

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss anxiety in general, and will move on to more specific issues such as language anxiety and test anxiety and how they can affect a person's oral performance. In the recent past, much research has been conducted into second or foreign language anxiety. However, the results have been fairly inconsistent (Scovel, 1978; Young, 1991). Furthermore, although a number of studies on language anxiety and second language learning have been carried out, they have not researched the anxiety level of Malay learners of English, specifically in the speaking skill. The present research intends to address this gap.

A lot of factors have been identified that contribute to the phenomenon of language anxiety. In a study conducted by Choy and Troudi (2006: 120), they discovered that "many Malaysian students enrolling in college for higher level courses...experience difficulties coping with English as a medium of instruction". The result of their study is not actually very surprising as most Malaysian students do actually have to struggle in their studies due to the shift in the medium of instruction from Malay to English especially at the tertiary level.

Other than having problems dealing with English, Choy and Troudi (2006) also found that more than half of the respondents in their study reported feeling afraid to speak English. The fear of speaking English arises due to their feeling very conscious of making mistakes while using the language. On top of that, the respondents feel very worried about being corrected when speaking English. The experience of the respondents in Choy and Troudi's study is in fact a very common scenario especially among Malay learners.

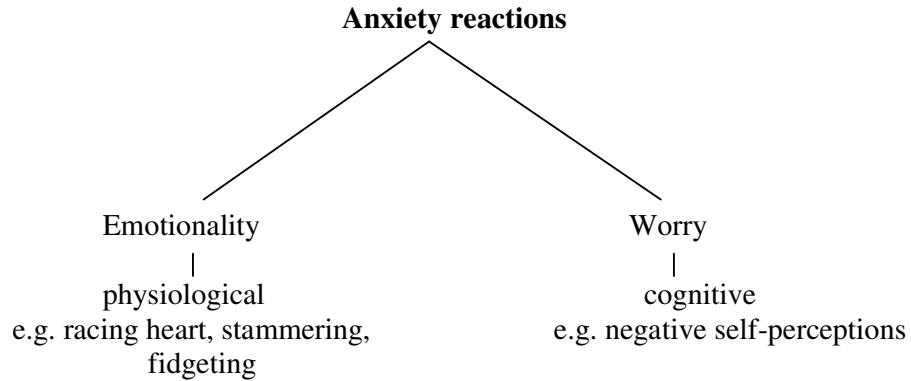
Hence, to further understand this issue, the meaning of anxiety would first be defined both in the psychological and general terms, then the types of anxiety would be narrowed down to the focus of this study which are language, test and speaking anxieties and how they can affect oral performance.

## **2.2 ANXIETY AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR**

Anxiety is generally experienced by all human beings. It can transpire due to many reasons and different people will experience different kinds of anxiety. The feeling of anxiety can ensue at anytime and anywhere and thus, there may be times where it could be spotted by others especially if the anxiety reactions are physical. Gaudry and Spielberger (1971: 7) believe that “the presence of signs such as tremor in the limbs, sweating of the hands and forehead and flushing of the neck and face, is deemed to be an indication of anxiety”. The physical reactions mentioned by Gaudry and Spielberger (1971) are some of the common anxiety indicators, but there are many other obvious indicators such as fidgeting or stuttering that are exhibited by anxious people. Liebert and Morris (1967), cited in Woodrow (2006), have identified two types of anxiety reactions. This is simplified in Figure 2.1. The first type is emotionality which involves physiological reactions such as the racing heart and behavioural reactions which include stammering and fidgeting.

The second type of anxiety reaction is worry which signifies a cognitive reaction. An example of this is self-deprecating thoughts or task irrelevant thoughts. The feeling of worry in this context is normally related to what the anxious person thinks of him or herself. The thoughts that are playing in the mind of the anxious person could be negative ones which then result in the high level of anxiety.

**Figure 2.1: Anxiety as a psychological factor**



On the other hand, there are also occasions where anxiety may not be noticeable as the anxious person might have only physiological reactions which are only known by the person experiencing it. Some of the physiological reactions that could arise from anxious or stressful situations are increased heart rate and blood pressure. These physiological reactions could only be identified in more controlled laboratory situations (Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971).

