



## **Interviewers' Gender and Interview Topic in Oral Exams: their Relationship with EFL Learners' Anxiety Level, Preferences and Performance**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays, language schools tend to include more of oral exams as part of their course completion assessment instruments in addition to traditional written exams. The major purpose of this study was accordingly to investigate high/low anxious students' oral performance in relation to interviewers' gender and interview topic. Using Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS, Horwitz, 1986), thirty female upper-intermediate students were selected and assigned to two equal groups of high and low anxious learners. All the participants were interviewed twice, once by a female and once by a male interviewer and each time they were required to talk about two topics, one gender-neutral and another gender-biased. All the performances were scored twice with an inter-rater reliability of  $+0.88$  and  $+0.89$  for two interviews respectively. A comparative analysis of the interview scores indicated that there was an inverse relationship between anxiety and oral performance, i.e. the higher the anxiety the lower the oral performance scores. Considering interviewers' gender, the results showed that there was no relationship between interviewers' gender and high/low anxious students' oral performance. With respect to interview topic, high-anxious students obtained higher scores with gender-neutral topic, while low-anxious students performed better on gender-biased topic.