

Iraqi EFL University Students Mindfulness and Speaking Anxiety A Correlational Study

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اليقظة الذهنية وقلق التحدث لدى طلبة الجامعة العراقيين دارسي اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية: دراسة

ارتباطية

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Abstract

The study examines the level of speaking anxiety and mindfulness among 150 fourth-year Iraqi EFL university students from the English language department at the College of Education/ Ibn Rushd for Human Sciences at Baghdad University and Al-Iraqia University is selected for the academic year 2025/2026. Utilizing the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale and Langer Mindfulness Scale, it reveals high mindfulness levels and average speaking anxiety, with a significant negative correlation between the two. Conclusions and recommendations based on these findings are provided. **Key words:** speaking anxiety, mindfulness, EFL learners, Correlational Study

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة مستوى قلق التحدث واليقظة الذهنية لدى ١٥٠ طالباً عراقياً في السنة الرابعة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية التربية/ ابن رشد للعلوم الإنسانية في جامعة بغداد والجامعة العراقية، للعام الدراسي ٢٠٢٥/٢٠٢٦. وباستخدام مقياس قلق التحدث اللغة الأجنبية ومقياس لانجر لليقظة الذهنية، كشفت الدراسة عن مستويات عالية من اليقظة الذهنية ومستويات متوسطة من قلق التحدث، مع وجود ارتباط سلبي قوي بينهما. وتقدم الدراسة استنتاجات وتوصيات بناءً على هذه النتائج. الكلمات المفتاحية: قلق التحدث، اليقظة الذهنية، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية لغة أجنبية، دراسة ارتباطية

١.١ Statement of the Problem

Many scholars highlight the importance of affective factors in second language learning, alongside linguistic and cognitive elements (Gass et al., 2013; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012; Pawlak, 2017). Key personality traits such as self-esteem, risk-taking, extroversion, motivation, and anxiety are significant in influencing L2 learning (Öztürk & Gürbüz, 2013). Affective variables, as defined by Mercer et al. (2012), are non-cognitive components related to emotions like boredom, anxiety, shyness, and low self-esteem, with L2 learning anxiety being a particularly significant area of research (Daubney et al., 2017; Horwitz et al. 2010 ; Teimouri et al. 2019). Research indicates a negative correlation between anxiety and language learning, especially in speaking, which is the most anxiety-inducing skill in classrooms (Saltan, 2003). Students face heightened anxiety during spontaneous speaking tasks in front of peers. Since the 1980s, anxiety has been a key focus in language studies, significantly affecting learners' speaking skills (Horwitz et. al., 1986; Young, 1991; Fang-peng & Dong, 2010). Liu and Jackson (2008) find that speaking anxiety causes learners to avoid communicating with others. Tsiplakides and Keramida's research (2009) demonstrates that learners who fear of negative evaluation and have low speaking ability tend to experience higher speaking anxiety levels. Maysari (2020) supports this, showing that higher anxiety leads to worse speaking performance while better confidence results in improved speaking skills. Affective factors create a major obstacle for foreign and second language learners because these factors obstruct their cognitive development (Arnold, 2021). MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) describe positive

psychology as a field that uses its principles to develop better language teaching methods. Students who practice mindfulness as a core element of positive psychology achieve better academic results because mindfulness helps them deal with stress and anxiety, which leads to higher confidence and presentation skills (Allen et al. 2021; Alomari 2023; Indriaswuri et al. 2023; Charoensukmongkol 2019; Morgan and Katz 2021). The process of language learning gets supported through intrinsic motivation, which results in greater student participation and reduced fear of errors (Ghanizadeh et al., 2019; Ulivia et al., 2022). The process of mindfulness practice helps learners to develop cognitive flexibility and active engagement, which enables them to discover new language patterns while improving their language skills (Moafian et al., 2019). Research conducted in an Iraqi context demonstrates that EFL learners experience speaking anxiety because they fear of negative evaluation results while their vocabulary skills remain deficient and their classroom environment fails to provide necessary support (Naeem, 2020). A positive relationship between phonology, grammar, and meaning contributes to this anxiety (Sayer, 2022). Additionally, internal factors and specific language components exacerbate difficulties, causing students to avoid oral communication (Abdulla et al., 2022). Incorporating mindfulness and relaxation techniques has been effective in reducing anxiety and improving speaking proficiency for these learners (Almasoudi & Sarkhosh, 2025). Students who display anxiety symptoms will develop anxiety because their phonological and grammatical skills lead to better understanding of meaning connections according to Sayer 2022. Research has largely overlooked the relationship between mindfulness and foreign language speaking anxiety in EFL contexts, focusing instead on general education and stress reduction. Current studies mainly explore general academic stress, leaving a gap in empirical evidence specifically addressing speaking anxiety among EFL learners (Okyar, 2023). This study seeks to enhance the literature on FL speaking anxiety by examining its relationship with mindfulness among Iraqi EFL university students. Accordingly, the following questions are addressed by this study:

1. Is there a significant correlation between university students' mindfulness and speaking anxiety.
2. Are higher levels of mindfulness associated with lower levels of speaking anxiety?

1.2 Aims

The current study aims at:

1. finding out EFL students' level of mindfulness.
2. finding out EFL students' level of speaking anxiety
3. finding out the correlation between mindfulness and anxiety in speaking.

1.3 Limits

The study investigates how mindfulness affects speaking anxiety in fourth-year Iraqi EFL students from Ibn Rushd College of Education and Al-Iraqia University during their 2025/2026 academic studies.

1.4 The Value

The relationship between mindfulness and speaking anxiety needs to be studied because it affects both theoretical and practical aspects of EFL education. The theoretical part of the study shows how affective variables in foreign language acquisition research work by combining psychological elements with language teaching methods. Practically, this research informs educators about effective ways to implement mindfulness techniques through breathing exercises and guided meditations and reflective tasks which help students control their emotions and decrease their speaking anxiety. The research aims to improve students' abilities to speak fluently while building their self-assurance and classroom engagement.