### **2.3 ANXIETY AS A GENERAL BEHAVIOUR**

In relation to the above, anxiety is generally known as “an emotion based on the appraisal of threat, an appraisal which entails symbolic, anticipatory, and uncertain elements. These characteristics, broadly conceived, mean that anxiety results when cognitive systems no longer enable a person to relate meaningfully to the world about him” (Lazarus & Averill, 1972: 246-247). When anxiety strikes, the anxious person might not be able to think properly or cannot make much sense of what he or she is doing or saying at that particular time, hence resulting in the person not behaving in the way he or she should behave. If this situation takes place, it could cause an embarrassment to the anxious person.

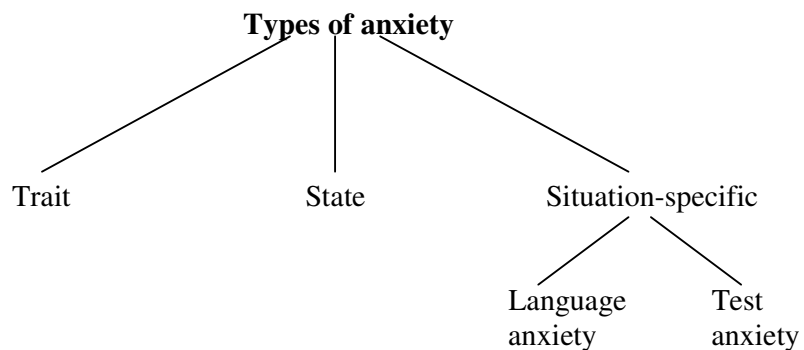
Anxiety generally could be identified through “such signs as pacing around the room, inability to sit in a chair for any length of time, chain smoking and inability to

relax...” (Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971: 7). When a person becomes nervous, the anxiety reactions could give good or bad effects to the anxious person. If the reactions are obvious, they can appear in the form of “restlessness, tenseness of posture, increased rate of speech and general distractibility” (Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971: 7). These reactions may not only occur during public speaking, but they could also happen in everyday conversations between people.

## 2.4 TYPES OF ANXIETY

According to Pappamihiel (2002: 330), “anxiety is a complex concept, dependent upon not only one’s feelings of self-efficacy but also appraisals concerning the potential and perceived threats inherent in certain situations”. People who experience anxiety often have low self-esteem and even low confidence level. Thus, several different types of anxiety have been categorised by psychologists (Cattell & Schier, 1963 in MacIntyre, 1999). They are “trait anxiety”, “state anxiety” and “situation-specific anxiety”. These anxieties are simplified in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2**



Since the focus of this study is on language and test anxieties, trait and state anxieties will not be discussed further as these have been described in Chapter 1, Section 1.1.1. Only situation-specific anxiety will be explained further because both language and test anxieties come under this category of anxiety. If a person experiences

situation-specific anxiety, the individual may assess or judge certain events as anxiety-producing only with the presence of certain factors. Some examples of situation-specific anxiety are stage fright, test anxiety, delivering speech and also language anxiety. From the examples, it is clear that situation-specific anxiety occurs when a person feels nervous in a specific situation but not in the others (MacIntyre, 1999). In the context of language anxiety, many foreign or second language learners might have the tendency to experience it in their language learning, but they may not experience anxiety in learning other subjects. A similar situation might also happen when a person feels nervous to sit for a test. If foreign or second language learners are in the process of learning a foreign or second language, they might have to go through language anxiety, speaking anxiety and also test anxiety, all at the same time. Undergoing several types of anxieties can prove to be incapacitating to some learners, but it can also be facilitating for others. However, most researchers have found that in the language learning context, the anxiety faced by learners is most of the time debilitating to them (MacIntyre, 1999).

