysis of the mean including the number of participants and the differences in mean and the standard deviation between the two groups.

	Observations					
	Included		Excluded		Total	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
<b>Experimental</b>	16	100,0%	0	,0%	16	100,0%
<b>Control</b>	16	100,0%	0	,0%	16	100,0%

Table 1: Participants’ Number

As shown in **Table1** the number of the participants which is 16 participants in the experimental group and 16 participants in the control group as well. All the participants in both groups are included. That is, there are no excluded participants because of missing data in one variable or another. As it is shown in the table, this is 100% of the cases.

	<b>Experimental</b>	<b>Control</b>
<b>Mean</b>	10,2500	12,1875
<b>N</b>	16	16

**Table 2: The Difference in Mean**

**Table2** shows the difference in mean and the standard deviation between the two groups. If we look at the means first, we can see that there I a difference between the experimental and the control group. The mean for the experimental group is 10.25 whereas the mean for the control group is 12.1875.

Looking at the mean alone does not provide strong evidence that the two groups are different in terms of the level of anxiety. We have to compare between the standard deviation. In the table, the standard deviation of the experimental group is 5.03984 while the SD of the control group is 5.5524. Hence, there is a difference of about 0.5. We conclude that there is a notable difference in the distribution of the level of anxiety between the experimental group and the control group. This is owing to the difference in the mean and the SD between the two groups.

## **5. The Analysis of T-test**

The T-test assesses whether or not the means of the two groups, the experimental group and the control group, are statistically different from one another, and thus significant. It is useful for analyzing simple experiments or when making simple comparison between levels of independent variable as the case in this research.

There are two variants in the t-test. The one this research is concerned with is the independent t-test. As the experiment is about two separate groups; more specifically, experimental versus control group.

## 6. The Descriptive Group Statistics

The **Table 3** below represents the descriptive statistics of the two groups.

**Table3** shows the descriptive statistics. It is clearly seen that the mean for participants in the experimental group is 10.25 and for the participants in the control group is 12.1875. Additionally, from the same table, the standard deviation that the variation in the data is a little wider for the control group (SD=5.5524) than the experimental group (SD=5.03984).

Hence, by looking at the mean, it can be seen that, on average, the participants in the experimental group who had received humor techniques are less likely to have anxiety than those of the control group who had not.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Error Standard Mean</b>
<b>Experimental</b>	16	10,2500	1,25996
<b>Control</b>	16	12,1875	1,38810

**Table 3: Descriptive Group Statistics**

## 7. The Inferential Statistics

**Table 4** shows whether or not the difference between the means is statistically significant.

The most important one in the table is sig. (tailed). This stands for the significance level (also called the probability or p value). It tells us the likelihood that our results have occurred by chance. If this value is smaller than .05 then there is support for our hypothesis, which is the use of humor decreases the level of anxiety. If it is larger, then our hypothesis is

rejected in favor of the null assumption. This states that there is no difference between the two groups (the experimental group and the control group).

From the table, we conclude that:

- An independent t-test found this pattern to be significant  $t(15) = 8.78, p = .000$

Together, this confirms that the use of humor techniques and strategies decreases the level of anxiety. This result supports the hypothesis.

	Value of the test = 0					
	t	ddl	Sig. (bilateral)	Mean difference	Confidence interval 95% of the difference	
					Inferior	Superior
<b>Experimental</b>	8,135	15	0,000	10,25000	7,5645	12,9355
<b>Control</b>	8,780	15	0,000	12,18750	9,2288	15,1462

**Table 4: The Significance of the Difference between the Means**

## 8. Pedagogical Implementations

The results of this research confirmed the role of the use of humor in reducing anxiety among EFL learners. Hence, the researchers suggest some recommendations for foreign language teachers in addition to some propositions for further research.

Teachers of foreign languages, most specifically English, should be informed about the anxiety symptoms that their students may show; so that they can recognize them. Hence, they will be able to manage this anxiety through the use of some techniques of humor, which had been proved to help the pupils to be more comfortable, relaxed and engaged in the

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session. These techniques include: Talking about a personal experience that is related to the topic of the course content.

In the end, learners have different reactions toward different techniques. Therefore, teachers should be concerned about their pupils anxiety in order to figure out the most appropriate technique to be implemented; so as helping pupils decrease their level of anxiety and be more interested and engaged in learning foreign languages.

### **9. Recommendations for Further Research**

Researcher suggests for further research this study is to be taken in posttest design and with a larger sample and in a longer period of time in order to reach more specific and objective results. Besides that, use other different scales to measure anxiety well. Researchers can also expand the study to include learners of other languages like Spanish and German to examine the role of humor in reducing anxiety and use different types of humor like pictures and videos.