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

1.5.1 Speaking anxiety

According to Young (1991), speaking anxiety in a foreign language classroom is a sort of performance anxiety brought on by students' fear of making errors and being negatively evaluated by others. As defined by Woodrow (2006), foreign language speaking anxiety refers to the stress and nervousness experienced by learners when they have to speak orally in a second or foreign language, particularly in formal or evaluative situations.

1.5.2 Mindfulness

Mindfulness is defined as a socio-cognitive state of active awareness that involves openness to novelty, cognitive flexibility, and sensitivity to context (Langer, 1989).

Mindfulness involves purposeful, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment and ongoing experiences (Jon Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Mindfulness is characterized as a receptive attention to and awareness of current events and experiences (Brown & Ryan, 2003).

In this study, mindfulness is explored from Langer's (1989) socio-cognitive perspective, defining it as an active cognitive process linked to learning and language use, rather than just a meditative practice focused on present-moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Brown & Ryan, 2003).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speaking Anxiety in EFL Context

2.1.1 Speaking Anxiety

Communicative language teaching highlights the necessity of speaking tasks in classroom language learning due to the significance of English as a global lingua franca (Sosa-López & Mora, 2022). Speaking is a crucial skill in English language learning, intricately linked to listening abilities (Brown 2003 cited in Mitha et al., 2018). It is a productive skill used for oral expression and information exchange (Wahyudi, 2017; Kallinikou & Nicolaidou, 2019; Tresnawati & Musthafa, 2016). The practice of speaking needs to be done by students through their classroom training and their daily activities, which include presenting to their fellow students (Maysari, 2020). The skill of speaking includes multiple abilities which speakers must develop through their work on pronunciation, listening skills, and grammatical knowledge (Long and Jack, 1987 as cited in Wahyudi, 2017). Afebri et al. (2019) discovered that students' speaking performance depends on multiple factors, which include their motivation level, their confidence level, their anxiety level, their ability to listen, their understanding of the subject matter, and the feedback they receive during speaking practice. Communicating in a second language, especially English, can cause considerable anxiety that hinders students' adaptation and educational goals. This performance-related anxiety adversely affects learning and achievement (Ansari, 2015), as it involves "self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope, 1986) and influences students' reactions to new and unfamiliar experiences in educational settings (Maysari, 2020). Students experience anxiety in classrooms due to pressure from assignments and expectations to speak, leading to embarrassment and forgetfulness (Zuhr et al., 2022). This anxiety can cause mental blocks, reducing verbal output. The quick pace of language instruction and a non-supportive classroom environment further diminish motivation, while the dominance of skilled speakers increases fears of unexpected questioning. Two main factors that lead to performance issues are psychological conditions (Khan, 2005), which include anxiety, and linguistic difficulties that arise from problems with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation skills (Spolsky & Hult, 2008). Young (1991) bases his research findings on the observation that foreign language students experience speaking anxiety because they worry about making errors and receiving unfavorable evaluations. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) establish a link between this type of anxiety and three factors which included self-monitoring, the fear of making mistakes and the need to achieve perfect speech recognition. Woodrow (2006) defines second language speaking anxiety as the stress experienced during formal contexts, such as presentations. Horwitz et al. (1986) identified three interrelated components affecting language learning: communication apprehension, which is linked to anxiety in social interactions; fear of negative evaluation, which leads individuals to avoid judgmental situations; and test anxiety, stemming from the fear of failure in assessments. Communication apprehension refers to the fear or tension experienced by individuals when speaking to others, with greater fear linked to higher levels of apprehension. Students with communication apprehension experience discomfort in using the target language for conversation, mainly due to limited proficiency in speaking and listening skills (Ansary, 2015). Students fearing negative evaluation perceive language errors as threats to their image, resulting in silence and withdrawal, which in turn leads to avoidance of language activities (Ely, 1986). Students with test anxiety perceive foreign language learning, particularly oral production, as a testing situation instead of a chance for communication and skill enhancement (Ansari, 2015). Speaking anxiety adversely impacts FL speech quality, leading to reduced fluency, increased filled pauses (Christenfeld & Creager, 1996; Goberman et al., 2011; Pérez Castillejo, 2019), and lower grammatical accuracy and complexity (Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012). Studies indicate that anxiety hinders the learners' ability to focus on their output, which results in diminished spoken performance (Kormos, 2015). In this study, foreign language speaking anxiety is defined as the tension, fear, and apprehension experienced by EFL learners during English oral communication, arising from worries about making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation, and low self-confidence (based on Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Young, 1991).

2.1.3 Causes of Speaking Anxiety among EFL Learners

Knowledge about FL speaking anxiety needs to be understood because it serves as a crucial element for improving second language teaching methods. The research by Sosa-López and Mora 2022 demonstrates that

students face difficulties in their FL speaking development when they experience anxiety during communicative tasks. English language teachers often face this problem because they incorrectly interpret anxious students' silence as an absence of motivation and a negative attitude instead of understanding it as an anxiety reaction. Students who speak English experience learning anxiety because of their personal beliefs, environmental conditions, their specific language abilities, and their contextual pressures from English speaking situations. Students experience anxiety because they lack self-confidence and they have incorrect beliefs about how learning occurs. The elements of a situation lead to different responses which disrupt their ability to speak effectively in public settings (Zhang & Zhong 2012; Hutabarat & Simanjuntak 2019). Student anxiety is affected by two types of factors which include psychological (Internal) aspects and physiological (external) aspects. Internal factors include the fear of making mistakes and shyness and lack of confidence and motivation while external factors include language-related problems such as pronunciation and vocabulary and grammar problems and peer pressure and insufficient educational materials as noted by Ernawati and Fatma (2012) and Ansari (2015) and Thornburry (2005) in Indrianty (2016). Horwitz (2010) believes that the problems exist throughout all educational levels beginning from basic learners to advanced university students because they negatively affect language acquisition which has attracted research attention from both scholars and educators who study language learning. Horwitz et al. (1986) and Worde (2003) characterize three primary factors as a main cause of student's anxiety when speaking English. Teacher-related issues include classroom speaking activities that may induce a fear of negative evaluation from teachers or peers and inappropriate teaching methods that can be perceived as threatening or confusing. Academic materials create student anxiety because their complex and extensive content forces students to work through speaking tasks. Student-related factors include students' language learning beliefs because students view the language as difficult while feeling compelled to achieve flawless results. Students experience anxiety from three different sources particular to their situation which include their low self-esteem, their past stressful educational experiences, and their unpreparedness for learning. Students experience academic difficulties in their speaking assessments because their anxiety levels exceed normal limits which results in lower performance outcomes in these assessments (Febrikawati, 2021).