## **2.5 LANGUAGE ANXIETY**

As this has been mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, this section will discuss more on language anxiety and the research that has been done previously with regards to it. Horwitz (2001: 113) mentions that "...anxiety has been found to interfere with many types of learning and has been one of the most highly examined variables in all of psychology and education". The research in this area started in the mid 1960s but the results have been fairly inconsistent (Horwitz, 2001). Young (1991) reports that past research in this area did not find any relationship between anxiety and language performance. Von Worde (2003) on the other hand states that previous research has consistently found that anxiety can impede foreign or second language production and achievement. In the face of these contradictory results, this study tries to find the answer

as to whether anxiety affects second language learning or not, in the area of speaking particularly.

“Language anxiety can be defined as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and learning. In the past few years, research has shown that language anxiety is the specific type of anxiety most closely associated with second language performance” (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991(b): 284 in MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). A lot of research has been done to investigate if anxiety really does interfere with second language learning and performance because the common assumption of teachers and researchers alike is that anxiety impairs second language learning and performance.

However measuring anxiety is not an easy thing to do as it is something which is very subjective and only the ‘sufferers’ would be able to recognize it. As Phillips (1992: 20) affirms, “...anxiety appears to be very complex and difficult to measure...Generally, the more specific the anxiety measure is to the performance measure, the more likelihood there is of a correlation”. Thus, a positive correlation would only be found if the anxiety measure is peculiar to the performance measure. Woodrow (2006: 321) strengthens this view by stating that “the negative correlation between oral performance and anxiety is not very strong. This is understandable because anxiety is just one of a number of variables influencing successful communication”.

Furthermore, language researchers have found that language anxiety does produce some adverse effects in second language learners in terms of academic, cognitive, social and personal effects that can jeopardise their success of learning the foreign or second language. Von Worde (2003: 1) mentions “if anxiety impairs cognitive function, students who are anxious may learn less and also may not be able to

demonstrate what they have learned. Therefore, they may experience even more failure, which in turn escalates their anxiety”. If the cognitive function of learners is affected, anxious learners would not be learning much and eventually they would not be able to produce the output of what they have studied. The impact will worsen if they are not successful in their language learning which ultimately heightens their level of anxiousness. In sum, the language learning process might be affected if anxiety gets in the way of it.

### **2.5.1 FACILITATING AND DEBILITATING ANXIETY**

In a second or foreign language classroom, it appears to be common knowledge that the learners would suffer from language anxiety. This anxiety can be viewed as having both positive and negative effects. When the effects are positive, it is referred to as facilitating anxiety. The reason it is called facilitating is due to the fact that the anxiety aids the learners in a certain way to actually perform well in the language. In addition, facilitating anxiety is also perceived as a motivating factor for the learners to succeed in the target language learning. According to MacIntyre and Gardner, “facilitating anxiety is considered to be an asset to performance and showed the predicted positive correlations...” (1989: 252).

Jones (2004) suggests that anxiety becomes facilitating when learners view language learning as a challenge to overcome hurdles. He perceives this type of anxiety as something that helps to overcome obstacles in order to get the job done. Thus, it also enables learners to push themselves further to get their homework or assignment done. The facilitating effects can also be motivating to the learners, depending on their attitudes and perceptions (Ohata, 2005a). Thus the advantage here is that the learners would feel the need to achieve their target in order to be successful second language learners.

Debilitating anxiety, on the other hand, being “the more common interpretation of anxiety, is considered to be detrimental to performance...” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989: 252). Hence, it can be deduced that language learners have a higher tendency to go through debilitating anxiety, instead of facilitating anxiety which can indirectly result in poor performance of their language learning. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b) cited in Chan and Wu (2004: 295) concur with this viewpoint. They suggest “although anxiety could be facilitating or debilitating, it in most cases “negatively affects performance in the second language”. Jones (2004) seems to agree with MacIntyre and Gardner as he also mentions that debilitating anxiety is a more common anxiety experienced by language learners. This is because debilitating anxiety is seen as an impulse to avoid the source of anxiety by learners. When the anxiety experienced by learners is debilitating, they could also be experiencing low self-esteem as well as low self-confidence. This factor may not only affect the performance of learners in the target language, but it could also have an effect on the learners’ personalities. Furthermore, in order to be successful language learners, they need to have a positive attitude and personality to ensure their success. Thus, if in the process of learning the target language, they go through an unpleasant experience, it could have a permanent negative impact on their language learning.