### **10. Limitations of the Study**

This study helped the researcher to explore the impact the use of humor has on reducing anxiety among EFL learners; and showed beneficial results. Nevertheless, the findings of this study might have been limited due to some reasons. First of all, due to financial and administrative restrictions, the experiment was conducted with a small sample. Furthermore, the period of time allotted for the intervention in which the strategies of humor had been used was short. That is owing to the time limitations as the researcher was committed to in addition to the overloaded timetables and because of the Covid19.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter is designed for both: research methodology and data analysis. The first part describes the methodology this chapter is built on. It states the research setting, then

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moves to describe the research method being chosen. After that, the research sample and the research variables are stated. Then, the data collection tools are demonstrated. This part also deals with validity and reliability concepts. In the end, the researcher highlighted the importance of ethical considerations. The second part is concerned with the practical part of the study. It examines the authenticity of the research hypotheses regarding the impact of the use of humor in reducing anxiety among EFL learners through the data obtained from the two research tools: posttest only design and observation. The findings extracted from the tools confirmed the correctness of the suggested research hypotheses. In addition, this part includes some recommendations for teachers to implement the strategies of humor and propositions for further research. In the end, the researcher, from the findings resulted the important role of the use of humor systematically in reducing anxiety among EFL learners and advise teachers to take these results into account.

*General Conclusion*

### General Conclusion

It is necessary for all human beings to experience a certain degree of anxiety from time to time in their lives. As it has been proved to be healthy for it is a process to keep humans ready in case of danger. However, if anxiety overtakes its reasonable level, it can cause serious problems to the extent that it restrains people from the practice of their daily activities. People, of all ages, can suffer from this. Students are not an exception. Nevertheless, teachers face challenges to help these students. It is their interest to provide a comfortable and anxiety-free environment. Along with researchers whose role is to find reliable and valid ways to help teachers and students alike. As a matter of fact, that was the purpose of the researchers in this study, to propose ways that help in reducing anxiety among students through the implementation of numerous strategies of humor.

In order to investigate the effectiveness of using of humor on reducing anxiety, the researcher in the study used a mixed-method research based on the quasi-experiment method. This was conducted to apply strategies of humor on a sample of 33 Third year middle school pupils. It was supported by two data collection tools: the posttest-only design and the observation. Furthermore, as a data analysis tool, the statistical software SPSS was used.

This research paper involves a general introduction, two chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction provided the reader with a background of the study. It pointed out the problem, the purpose of the study, along with the research questions and hypotheses. Furthermore, the data collection tools and the structure of the dissertation. Finally, it presented the significance of the study.

The first chapter was devoted to the literature review of the independent variable: anxiety; and the dependent variable: humor. It started first with anxiety. It gave a theoretical overview

about it; from its definition to make it understandable for the reader by providing basic knowledge about it. Then, it tackled the major theories of anxiety. After that, characteristics and types of anxiety were stated in detail. In addition, the researchers discussed anxiety as a hindrance to learning. Finally, it tackled the sources of anxiety. The second part of this chapter was concerned with humor. First of all, humor was defined by stating some of the researchers' definitions. Following this humor functions and theories were presented. After that, it shaded the light on the importance of humor on educational settings. In the end, implications of humor in educational setting were displayed.

The second chapter of this research was about the research methodology as well as the research analysis of the gathered data. The first part was devoted to the research methodology. It started with an explanation of the setting. Then it dealt with the chosen research method. It moved, after that, to the research sample, variables, the data collection tools. And finally, explained the concepts of validity and reliability along with ethical considerations as the final point of this part. The practical part of the research was the last one. It represented the analysis of data collected through the early mentioned tools. To analyze the results, the researchers used the SPSS software.

Eventually, the researcher conducted this study to examine the effectiveness of implementing strategies of humor on reducing anxiety. Results showed that the proposed hypotheses of the research have been proved; concerning the positive effect of humor on reducing anxiety among EFL learners when the teacher used some humorous strategies like telling personal story related to the context and telling some jokes the learners were very excited to learn . Hence, the researcher invite the teachers to take advantage of the strategies of humor to implement them in their classes; so that they can provide an anxiety-free and a comfortable environment to facilitate language learning for their pupils, also they should

## General Conclusion

ameliorate their sense of humor and try to be funny as much as possible to make learning foreign languages easy for their pupils they may use sometimes pictures and videos to break the ice of boredom because teaching is not an easy task.