2.1.4 Effects of Speaking Anxiety among EFL Learners

Students who learn English face two main barriers, which result from their speaking anxiety and their fear of making errors and low confidence and peer judgment of their abilities (Maysari, 2020). Anxiety serves as a key obstacle that impacts the process of studying foreign languages, especially for English learners who experience distraction and tension and perform below their potential. Students with higher anxiety levels tend to learn less effectively and experience more academic failures, while students with lower anxiety levels achieve better results in learning English. Students show their anxiety through their decision to avoid class activities and to stay silent during speaking exercises, which stems from their low confidence and lack of motivation and their tendency to feel passive and their need to speak, which creates stronger fears and shyness about making mistakes. Students believe English serves as an extremely difficult subject, which leads to negative effects on their self-esteem while increasing their anxiety. According to Febrikawati (2021), the requirement to speak causes students to develop stammering problems and pronunciation and intonation difficulties, which demonstrate their lack of confidence. Most learners have feelings of inferiority when they need to speak English in front of their classmates which results in stress and decreased self-confidence. The study by Susilawati (2017) shows that English learners experience overwhelming pressure which makes them become shy and anxious. The inadequate English knowledge of students leads to anxiety because they feel ashamed of their English skills and they fear being mocked when they make mistakes during speaking practice (Hutabarat & Simanjuntak, 2019). The evidence shows that students with speaking anxiety will try to avoid social situations by staying silent and not making eye contact because they fear making mistakes and being judged and competing with others (Dörnyei, 2001; Subaşı, 2010). Vocabulary limitations and grammatical errors together with fluency and pronunciation problems and public speaking anxiety along with insufficient practice opportunities lead to a decline in confidence (Ansari, 2015).

2.2 Mindfulness in Educational and EFL Contexts

2.2.1 Mindfulness

The field of psychology has been essential for developing language teaching methods since the 19th century because it has provided scientific insights about how people learn languages and remember information (Richards & Rogers 2001). The second language classroom uses Dr. Ellen Langer's mindful learning theory as its principal psychological framework (Langer 1997). Mindfulness has multiple definitions in the literature.

Langer defined the concept as "a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context" (Langer 2000, p. 220). The stake helps learners develop better contextual understanding while they can handle their life situations. Langer and Moldoveanu (2000) view it as "the process of drawing novel distinctions," which aids presence (p. 2). According to Kabat-Zinn (1994), the definition includes three elements: "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally." According to Bishop et al. (2004), their operational definition emphasizes two processes: self-regulating attention and accepting all experiences. The definitions show how mindfulness concepts become complicated because people interpret them in different ways. Mindfulness exists as a psychological method which helps learners handle anxiety while they practice non-judgmental present-moment awareness (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). The practice boosts emotional control abilities while it decreases distress and enhances people ability to concentrate. Mindfulness exerts positive effects on brain operations and cognitive functions especially working memory (Zeidan et al., 2010). The practice of mindfulness demonstrates its ability to boost creative thinking and mental adaptability, which help students, learn better (Langer et al., 1989; Thornton & McEntee, 1995). The teaching capabilities of mindfulness have powerful effects on essential educational domains which include skill transferability, knowledge application in new situations, student motivation, engagement, creative thinking, and the encouragement of self-directed learning according to Sherretz (2006). The process of understanding new languages depends on these elements which serve as vital requirements for achieving effective language acquisition. In conclusion, mindfulness exists as a flexible mental state which learners experience when they maintain present awareness while they stay open to fresh experiences and remain aware of their surroundings and their capacity to perceive. Langerian mindfulness differs from traditional meditation by its emphasis on mental flexibility and active cognitive processing. The approach holds special value in educational and language-learning environments because these settings require both flexibility and active communication to resolve language-related problems.

2.2.2 Langerian Mindfulness

The concept of mindfulness developed by Ellen Langer in 1989 requires people to recognize different types of things which results in their increased realization of their current activities and their surrounding environments. The practice of active engagement produces advantages because it enables people to develop better environmental sensitivity and they become willing to accept fresh knowledge while developing new ways to understand their surroundings and their problem-solving abilities. The practice of mindfulness enables individuals to achieve a focused state of mind that enhances their creative abilities and their power to concentrate and their overall awareness (Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000). The default mode network causes people to develop habitual patterns which result in automatic actions that restrict their mental abilities (Olendzki, 2014). Learners who possess cognitive flexibility with curiosity will discover new things in every situation they encounter which helps them accept new knowledge and current life events. The study found that people who practice mindfulness become more creative while developing better approaches to handle their challenges (Carson, Shih, & Langer, 2001). The process of maintaining focus through intentional concentration results in people experiencing substantial transformations in how they understand things. Langer and her colleagues have conducted research about this contrast which shows how people benefit from elevated awareness (Olendzki, 2014). Langer (2009) asserts that mindfulness allows individuals to break out from their habitual mental patterns. Conditional thinking, which Saarinen and Lehti (2014) characterize as a superior mental method to replace rigorous and absolute thinking, can be used to overcome the mindless state. Langer (1997) asserts that learners must develop uncertainty management abilities because the experience of uncertainty compels them to reconsider their core beliefs, which they previously believed to be unchangeable because of their proven track record. Because labels enable individuals to lose sight of larger things and only perceive what aligns with their own ideas, her observations show how people use labels to build their reality. Fatemi (2014) asserts that individuals would experience uncertainty while using labels since they should consider them to be transient designations. In conclusion, Langerian mindfulness improves language learning through novelty seeking, producing, flexibility, and better active participation. The method helps students develop their engagement skills while learning to understand content, increasing their creative abilities and focus skills, and decreasing their stress levels.