## **2.6 SPEAKING ANXIETY**

Another type of anxiety that could arise from language anxiety is speaking anxiety. As is generally known, language learners would normally have to use all the four skills in language learning namely reading, writing, listening and speaking. Speaking anxiety is one of the issues that this study attempts to find out if it is one of the reasons that can affect performance. MacIntyre (1999) reports that Horwitz et.al (1986) are of the opinion that language anxiety originates from three primary sources



which are communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation by others and test anxiety. All three sources can somehow be connected to speaking anxiety in particular. There has been some support on the first two sources whereby it is “clear that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are related, the latter being a significant cause of the former: a fear of appearing awkward, foolish or incompetent in the eyes of learners’ peers or others can inhibit attempts to communicate confidently” (Jones, 2004: 31). In short, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are interrelated. The two sources are significant as they could be the causes of speaking anxiety among the subjects of this study, assuming that they are indeed affected by speaking anxiety.

One of the sources of speaking anxiety is communication apprehension which has been found to be one of the biggest problems affecting learners. The reason why it is considered as one of the biggest problems is because a lot of other related problems would arise from it.

“Communication apprehension, which generally refers to a type of anxiety experienced in interpersonal communicative settings (McCroskey, 1987), is obviously quite relevant to second or foreign language learning contexts. Especially in the language classroom where the learners have little control of the communicative situation, and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teacher and peers (Horwitz et.al, 1986), communication apprehension seems to be augmented in relation to the learners’ negative self-perceptions caused by the inability to understand others and make themselves understood (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989)”

(Ohata, 2005a: 137)

Young (1991: 427) seems to have the same opinion as Ohata (2005a) for she states “...students who start out with a self-perceived low ability level in a foreign or second language are the likeliest candidates for language anxiety, or any other type of anxiety for that matter”. Other than Young, Phillips (1992: 15) also reports that “Horwitz and Sadow indicated that high language anxiety is related to students’ “negative concepts of themselves as language learners, and negative expectations for language learning”.

Phillips (1999: 125) also adds, “based on consistent results showing that the speaking skill is the most frequently cited source of anxiety among language students, one might posit that today’s emphasis on the development of communicative competence will exacerbate students’ anxiety about speaking”. This view is true to a certain extent as in today’s language classes, the method of teaching has been transformed from teacher-centred to student-centred classes as in the case of this study. In student-centred classes, the focus is more on the learners rather than the teachers. The teachers are only in the classrooms to facilitate and guide them. Thus, learners are expected to do a lot of speaking in their learning process. This is in line with the view that practice makes perfect. So, for learners who are afraid to speak up in class, it could serve as an ordeal for them every time they go to their language class. Their attitude could culminate in their passive stance in the language classrooms. Nevertheless, those learners who are talkative would be enjoying the class since they do not have a speaking anxiety problem. In brief, what can be deduced is that the origin of speaking anxiety could come from the learners themselves. What they think of their ability in using the target language could have a detrimental effect on them as well as on their performance.

Being an English teacher herself, the researcher has found that most of her ESL students fear using English. Due to this fear or anxiety, some of them obtained rather unsatisfactory results in their assessments. Therefore, it is necessary for language learners to not let their apprehension of using the target language get in their way of becoming successful language learners.

## **2.7 PUBLIC SPEAKING**

Due to the fear of speaking the target language, another problem that might crop up is the fear of using the target language in front of an audience, i.e. public speaking. Over the years, several studies have been carried out to uncover the reasons why

students do not do well in their oral examinations and public speaking performances. Public speaking has commonly been perceived by many as a horrible experience especially for those who are introverts. Von Worde (2003: 5) reports that “the fear of communicating orally and public speaking anxiety have long been accepted as psychological phenomena”. Her view is supported by Woodrow (2006) based on her study which indicates the interference of anxiety in oral communication. Hence, it is not surprising that a lot of people if queried would normally say that they get butterflies in the stomach when they have to speak in public, be it a formal presentation or otherwise. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to know if language anxiety can interfere with the performance of learners when they have to address an audience in public.