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## Appendices

### Appendix01: Techniques and Strategies to Implement Humor in the Classroom

Humor is proved to be effective in the learning process as mentioned earlier. Hence, there are some points the teachers have to consider concerning using humor in their courses. The instructors should consider apply humor gradually and effectively, for it takes time as developing the teaching style. In addition, they have to be open to new humorous opportunities and be flexible to switch from one technique to another one the one hand, and from humor to seriousness on the other hand. Moreover, the teachers have to work on developing his ‘‘unique humor style’’.

There are various ways to present humor as there are different kinds of it (comedy). Hereafter some of the humorous techniques that teachers can implement:

- Talk about personal experience that is related to the topic of the course content.
- Make fun of yourself: to share some awkward moments or situations about your accomplishments, your luck, or your job to make the students feel that you are human, real, and not superior to them.
- Relate humor to course content: you can relate to books, films, or previous content.
- Use quotes: quotes of famous people, yourself or students that is related to the course content and comment of something funny about them.
- Indicating some recent event items: these can be found in newspaper articles, magazines, or world news; and talk (with exaggeration) what you find ridiculous, illogical, or absurd with a humorous way.
- Use humorous definitions: definitions of the topic or topics of the course. This relies on the teacher’s ability to manipulate words and relate items to each other.
- Make funny responses to your own mistakes : you could use one of these responses :
  - a. Isn’t it so kind of me to show you one of the common mistakes so that you avoid them?
  - b. I was just checking if anyone of you was paying attention.
- Asking a series of questions where one, or more, question is supposed to be a funny question.
- Humorous written comments: you can involve them in handouts you give to the students. For instance: unusual instructions, warnings, quotes, or cautions.

When the teacher uses these techniques, he should bear in mind the following points:

- Use humor in ethical limits and in an appropriate way. This includes not creating situations that make students feel ridiculous or awkward; and not specifying humor towards a certain person or group including race, color, disabilities...etc.
- Hence, the technique the educator uses does not get the expected response, some learners would engage in daily conversations. Here, the teacher has to take a stand either by resume the lecture or the lesson or asking course-related questions. In both cases, he should avoid using any type of humor for that session. And always be prepared for a backup plan.

And always remember what FerreolFlaguel (1998) said ‘ ‘ Never be boring. Always be clear and try to be funny from time to time. Say to yourself that you address people who expect three things from you: to learn something new, something exciting and fun details’ ’.

## Appendix 02: Observation Checklist

- The total number of Pupils .....
- The number of absentees.....
- Date of the first session.....
- Date of the second session.....
- Date of the third session.....

Criteria to observe	The first session		The second session		The third session	
1. Pupils' involvement in the learning process.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
2. Pupils are free to speak.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
3. Pupils are interested.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
4. Pupils accept other's opinions.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
5. Teacher can manage time.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
6. Teacher can diagnose learning problems	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
7. Interaction between the students and the teacher.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
8. Materials.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
9. Relaxed atmosphere	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
10. There is noise.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
11. Teacher asks questions	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
12. The learning process is vivid	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
13. The number of students who participate	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

**Appendix03: 7-GAD Scale**

**Dear Pupils,**

**This (7-GAD) scale is an important data gathering tool for our research study which investigates the influence of using humoristic strategies and techniques on reducing foreign language class anxiety. It is designed to collect data in order to know to what extent these strategies and techniques could help in reducing anxiety. We guarantee you that the data gathered below will be kept private and anonymous, and will not be used for any other purposes.**

**Part I : General Information**

- 1) Age :
- 2) Gender : Female  Male

**Part II:**

Below is a list of phrases that describes certain feeling that people may have. Please read carefully and select (circle) one of the four responses for each of the seven questions.

<b>Over the last 2 weeks, How often have you been bothered by the following problems?</b>	<b>Not at all sure</b>	<b>Several days.</b>	<b>Over half days</b>	<b>Nearly everyday</b>
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge.	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying.	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things.	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing.	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still.	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable.	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen.	0	1	2	3

## Appendix04:Teachers'Questionnaire

Dear teacher,

This questionnaire aims at collecting data, concerning the role of humor in reducing anxiety in EFL classroom at middle school level. We will be very grateful if you could answer the following questions below. It is not recommended to write your name. It is strictly confidential. Thus, feel at ease to complete the following questions by putting a cross (X) in the appropriate box.