2.2.3 Mindfull Learning

Mindful learning, defined as a social-cognitive approach (Pirson M. et al., 2012), is heavily influenced by the work of Harvard psychologist Ellen Langer (Langer, 2016) and is often referred to as Langerian mindfulness. This concept is distinct from traditional meditative mindfulness, hence it is labeled as non-meditative (Trent et al., 2016). Research has shown that mindful learning significantly enhances various competencies, notably

creativity, while also contributing to lowered burnout levels among both students and teachers (Langer, 2000). Literature identifies two primary approaches to enhancing mindfulness in educational contexts: mindfulness training and mindful learning. Mindfulness training encompasses specialized courses or practices offered to students, either as mandatory or elective components of the curriculum (Roeser et al., 2012). Mindful learning emphasizes the importance of reflection, as highlighted by Cooper and Boyd (1996), asserting that it is contingent upon learner reflection and involves mindful learners. Teachers need to demonstrate their ability to interact with others while they work through their ability to think critically and develop creative solutions and deliver messages and maintain personal health and show their responsibility toward the world and their ability to assess information. The teachers and students must create a mindful learning environment which enables critical thinking development and mutual respect while providing continuous support and challenges for their learning progress. There is a rising interest in mindfulness and mindful learning activities in educational settings, according to recent studies. According to Napoli et al. (2005), mindfulness practices greatly extend children's attention spans. These results demonstrate the beneficial effects of mindful learning techniques in a variety of educational settings, supporting a well-established connection between education and mindfulness.

2.2.4 Exploring Mindful Learning across Traditional and Innovative Approaches

The educational system requires students to memorize knowledge for their intelligence demonstration through quick accurate response identification according to traditional educational practices that Ellen Langer defined as mindful learning in her 2016 work. The new method of learning requires students to pay attention while they learn and maintain their ability to adapt and accept new experiences. Students who practice mindful learning will develop the ability to see multiple perspectives and create solutions for specific situations, which helps them overcome their wrong understanding of traditional educational methods. The essential elements of Langer's (1997) definition of mindful learning show how this educational approach differs from conventional learning methods which present fundamental components of modern educational systems that concentrate on student learning and critical thinking development and creative thinking.

Openness to Novelty

Mindful learning teaches students to embrace new experiences through their ongoing practice of doubting existing knowledge and their ability to create new understanding. The method of mindful learning enables students to develop their critical thinking skills because it requires them to investigate various viewpoints instead of learning predetermined knowledge. The practice of open-mindedness leads to creative thought development while students engage in more intensive study of educational materials.

Mindfulness of Differences

The fundamental element of mindful learning requires students to practice their skills by recognizing different types of differences. Traditional learning environments show a preference for uniformity and fixed interpretations, but mindful learning requires students to discover and understand different ideas and perspectives and various learning environments. The students acquire abilities which enable them to maintain their focus while their analytical thinking skills progress through this understanding.

Sensitivity to Context

Students who study through traditional methods need to memorize information through rote learning which prevents them from understanding different types of contextual information. Mindful learning teaches students to recognize their environment, which helps them develop critical thinking skills while evaluating knowledge and understanding their learning process and handling uncertain information. The method helps students understand better while teaching them how to apply their knowledge in various real-world situations.

Mindful Self-Regulation and Emotion Management

Mindful learning requires students to develop self-control and emotional understanding. The conventional educational system teaches students to wait for rewards while using external factors to drive their learning. This creates a supportive and comfortable learning environment that enhances student engagement and collaboration.

Mindful Choice and Action

The traditional educational system defines intelligence through its assessment method which evaluates students capacity to evaluate conditions and produce correct answers. Students develop personal knowledge of their environment through active learning which Mindful Learning teaches. The approach enables students to take charge of their learning while developing their ability to think independently.

Awareness of Multiple Perspectives

The practice of mindful learning teaches students to recognize different perspectives instead of teaching them to identify correct and incorrect answers. This method enables learners to develop critical thinking skills through their exploration of different perspectives and their examination of multiple ways to understand a topic.

Flexible Thinking

Mindful learning helps students develop their ability to think flexibly. While traditional education often considers forgetting as a major issue, mindful learning treats students who forget information as an opportunity to discover different solutions through their problem-solving process. The ability to adapt these two approaches allows organizations to develop new ideas while improving how students handle complex challenges. Mindful learning has increasingly become integrated with innovative educational approaches that assert holistic student development, cognitive engagement, and emotional well-being. Mindful learning aligns closely with Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), which develops students' self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making abilities (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Students who practice educational mindfulness techniques gain better ability to handle stress and maintain healthy mental states while developing resilience. Mindful learning activities help students acquire twenty-first-century skills which include creativity, critical thinking, cooperation, and communication that modern educational systems require for both innovation and effective learning outcomes. Active content engagement through reflective learning methods helps learners strengthen their competencies. The process of mindful learning establishes a connection with experiential learning theory because it improves the four fundamental elements of learning through experience, reflection, conceptualization, and practical testing. According to Yeganeh and Kolb (2013) research, students who practice mindful engagement will gain practical experience which they can use to develop their knowledge base. The concept functions as a self-regulated learning framework which requires students to organize their learning activities, master the educational materials, and monitor and assess their academic progress. Zajonc (2016) research proves that contemplative practices support mindful learning through their development of present-moment awareness together with non-judgmental attention and thus increase students' ability to comprehend learning material. In summary, mindful learning signifies a transition from teacher-centered to learner-centered methods, prioritizing openness, flexibility, and contextual awareness. It boosts critical thinking, creativity, and engagement, especially in EFL classrooms. This approach fosters personalized education, collaboration, and emotional growth, aligning with trends like social-emotional learning (SEL) and experiential learning, thereby enhancing academic success and preparing students for active participation in contemporary education.