In a language learning classroom, learners are most of the time expected to be involved in various speaking activities. Some of the activities that these learners engage in may or may not be assessed. Even though some activities are not assessed, they could still create some tension or anxiety in learners. Young (1991: 433) makes it clear that the general assumption on public speaking is that “...speaking in front of the class has been repeatedly cited as evoking anxiety”. Von Worde (2003) has identified a number of problems that are generated by speaking activities. They are oral communication, public speaking, limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, and being called on in class. What Von Worde has listed down are also the common problems faced by language learners when it comes to speaking in public.

Woodrow (2006) has also discovered that one of the major stressors that learners experience in language learning is performing in front of the class. Many other researchers have also uncovered similar results in their language anxiety studies. Young (1991: 429) states that “Koch and Terrell (1991) find that more than one-half of their subjects reported oral presentations in front of the class and oral skits as the most anxiety-producing activities...”. Horwitz (2001: 116) finds that “specifically, students

were considerably less anxious in the reading class than in the conversation class. Thus, ...language classrooms which require oral communication are more anxiety-provoking than traditional classrooms”. It shows that in comparison to other skills such as reading or writing, speaking is the skill that is the least preferred by learners. Their incompetence in the target language is actually the common reason given by them especially when they have to deal with their anxiousness in speaking. This shows that research has proven that learners do in fact abhor speaking activities due to the nervousness that could arise from them. Hence, as past research shows, there is no wonder that language learners in many cases find it very hard to speak in public or in front of their classmates.

## **2.8 TEST ANXIETY**

In this study, the learners not only have to deal with their speaking anxiety in the target language as well as public speaking, but also with test anxiety. These learners are learning English as their second language and some of them are actually experiencing a difficult time in doing their task. This is especially so when they are in a test situation whereby on its own, it can already produce high anxiety. What is experienced by them is in fact called second language speaking anxiety and it can be devastating for some of them especially when they cannot achieve their expectations. Woodrow (2006: 308) echoes their experience when she says that “second language anxiety has a debilitating effect on the oral performance of speakers of English as a second language”. In the present study, the learners are evaluated based on an individual presentation that is a part of their on-going assessment. Therefore, the on-going assessment is also considered to be a test to the learners as marks are given to them after their presentations.

According to Horwitz et.al (1986: 127), generally, test anxiety is “a type of performance anxiety stemming from a fear of failure”. So, when learners suffer from anxiety in doing any kind of test, it is due to their concern of failing the test.

For most people, a test situation will never fail to induce anxiety in them. This generally happens because people are normally concerned of the outcome of the test they take. It is also human nature to want to do well in any test they take and to have high expectations of the test results. This notion is supported by Gaudry and Spielberger (1971: 13) who say “most persons perceive the testing situation to have an evaluative or assessment purpose, and feel that it is important to do well...”.

From the feeling of wanting to do well, comes the feeling of anxiety in doing the test. When people have high expectations of themselves, indirectly they might have the tendency to experience anxiety because they put themselves under some kind of pressure in order to perform well in the test. Consequently, the presence of anxiety is very much felt in testing situations. According to Sinclair (1971: 95), “anxiety is conceived as a hypothetical construct mediating between certain situational stimuli and various specifiable responses. The stimulus situation which evokes the anxiety reaction is assumed to be such that the individual anticipates a strong threat to his self-esteem. In classroom test situations, the anticipated threat to self-esteem is, most often, failure of the test”. Sinclair (1971) goes on to say that more research has been done on anxiety and that it is an important element that influences test performance. Under normal circumstances, failing a test would result in low self-esteem of the test-taker or the low self-esteem of the test-taker could also mean failure of the test. It all depends on the attitude of the test-taker whether to make anxiety as an obstacle or a motivating factor to succeed. In other words, it is possible that learners in this study could generally become worried when they have to speak in public; they would worry about what to say and they feel distressed if they fail the test.