### Section One: Personal Information

1. How old are you?  years old
2. Your gender:
  - Female
  - Male
3. How long have you beenteaching English for? years
4. How oftendo you teach English per week?  Hours
5. What kind of a person are you?
  - Extrovert
  - Introvert

### Section Two: Humor and Anxiety in classroom

1. How often do you feel your pupils feel anxious while leaching?
  - Sometimes
  - Always
  - Never
2. Do you think that pupils need short time of fun during the lesson?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Sometimes

**3. Does the use of humor in classroom**

- Make the pupils enjoy the lesson
- Waste of time
- Reduce learners' stress and anxiety

**4. Do you think that humor is an effective tool for language teaching?**

Yes  No

**5. Which forms of humor do you prefer to use?**

- Funny stories
- Joke
- Games
- Music
- Other

## ملخص

يُعتبر القلق استجابة طبيعية لخطر محقق، لكن إن زاد عن حده فإنه بطبيعة الأحوال سيعرقل سيرورة حياة الانسان ويصبح قلقا مرضيا يجب علاجه قبل تفاقم الأمور. في مجال التعليم، ثبت أن للقلق دور كبير في انخفاض القدرة على التعلم. هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على أثر استخدام الفكاهة في تخفيض مستوى القلق لدى المتعلمين. إذ قامت الباحثة أولا بالتعريف ببعض المفاهيم المتعلقة بالقلق. من خلال تعريف القلق، نظرياته، وأنواعه. وكذلك مصادره وعلاقته بإنتاجية التعلم لدى المتعلمين. بعد ذلك انتقلت للتعريف بالفكاهة، نظرياتها، أنواعها وكذلك أهميتها في مجال التعليم. ولمساعدة الأساتذة في تطبيقها في صفوفهم، تم إدراج بعض التقنيات والاستراتيجيات المثبتة من قبل الأخصائيين. استعملت الباحثة المنهج شبه التجريبي للإجابة على سؤال البحث والمزج بين عدة أدوات بحث. من خلالها تبينت تصميم الاختبار التحصيلي البعدي فقط متمثلا في مقياس 7-GAD. تم إعطاءه لطلبة السنة الثالثة متوسط: المجموعة التجريبية (الفوج أ)، والمجموعة الضابطة (الفوج ب)، بمتوسطة محمد يكن الغسيري بالهامل، استعملت الأساتذة، خلال ثلاث حصص بعض استراتيجيات وتقنيات الفكاهة، والتي تم إثبات نجاعتها وفعاليتها، مع طلبة السنة الثالثة متوسط لقياس مدى فعاليتها في تخفيض مستوى القلق لديهم ثم مقارنة مع نسبته لدى طلبة الفوج الثاني. تضمنت الدراسة أيضا تحليل النتائج المتحصل عليها من خلال هذا المقياس. وكذا تحليل الاستطلاع الخاص بأساتذة اللغة الانجليزية وذلك باستعمال النسب المئوية والدوائر النسبية. اقترحت الباحثة في نهاية البحث أنه بإمكان تطبيق الأساتذة لهذه الاستراتيجيات الملائمة لمتعلميهم وادماجها في منكراتهم بهدف جعل تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية أمرا ممتعا و سهلا للتلاميذ. كما أنها في نهاية البحث أكدت على ضرورة إجراء المزيد من الدراسات حول أثر الفكاهة في تخفيض مستوى القلق لدى المتعلمين .

## Résumé

L'anxiété est une réaction naturelle face à un danger potentiel. Cependant, si cette réaction est exagérée, elle peut bien représenter une entrave réelle du cours de la vie, voire une pathologie à prendre en considération et à traiter de toute urgence !

Dans le domaine de l'éducation, il a été démontré, et sans équivoque, qu'un tel état a un impact négatif sur les capacités d'apprentissage de l'apprenant. Cette étude envisage de mettre en exergue l'effet réducteur du recours à l'humour de l'anxiété chez les apprenants.

Dans un premier temps, on a tenté de présenter certains concepts liés à l'anxiété afin de mieux la définir et élucider ses types et ses théories, ainsi que ses sources et sa relation avec la productivité chez les apprenants. Par la suite, on a passé au thème de l'humour et son importance dans le domaine de l'apprentissage, dans un souci de venir en aide aux enseignants, dans la mise en pratique de certains techniques et stratégies validées par les spécialistes.

Pour ce faire, on a fait recours à la méthode quasi-expérimentale et afin d'amalgamer entre plusieurs outils de recherche, grâce à quoi, il a été possible de concevoir un teste (.....) représenter par l'échelle (.....) GAD-7 remis aux élèves de 3AM du CEM M.Y.Al-ghassiri, repartis en un groupe expérimental (C.A) et un groupe témoin (C.B).

Au cours de trois séances, l'enseignante a fait usage de techniques et de stratégies qui se sont avérées très efficaces et ont permis de mesurer, de comparer et d'analyser les résultats obtenus, ainsi que l'enquête auprès des enseignants.

À la fin, on a conclut qu'il est incontestablement possible d'intégrer l'humour en classe de ALE, même si le thème nécessitant davantage de recherche et d'investigation !