2.2.3 Relationship between Mindfulness and Foreign Language Learning:

Students develop their foreign language skills better through mindfulness practices which support their creative abilities and intellectual growth and their capacity to work with others. It provides them with multiple chances to discover their personal viewpoints, engage in critical reflection, and learn from peers (Wang & Liu, 2016). Studies show that mindfulness practices in foreign language classes lead to notable improvements in academic and cognitive achievements, attention spans, and reduced distractions compared to non-mindful peers (Zeilhofer, 2020; Mortimore, 2020). Additionally, mindful collaborative learning allows students to collaborate effectively, thereby benefiting their language acquisition (Fatemeh Moafian et al., 2019). Overall, mindfulness serves as a consistent predictor of motivation in foreign language studies, influencing students directly and indirectly (Afsaneh Ghanizadeh & Hossein Makiabadi and Samaneh Abdi Navokhi, 2019). Mindfulness is associated with numerous educational advantages, including improved attentional functions and cognitive flexibility (Moore & Malinowski, 2009), enhanced learning (Zeilhofer, 2020), and boosts in cognitive performance, such as memory, speech fluency, and flexible cognitive skills (Marciniak et al., 2014). It enables individuals to manage challenging academic and workplace situations (Paul et al., 2007) and enhances learning efficiency in classrooms (Lin & Mai, 2018). It fosters effective memory habits (Filipović, 2018), facilitates connections between various facts and concepts (Bylund & Jarvis, 2010), and has a positive influence on student learning outcomes (Fiebert & Mead, 1981). Additionally, mindfulness supports learners in self-regulating their studies, enhancing self-discipline, self-assessment abilities, cognitive skills, and the management of learning resources, ultimately reducing anxiety levels (Corti & Gelati, 2020). Mindfulness practices in EFL classrooms lead to improved learning outcomes and better communication abilities while decreasing student anxiety levels. According to Ayala and Acuña's research (2025), mindfulness practices help students reduce their anxiety levels, which leads to better listening skills and increased participation during class activities and exams. The academic staff and students receive benefits from decreased anxiety levels together with improved emotional control, which helps teachers develop greater confidence in their work. The

implemented techniques improve communication skills while they create a classroom environment that supports students' needs.

2.2.4 The Relationship between Mindfulness and Foreign Language Anxiety

Psychology and other related fields have experienced increased research focus on mindfulness during the past twenty years, which studies its effects on anxiety (Možina, 2010). Mindfulness exists as a state that people experience by observing their current moment situations without forming any judgments. It emphasizes accepting and acknowledging these experiences without avoidance or suppression (Černetič, 2016). Mindfulness is shown as an effective tool for improving English language learning. Ayala & Acuña (2025) shows that mindfulness decreases student anxiety linked to communication, tests, and evaluations, fostering a positive learning environment. Additionally, it boosts listening skills and encourages active participation by creating a safe atmosphere for students to express themselves. Both students and teachers benefit from reduced anxiety and better emotional regulation. Defined as the link between actions and reactions achieved through self-awareness and meditation, mindfulness fosters self-control in stress. Choomchaiyo and Varma (2021) shows a positive correlation between mindfulness and reduced foreign language anxiety. Studies conclude that mindfulness is an effective classroom strategy (Zhao et al., 2022) for alleviating anxiety in foreign language learning and improving awareness of learning processes and outcomes Morgan (2019). Mindfulness techniques foster a relaxed atmosphere that boosts student participation in speaking activities. Research by Largo (2022) and Ayala & Acuña (2025) indicates that mindfulness alleviates anxieties and creates a secure learning environment, empowering students to actively engage in English language usage. By nurturing positive relationships, mindfulness enhances effective language learning. Mindfulness techniques, highlighted by Geng (2021) for managing classroom anxiety, and Zhao et al. (2022) for reducing listening anxiety, have a transformative impact on language learning. The research conducted by Largo in 2022 shows that these practices create emotional safety for Colombian students, which leads to their increased genuine participation in English language learning. Mindfulness functions as a complete system that improves stress management while it supports emotional and cognitive learning in educational settings through mutual student support and self-awareness development. Mindfulness techniques enable college students to handle stress better while developing their emotional control and concentration skills. A low-intensity mindfulness course was shown to improve nonjudgmental, nonreactive responses to thoughts and emotions (de Bruin et al., 2015). The study shows that mindfulness practice improves cognitive abilities which enable people to maintain their focus and handle stress during different activities (Greif & Kaufman, 2019). Mindfulness practice leads to positive thinking and emotional states which help students reduce their academic stress according to the study results (de Bruin et al., 2015). To sum up, the mindfulness learning method promotes present-moment focus, reducing anxiety in speaking tasks by helping students manage fear of mistakes and self-criticism. This fear reduction enhances language skills and encourages open participation in conversations. Langer's socio-cognitive theory suggests that mindful learners must be open, flexible, and contextually aware to effectively handle fears and adapt. In EFL classrooms, techniques like breathing exercises create a supportive environment that decreases anxiety, highlighting mindfulness as a valuable strategy in language education.

2.2.5 Related Studies

The relationship between mindfulness and foreign language speaking anxiety shows a negative trend according to recent research findings. A longitudinal study that tracked 259 university students found that students with higher mindfulness levels experienced decreased English-speaking anxiety (Khatami et al., 2025). Systematic reviews confirmed this inverse relationship, especially regarding speaking anxiety (Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Fallah, 2017). EFL students who practiced mindfulness showed significant reductions in their speaking anxiety while improving their speaking skills according to the findings of Mousavi and Nakhjavan (2025). The research conducted by Almasoudi and Sarkhosh (2025) demonstrated that mindfulness techniques helped students improve their oral proficiency while decreasing their anxiety levels.