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991: 104) point out that “problems observed by Horwitz et.al (1986) include poor retrieval of items from memory under anxious conditions (such as exams)...”. Moreover, Horwitz et.al too mention that “oral tests have the potential of provoking both test and oral communication anxiety simultaneously in susceptible students” (1986: 128). It is quite common for people to actually forget what to say or what they have planned to say in anxious situations. In many cases, they might have memorised beforehand whatever they need to say but in an anxious situation like an exam, everything that has been memorised might just disappear once the anxiety creeps in. If this happens, then the possibility of performing badly in the exam can actually become a reality and eventually a ‘nightmare’ to learners.

Another researcher, Ohata (2005b: 11) in his study of language anxiety of Japanese students discovered that “most of the participants said that they feared taking tests, because test-taking situations would make them anxious about the negative consequences of getting a bad grade. This would lead to other psychological stresses, such as the fear of losing self-confidence or feeling inferior to others”. In brief, taking a test especially in a language that one is not so proficient in, in this context, English, can prove to be anxiety-provoking to language learners. This view is shared by Chan and Wu (2004) because according to them the low proficiency in English is the actual cause of most test-anxious students being nervous when taking English oral tests. Other than worrying about not getting good grades, learners could also suffer from inferiority complex and low self-confidence which could leave a permanent ‘scar’ on learners’ personality.

Ohata (2005b) further adds that the participants in his study report of feeling more anxious when others monitor or evaluate their speaking ability. The feeling of anxiety reported by Ohata’s participants is actually very common because most people

in general, do not like the idea of being evaluated when they speak. For some, the experience could even be 'traumatic' to the extent of not wanting to speak in public and preferring to remain quiet.

Another related issue mentioned by Ohata (2005b) is that the feeling of apprehension that arises in the second or foreign language communicative contexts is normally followed by fear of negative evaluation from others. This type of fear has been found to be very much associated with communication apprehension and it could come from both teachers and peers (Chan & Wu, 2004). MacIntyre and Gardner (1991: 105) have a similar opinion in which they mention "fear of negative evaluation...in this case, refers to both the academic and personal evaluations made of students on the basis of their performance and competence in the target language. Teachers and peers alike listen to each utterance to "correct" mistakes".

In Ohata's (2005b) study, all his subjects are reported to have declared their grave worry about the different types of assessed situations. To them, they feel as though they are being judged by the surrounding people based on their knowledge and performance of English. To these learners, they probably feel very self-conscious during presentations as all eyes are on them. Sometimes, when this affects the learners too much, their personality could also be negatively affected. As a result, they could become individuals with low self-esteem and confidence level. If this continues to happen, there is a possibility that it could jeopardise their career in the future as well. Their career could be affected when they have to, for instance, deliver presentations in English.

## **2.9 CAUSES OF ANXIETY**

### **2.9.1 LEARNERS' SELF-PERCEPTIONS**

Language anxiety can be caused by several different reasons. One of them is that learners' self-perceptions of their own ability could more often than not create anxiety in them. MacIntyre (1999: 32) states that "language anxiety affects not only the way in which learners perform but also the way in which they perceive their performance, which can serve to maintain high levels of anxiety". He also continues with the statement "it appears likely that one of the reasons language anxiety persists is its negative effect on a student's self-perception of proficiency" (1999: 33). Many learners seem to be very concerned not only with their performance in the target language, but also how they view their performance. For learners with low levels of self-confidence, they might have the perception that they have done very badly in the performance due to their low proficiency in the target language. They might have thought negatively and that they did not do well and in turn, their anxiety level would not subside.