3. Method

The study employs a descriptive-correlational research design to determine existing levels of two variables and their relationship. The research uses a non-experimental quantitative approach that applies correlational statistical methods to measure relationship strength (Creswell 2012).

3.1 Population and Sample

Creswell (2012) defines population as a group that shares a specific characteristic. The study population includes students from the English language department at the College of Education Ibn Rushd for Human

Sciences, Baghdad University, and AL-Iraqia University who were randomly selected to form 150 fourth-year students from these institutions.

3.2 Instruments

Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of prior research, this study adopts a foreign language speaking anxiety scale and a Langer mindfulness scale, which are deemed appropriate for the study's sample and specific nature.

3.2.1 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale (FLSA)

Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the foreign language classroom anxiety questionnaire to assess language learner anxiety through a 5-point Likert scale that included 33 assessment items. Saltan and Ozturk conducted their research from 2003 and 2012 onward to assess speaking anxiety among learners through the use of 18 assessment items from the original scale. Ozturk developed a scale, which this research used to measure EFL speaking anxiety through a method that employed a 5-point Likert scale, which ranged from "strongly disagree (1)" to "strongly agree (5)."

3.2.2 Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS)

The Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS), which Pirson et al. (2012) developed, is employed. The LMS consists of 14 items designed to measure respondents' levels of mindfulness across three dimensions: novelty seeking, novelty producing, and engagement. The rating system for each dimension uses a seven-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

3.3 Face Validity

Oluwatayo (2012) defines face validity as the expert evaluation of an assessment tool's appearance and relevance, focusing on aspects like relevance, logical coherence, clarity, and ambiguity. In this study, ten specialists in Teaching English as a Foreign Language assessed the scales' face validity, concluding it is suitable for the target sample and research objectives.

3.4 Construct Validity

According to Li (1996), construct validity is defined as "the extent to which a research tool measures the trait, theoretical ability or construct that is intended to measure" (p.39). Construct validity is analyzed through logical and empirical evaluations of a specific construct. In assessing the construct validity of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and the Langer Mindfulness scales, two psychometric indicators are measured: item discrimination power and item-total correlation.

3.5 Pilot Administration

A pilot administration involving 50 fourth-stage English students at Ibn Rushd College of Education who are not included in the study sample is conducted to evaluate the clarity of scales' items and response times. The results show that the items on the scales are clear, with students taking 20 minutes to complete the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale and 15 minutes for the Langer Mindfulness Scale.

3.6 Statistical analysis of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale and Langer Mindfulness Scale.

3.6.1 Item Discrimination Power

According to Farenga and Ness (2015), the item discrimination index measures how well an exam item differentiates between high and low scorers, commonly assessed via the extreme groups approach that examines the upper and lower 27% of respondents (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2018). After applying the two scales on the same sample of this study and scoring the responses, and to extract the discriminatory power of the scale items, the scores of the individuals are arranged from the highest total score to the lowest total score, and the two extreme groups are identified with the total score, with a rate of (27%) of each group, as suggested. The number of individuals in each group is (41) students. T- test for two independent samples is used in calculating the significance of the differences between the averages of the two groups in the scores of each item of the scale, on the basis that the calculated t- value represents the discriminatory power of the item, and through this procedure it is found that all the items in the two scales are of accepted discrimination power because their calculated t- values are greater than the tabulated t- value of (٢,٠٠) with a degree of freedom (80) and at the level of significance (0.05). Table (3.1) and (3.2) show the results of calculating the discriminatory power of the items. **Table (3.1) Discrimination Power of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale**

No.	Upper Group		Lower Group		Calculated t- Value	Tabulated t- Value	Level of Significance (0.05)
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation			
١	3.413	0.719	2.404	0.971	5.282		Significant

٢	3.503	0.967	2.712	1.002	3.593	٢,٠٠	Significant
٣	3.488	0.913	2.529	1.174	4.078		Significant
٤	3.512	0.886	3.033	0.707	2.673		Significant
٥	3.010	0.876	2.173	1.065	3.839		Significant
٦	3.337	0.796	2.481	1.079	4.038		Significant
٧	3.365	0.986	1.913	0.967	6.649		Significant
٨	2.933	0.839	2.337	0.981	2.920		Significant
٩	3.596	0.676	2.788	1.058	4.070		Significant
١٠	3.596	0.676	2.827	0.960	4.142		Significant
١١	3.644	0.606	2.981	0.903	3.856		Significant
١٢	3.163	0.837	2.019	0.737	6.488		Significant
١٣	3.760	0.512	3.058	1.087	3.695		Significant
١٤	3.077	0.952	1.471	0.653	8.798		Significant
١٥	3.567	0.665	2.827	1.092	3.661		Significant
١٦	3.356	0.709	2.606	0.980	3.922		Significant
١٧	3.308	0.825	2.385	0.851	4.925		Significant
١٨	3.673	0.565	2.327	1.110	6.835		Significant

Table (3.2) Discrimination Power of Langer Mindfulness Scale

No.	Upper Group		Lower Group		Calculated t- Value	Tabulated t- Value	Level of Significance (0.05)
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation			
١	5.979	1.225	4.423	1.567	4.948	٢,٠٠	Significant
٢	5.505	0.926	4.330	0.688	6.442		Significant
٣	6.041	1.492	4.722	1.663	3.734		Significant
٤	6.227	0.919	4.608	1.229	6.672		Significant
٥	6.196	1.067	4.361	0.959	8.090		Significant
٦	5.959	0.200	4.897	0.823	7.930		Significant
٧	5.938	1.223	4.959	0.828	4.192		Significant
٨	6.330	0.875	5.113	0.610	7.216		Significant
٩	6.010	1.150	4.052	1.112	7.741		Significant
١٠	6.072	1.130	4.948	1.503	3.780		Significant
١١	6.113	1.089	4.412	0.997	7.286		Significant
١٢	5.577	1.749	4.742	1.309	2.417		Significant
١٣	5.959	1.376	3.979	1.283	6.656		Significant
١٤	6.124	1.522	4.134	1.605	5.690		Significant

3.6.2 Item - Total Correlation

The Person correlation coefficient is utilized to assess the correlation between individual item scores and the total test score in the current study. The correlation coefficients are found to be statistically significant, surpassing the tabulated value of (0.161) at a (0.05) significance level with (148) degree of freedom, suggesting the validity of the items in measuring the intended phenomenon. Tables 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate these findings.

Table (3.3)

Correlation Coefficients between the Score of each Item and the Total Score of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale

Item no.	Person correlation coefficient	Tabulated T- value	Item no.	Person correlation coefficient	Tabulated T- value
١	٠,٣٥٤	0.161	١٠	٠,٤١٢	0.161
٢	٠,٤٢٦		١١	٠,٣٦١	
٣	٠,٥٥٤		١٢	٠,٣٩٨	
٤	٠,٣٩٤		١٣	٠,٤٠٦	
٥	٠,٤٩٥		١٤	٠,٤٢٤	
٦	٠,٤٢٢		١٥	٠,٤٥٢	

٧	٠,٣٨١		١٦	٠,٣٥٦	
٨	٠,٥٧٢		١٧	٠,٣٦١	
٩	٠,٥٢٨		١٨	٠,٤١٠	

Table (3.4)

Correlation Coefficients between the Score of each Item and the Total Score of the Langer Mindfulness Scale

Item no.	Person correlation coefficient	Tabulated T- value	Item no.	Person correlation coefficient	Tabulated T- value
١	٠,٤١١	0.161	٨	٠,٤٣١	0.161
٢	٠,٤٥٥		٩	٠,٤٢٨	
٣	٠,٥٠٥		١٠	٠,٤١٢	
٤	٠,٣٩٨		١١	٠,٣٧٦	
٥	٠,٤٣٣		١٢	٠,٣٥٤	
٦	٠,٤١٥		١٣	٠,٤٤٠	
٧	٠,٤٠٥		١٤	٠,٣٨٥	

3.6.3 The relationship between the item score and the score of the domain it belongs to:

To determine the correlation coefficient between the score of each item and the score of the domain it belongs to, this method is used in order to ensure the validity of the scale items in each domain. The total score of the domain is adopted as an internal criterion. After using Pearson's correlation coefficient, it is found that all correlation coefficients are statistically significant when compared to the critical value of (0.161) at a significance level of (0.05) with (148) degrees of freedom. This indicator shows that all the scale items reflect their domains, as shown in Table (3.5).

Table (3.5)

Correlation Coefficients between the Score of each Item and the Score of the domain it belongs to (the Langer Mindfulness Scale)

First Domain: Novelty Seeking		Third Domain: Engagement		Second Domain: Novelty Producing	
Item No.	Correlation Coefficient	Item No.	Correlation Coefficient	Item No.	Correlation Coefficient
1	0.555	2	0.604	4	0.678
٥	0.599	3	0.631	9	0.634
٧	0.526	6	0.643	12	0.646
١٠	0.631	8	0.603		
13	0.577	11	0.575		
		14	0.615		

3.6.4 Matrix of internal correlations for the independence of domains:

To determine the independence of the main domains in measuring mindfulness, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated using scores from a sample of 150 students. The results show that all correlation coefficients for each domain with the other domains and the overall score are statistically significant, suggesting that the domains collectively measure a single construct—mindfulness. All coefficients are higher than the critical value of (0.161) at a (0.05) significance level with (148) degrees of freedom, indicating strong construct validity for the scale, as shown in Table (3.6).

Table (٣,٦) Matrix of Internal Correlations for the LMS Domains

Domains	Total Score	Novelty Seeking	Novelty Producing	Engagement
Total Score	1	0.611	0.598	0.666
Novelty Seeking		1	0.486	0.465
Novelty Producing			1	0.418
Engagement				1

3.7 Reliability

The Alpha Cronbach Formula is utilized to estimate this reliability. According to Vaske et al. (2016), in human dimension research, an Alpha Cronbach coefficient of (0.65 - 0.80) is considered adequate. This study finds

that the two scales used exhibit high internal consistency, with r-values of (0.85 and 0.88), which signifies good reliability.

4. Presentation of Results

4.1 Results Related to the First Aim:

Regarding the mindfulness level of EFL students, the calculated findings show a mean score of 68.456 with a standard deviation of 6.137. A t-test for one independent sample is utilized to determine the significance of the variance between the mean score and the theoretical mean, which is 56. The estimated t-value (24.862) is higher than the critical t-value (1.96) with 149 degrees of freedom, indicating that the difference is statistically significant at the significance level of 0.05. Because the theoretical mean is lower than the sample mean, this indicates that the study sample has a high level of mindfulness. See table (4.1).

Tablet (4.1) Mean, Standard Deviation and T-Value for Langer Mindfulness Scale

Variable	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Theoretical mean	T-Value		Significance (0.05)
					Calculated	Critical	
Langer Mindfulness	150	٦٨,٤٥٦	٦,١٣٧	٥٦	٢٤,٨٦٢	١,٩٦	Significant

4.2 Results Related to the second Aim:

Regarding the speaking anxiety level of EFL students, the statistics show that the sample mean score is 55.123 with a standard deviation of 8.431, whereas the hypothetical mean is 54. When the t-test is applied to a single independent sample, the computed t-value (1.632) is less than the tabulated value (1.96) at the degree of freedom (149) and significance level (0.05). The findings show that the hypothetical mean score is not significantly different, suggesting an average speaking anxiety level among the sample. See Table (4.2).

Table (4.2) Mean, Standard Deviation, and the T-Value of the speaking anxiety Scale

Variable	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothetical mean	T-Value		Significance (0.05)
					Calculated	Tabulated	
speaking anxiety	١٥٠	٥٥,١٢٣	8.431	٥٤	١,٦٣٢	١,٩٦	Not significant

4.3 Results Related to the Third Aim:

To achieve this aim, the responses from the sample regarding mindfulness and speech anxiety scales are collected and then analyzed using the Pearson correlation coefficient, with the results presented in table (4.3) below.