Ohata (2005b: 4-5) points out that "according to Price (1991) and Hembree (1988), learners who perceive their level of proficiency to be lower than that of others in class are more likely to feel language anxiety". Self-perception has a lot to do with self-confidence and self-esteem. Learners who feel that they are weak in the target language would in many cases compare themselves to their peers who they think are so much better than them since they are not confident of themselves. This does not happen only in language classes, but also in any type of class. Moreover, from this researcher's point of view, being an English teacher has made her notice that comparing oneself to others is as a matter of fact, what learners do unconsciously. Ohata (2005b: 4) quotes Bailey (1983) who claims that "competitive nature of L2 learning can lead to anxiety when learners compare themselves to others or to the idealized self-images". At certain times, it can be beneficial to the learners since it indirectly creates a healthy competition



among themselves. When there is a healthy competition, the learners would naturally want to improve themselves to be better than the others and obliquely they can develop into successful language learners. However, this kind of competition can also turn out to be distressing or detrimental to certain learners especially those with low proficiency level. Learners with low proficiency level are most of the time worried about their performance and also their peers belittling them. As a result, some of them would resort to keeping quiet and contributing less to the class in order to not appear foolish in front of others.

### **2.9.2 TEACHERS AS THE CAUSE OF ANXIETY**

Another issue that is closely connected to speaking language anxiety seems to be about teachers who actually ‘help’ in increasing their learners’ anxiety levels. In research on language anxiety, teachers have also been found to contribute to their learners’ high levels of anxiety. Ardi (2007) appears to support this view. According to him, teachers could also contribute to learners’ anxiety with their teaching methods and their refusal to develop friendly relationships with learners. Some teachers do not realise that they have actually aroused their learners’ anxiety level through their way of teaching.

Since the researcher is an English teacher too, she has made some observations on the activities that would make her learners nervous. In speaking classes, passive and quiet learners are found to be very uncomfortable when they are ‘forced’ to speak in class. If they are asked for their opinion on a certain topic, they would normally hesitate a great deal before they provide the answer. Conversely, the talkative ones do not seem to have this problem as they are more than willing to contribute their ideas to the class even when they are not asked to. The worst anxiety-producing activity for her learners would, most of the time, be individual presentations. Furthermore, learners might also

find their class very stressful if their teachers are unfriendly. Friendly in this context can be considered as being approachable, making small talk with learners by asking about their well-being to make them feel comfortable or even making jokes with them to lessen the tension.

## **2.10 MEASURES OF ANXIETY**

A number of studies in second language anxiety “have found negative correlation of second language anxiety with second language achievement and performance (e.g. Aida, 1994; Cheng, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Gardner et.al, 1987; Horwitz, 1986; Phillips, 1992; Truitt, 1994; Trylong, 1987; Wu, 1994; Ying, 1993; Young, 1986) (Cheng, 2001: 76). Woodrow (2006) also reports a similar result in which she mentions that significant negative relationship between second language speaking anxiety and oral performance has been reported by several researchers. Due to the extensive research in this field, several tools have been developed by researchers to measure the anxiety level of learners (Cheng, 2001). These tools have been widely used among second language anxiety researchers.

The most common tool used by researchers in measuring the anxiety level of learners is the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). It was constructed by Horwitz et.al (1986) and “has been used in a large number of research projects (Horwitz, 2001)” (Woodrow, 2006: 310). One reason why it has been extensively used is because of the fact that the results obtained from the use of the FLCAS has been reliable and valid (Aida, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999 in Woodrow, 2006).

The underlying principle of using the questionnaire is that the questionnaire “require the subject to give introspective reports about how he feels, or about his feelings with respect to a certain delineated class of events or situations, such as taking a test or giving a speech. The validity of these measures assumes, of course, that the

respondent is motivated to answer accurately and honestly and that he is capable of assessing his own reactions” (Gaudry & Spielberger, 1971: 8).

The FLCAS is developed specifically to measure the anxiety level of learners learning a foreign language. The questions in the FLCAS are divided according to three components of language anxiety which are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Woodrow, 2006). All the questions are intended to find out the feelings of learners in relation to their language learning and whether their anxiousness impairs their performance or not. A high score obtained on the FLCAS is interpreted to mean high anxiety and vice-versa. Consequently, researchers have adapted this measurement tool to suit their needs since it has been found to be highly reliable.

Accordingly, for the purpose of this study, changes were made to certain questions in order to suit the requirements of this study. The questions have been adapted to suit the specific setting in this study which is to focus more on the speaking assessment in order to get the results that would answer the research questions.