Table (4.3) The Correlation between the speaking anxiety and Langer Mindfulness

Sample	Correlation Coefficient Value between the speaking anxiety and Langer Mindfulness	T-Value		Significance (0.05)
		Calculated	Tabulated	
150	-٠,٤٧٨	-٦,٧٣٢	1.96	significant

It is evident from the above table that the correlation coefficient between mindfulness and speech anxiety is (-0.478). T-test is used to determine the significance of the relationship. The calculated t-value (-6.732) is higher than the tabulated value of (1.96) at a significance level of (0.05) and degrees of freedom (148), indicating a statistically significant negative relationship between mindfulness and speech anxiety among university students; higher mindfulness is associated with lower speech anxiety.

4.2 Discussion of Results

Students maintain effective communication skills while facing nervousness during question-answering and presentation situations. Students become anxious because they don't have enough opportunities to practice real-world communication, they don't talk outside of class, they worry about making mistakes, and they have doubts about their language abilities. Moderate anxiety improves preparation and performance, but it creates

communication barriers when people do not treat their anxiety. The teaching strategies that support students need to create a relaxed environment and enable group work and deliver positive feedback in order to reduce student anxiety. These results match the earlier findings of Horwitz et al. (1986), who discovered that foreign language anxiety affects most students who study foreign languages. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1991; 1994), students experience speaking anxiety because they must produce speech and undergo language assessment, which results in their moderate anxiety. The current study demonstrates that students attain a high level of mindfulness according to the second research objective, which aims to determine "EFL students' mindfulness level." EFL students show essential language learning qualities through their demonstrated ability to stay focused and their willingness to try new experiences and their capacity to think in different ways. Mindfulness enables students to understand learning methods better while they decrease their habitual reactions and become more active in classroom discussions. The educational setting provides interactive activities that create an atmosphere that boosts student participation and self-reflection, which leads to increased mindfulness. In line with Ellen Langer's socio-cognitive theory of mindfulness, which emphasizes novelty, engagement, and adaptation, mindful learners are better able to recognize language information, evaluate their performance, and adjust their learning tactics. The discovered evidence establishes a connection with Langer (1989), who demonstrates that learners who practice mindfulness show both cognitive flexibility and willingness to accept fresh knowledge. Hayes (2004) discovered that mindfulness practices enable learners to achieve psychological flexibility while reducing their anxiety levels. Brown and Ryan's study (2003) find that mindfulness practice improves three mental functions, which include better attention skills, increased awareness, and emotional well-being. These three improvements lead to better learning results. To find out the relationship between mindfulness and speech anxiety among EFL university students, the study highlights a significant negative relationship between mindfulness and speech anxiety among EFL university students. It confirms that EFL university students' mindfulness practice leads to a decrease in their speech anxiety. Higher mindfulness levels create lower speaking anxiety rates because mindfulness helps students concentrate and reduces their fear of negative assessments while it boosts their speaking confidence. The system helps students control their emotions and decrease stress which results in improved speaking abilities. Mindful learners view mistakes positively, which helps them feel less scared when learning a new language. EFL classrooms need mindfulness practices to create reflective learning environments which support students' speaking development through speaking activities. This result is consistent with Khatami et al. (2025), which demonstrates that higher mindfulness levels corresponded to lower English-speaking anxiety. Similarly, Charoensukmongkol (2019) and Fallah (2017) confirm this inverse relationship, especially regarding speaking anxiety. Additionally, Mousavi and Nakhjavan (2025) find that EFL learners engaging in mindfulness practices experienced notable decreases in speaking anxiety and enhanced speaking performance. Also, Almasoudi & Sarkhosh (2025) indicate that mindfulness techniques positively impacted oral proficiency and reduced anxiety.

4.3 Conclusion

The study investigates how EFL university students' mindfulness levels relate to their speaking anxiety problems. The study reveals that while students possess high mindfulness skills, they experience average speaking anxiety. A significant negative correlation indicates that increased mindfulness reduces speaking anxiety. The research suggests that practicing mindfulness aids language learning by alleviating anxiety. It recommends integrating mindfulness practices in EFL classrooms to improve speaking skills and foster a more positive learning environment.

4.4 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Recommendations for Teachers

1. English language teachers are advised to incorporate mindfulness-based activities in EFL classrooms to mitigate speaking anxiety and boost student participation.
2. A supportive and relaxed classroom atmosphere should be established to enable students to express themselves freely without fear of negative judgment.
3. Group discussions, pair work, and cooperative learning activities should be encouraged to enhance students' confidence in speaking English.
4. Teachers ought to deliver positive and constructive feedback to help students conquer fears and strengthen their speaking abilities.
5. Reflective learning strategies, such as self-assessment and peer-assessment, should be utilized to increase students' awareness and mindfulness.

2. Recommendations for Curriculum Designers

1. Incorporate mindfulness-based learning strategies into English language syllabi.
2. Design speaking activities gradually, starting with simple tasks and progressing to more complex communicative activities to minimize students' anxiety.
3. Include communicative and interactive teaching materials that promote student engagement and alleviate fear of speaking.

3. Recommendations for Educational Institutions

1. Universities should organize workshops and training programs for teachers focused on mindfulness-based teaching strategies.
2. Institutions ought to create opportunities for students to engage in English practice through real communicative situations, such as speaking clubs and presentations.
3. Universities are encouraged to foster classroom environments that enhance psychological comfort and mitigate anxiety.

4.5 suggestions

In light of the study's findings, further research suggestions are proposed.

1. A further study is needed to investigate additional variables associated with mindfulness, such as motivation, self-confidence, willingness to communicate, and academic achievement.
2. A further study is needed to explore the relationship between mindfulness and other language skills such as listening, reading, and writing in addition to speaking.
3. A similar study can be extended to different educational levels, including primary and secondary school students.

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