Other than using the FLCAS, another method of measurement that is commonly employed by researchers of language anxiety is the interview. The interview has also been found to be effective in studying this phenomenon which is why this study too has also used the interview as an additional tool to measure the learners’ anxiety level. This measurement tool is used to further explore the feelings of learners which cannot be discovered through the FLCAS. The interview questions focused on whether participants experienced second language speaking anxiety, in what situations they were anxious and how they felt (Woodrow, 2006).

According to Ohata (2005: 140), “the rationale behind the use of interviews as a data source is that it can provide access to things that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, or beliefs (Denzin, 1989; Merriam, 1998)”. Ohata is

right because anxiety is not a feeling that can be seen at all times, but one that can only be felt by the anxious person. Hence, it means that only the anxious person would be able to relate whatever he or she is experiencing of language anxiety.

## **2.11 ACADEMIC EFFECT OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY**

One of the objectives of this study is to discover if language anxiety actually affects the results of the learners' performance. Thus, the main aim of this section is to discuss previous research that has been done in relation to this particular issue. "Language anxiety has consistently shown a negative correlation with second language achievement and with the perception of second language proficiency. The combination of high levels of anxiety and low self-rated proficiency creates students with low levels of linguistic self-confidence..." (MacIntyre, 1999: 41). The common assumption of researchers of language anxiety is that the higher the anxiety level, the lower the achievement or performance level. MacIntyre (1999: 34) also notes that "it seems clear that high levels of language anxiety are associated with low levels of academic achievement in second or foreign language courses". This view is supported by other researchers such as Aida, 1994; Chang, 1999; Gardner et.al, 1987; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; and Liao, 1999. These researchers are of the opinion that the learning achievement level of learners becomes lower if learners are highly anxious in their language learning (Chan & Wu, 2004).

To a certain extent, the statement could be true based on Phillips' (1999: 125) statement that, "research has consistently shown that anxious language students suffer significantly during oral activities and that anxiety has a negative impact on students' attitudes toward language study". Under normal circumstances, anxiety can indirectly influence language learners' attitudes in their language learning process. Being a language teacher herself, the researcher has found through her observations that

learners, who think negatively towards their language, do not in actuality do well in the subject. This negative attitude of theirs can sometimes affect their overall performance in their examinations. To further support this notion, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991: 99) add that “Trylong (1987) found...a negative relationship between anxiety and attitudes, such that anxious students tended to have less-positive attitudes...Trylong concluded that aptitude, attitudes, and anxiety provide a useful combination of effects for understanding the process of language learning”. In brief, the negative attitude of learners will not help them to be successful in their language learning.

Even though research has regularly found that highly anxious learners have low proficiency, there is also some research which indicates otherwise. This parallels what Mandler and Sarason (1952: 172) reported, “...Anxiety does not necessarily depress scores, but can serve to elicit improvement”. Sometimes, there are occasions whereby learners use anxiety as a tool for them to improve their learning performance. It acts as a motivating factor for them to perform well in the target language and thus, work hard to become successful language learners.

Besides that, Ardi (2007) discovered that both low and high level learners have their own worries in language learning. What differentiates them is the factor that causes their anxiety. Ardi (2007: 44) reports that “lower intermediate learners consider that lack of confidence contributed to their anxiety...Upper intermediate learners were more afraid of failing their class...”. Thus, it can be deduced that higher level learners are more concerned of their academic performance. They are probably not as worried as the low level learners because they might have high self-confidence level as their anxiety level could be lower.

## **2.12 CONCLUSION**

From the previous studies conducted by researchers in this area, there is still no conclusive result as to whether language anxiety does actually impair learners' performance. Most of these studies have focused more on other languages such as French and Spanish. There were some studies that did actually focus on English, but it was not as a second language but as a foreign language. The subjects of these studies were from different backgrounds. Hence, there is a need for this study to be carried out to see if the same findings would result even though the background of the subjects is different. The method used in the present study will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In brief, it is hoped the results of this study will be able to fill the gap that has not been filled by previous research.