Foreign Language Learning and the Creation of Anxiety in Students: the Case of First Year Students of English in the University of Bejaia;

LMD[i] System Group

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Abstract

This study aims at mapping out, analyzing and discussing the generating factors of Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) experienced by a group of Algerian students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The investigation was carried out in the English Department at Abderrahmane Mira University of Bejaia. Participants were first year level students inscribed in the Licence/Master/Doctorat system (LMD). The methodological approach is the ethnographic case study based on observation, then arithmetic based on the questionnaire as a tool for data collection. The authors identified factors such as communication apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) and test anxiety as prominent elements in the generation of FLA. Besides, researchers classified many types of anxieties with their diversified causes and effects on not only the individual but on the learning process as well.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى رسم خريطة، تحليل و مناقشة عوامل انتاج قلق تعلم اللغات الاجنبية المعيشة من قبل مجموعـــة مـــن الطلبـــة الجزائريين الذين يتلقون الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. اجري البحث الميداني في قسم اللغة الانجليزية بجامعة عبد الرحمن ميرة – بجاية – حيث كان المشاركون طلبة من السنة الاولى المسجلين في نظام ل م د . المقاربة المنهجية هي دراسة لحالة اثنوغرافية ترتكز على الملاحظة، و مـــن ثـــم دراسة إحصائية على اساس استبيانات تشكل وسيلة لجمع المادة. وجد الباحثون عوامل مثل التواصل، الفهم، الخوف من التقييم الســـلبي، وقلـــق الفحوصات كعناصر هامة في خلق (القلق من تعلم اللغات الاجنبية)، كما صنف الباحثون عدة انواع من الانشغالات مع أسبابها و آثارها لـــيس فقط فيما يتعلق بالفرد بل أيضاً.

Résumé

Cette étude vise à cartographier, analyser et discuter les facteurs de production de l'anxiété langue étrangère (FLA) vécue par un groupe d'étudiants algériens qui apprennent de l'anglais comme langue étrangère (EFL). L'enquête a été réalisée dans le département d'anglais de l'Université Abderrahmane Mira de Bejaia. Les participants étaient des étudiants de niveau première année inscrits dans le système Licence / Master / Doctorat (LMD). L'approche méthodologique est l'étude de cas ethnographique basée sur l'observation, puis l'étude arithmétique sur la base du questionnaire comme outil de collecte de données. Les auteurs ont identifié des facteurs tels que la communication appréhension, la peur de l'évaluation négative (FNE) et l'anxiété de test comme des éléments importants dans la génération de FLA. En outre, les chercheurs classent de nombreux types de soucis avec leurs causes et leurs effets diversifiés sur non seulement l'individu, mais aussi sur le processus d'apprentissage.

Introduction

The affective domain includes many factors: empathy, self-esteem, extroversion, inhibition, anxiety, attitudes, motivation, etc. Some of these may seem at first rather far removed from language learning, but when we consider the pervasive nature of language, any affective factor can conceivably be relevant to Second or Foreign Language Learning (S/FLL). Affective factors seem to be one of foreign language teachers' biggest worries. Further, the personality traits which influence the patterns

of affective factors refer to the learner's perception of himself and, according to H. D. Brown (1973), include, as afore-said, aspects such as: self-esteem, inhibition, extroversion, risk-taking, empathy and anxiety.

Our study puts focus on anxiety as one of the above affective variables. There is no doubt that this construct has been a matter of discussion in the last three decades and this is due to its persistent effects on FLL. Our ultimate objective of this investigation is to find out how foreign language students perceive and live anxiety. If it is the case, questions like how, when and why students feel this anxiety need be answered.

1. Literature Review

A growing body of educationalists, psychologists, researchers and teachers become more interested in the study of anxiety in language classrooms using diverse methods and means though the purpose remains similar (Kleinmann, 1977; Scovel, 1978; Krashen, 1985; Crookal and Oxford, 1991; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; Bailey, 1991, 2000, Nascente, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2003; Brown, 2003). However, the field of research on anxiety has been plagued by problems of not only concept definitions but also by the type of effect anxiety has on FLL. This is due in a way to the fact that the relationship of language anxiety and language performance is not simple. Moreover, researchers do not all agree on the definition anxiety has, and this fact generated many new concepts related to anxiety and, thus, new kinds appeared as a result. Hence, terms like state anxiety and trait anxiety (Spielberger, 1966; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993), debilitating anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Young 1986, Trylong 1987; Price, 1991; Scarcella and Oxford, 1992; Aida, 1994), facilitating anxiety (Chastain, 1975; Scovel, 1978; Ehrman and Oxford, 1995) and others have been distinguished by theorists. In spite of all this, research agrees at least upon the presence of anxiety in foreign language settings.

The definition of anxiety is difficult as it can range from an amalgam of overt behavioural characteristics and can be studied scientifically to introspecting feelings (Casado and Derishiwsky: 2001). Anxiety can be defined as Delmont and a Lucht (1995: 124) stated as a *"painful feeling of waiting"*, *"fear with no object"*, fear of an indefinite danger, a feeling of an indefinable insecurity. This definition may serve us to identify the causes of anxiety which the learner himself is not aware of, but its sources in an English classroom may be identified. Further, Syllamy (1996: 22) described anxiety as an affective state characterised by a feeling of insecurity, a diffused trouble. Moreover, research on anxiety (Spielberger, 1966, 1975; Eysenck, 1992; Nascente, 1998, 2001, March 2002, July 2002, 2003) distinguishes between two kinds of anxieties referring state anxiety to a specific situation like stage fright and trait anxiety to a personality characteristic like a person who is generally nervous and tense (Tsui, 1995: 88.). Eysenck suggested, in this concern, that trait anxiety "*may represent a permanent tendency to react to input from the affective decision mechanism by directing attention towards or away from the location of threat.*" (Eysenck, 1992: 175). Spielberger in one of his studies on anxiety declared that among the numerous variables that have provided mixed and confusing results are trait anxiety and state anxiety. He referred the first to the anemic state of some individuals to become anxious in any situation, and the second to the apprehension experienced at a particular moment in time. For the latter, he gave the example of having to speak in a foreign language in front of classmates and this is, certainly, a factor that interests us in the study of anxiety (Spielberger, 1983). However, we should always bear in mind that there is "*the causal effect of trait and state anxiety on cognitive performance and the dependency of state anxiety on trait anxiety*" (Meijer, 2001: 263). Another distinction is also of great relevance to the teaching and learning of foreign languages. This dichotomy is made up of debilitating anxiety and facilitating anxiety. Not all anxiety has detrimental effects on performance. Perhaps it is for this reason that Kleinmann (1977: 105), and Scovel (1978:

139) have made a distinction between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety (cited in Tsui, 1995: 87; Arnold, 1999: 61; Tarone and Yule 1999: 133; Allwright and Bailey, 1991; 2000:172, Bailey and Nunan 1997: 163, Gardner and MacIntyre 1993: 6, Steinberg et al., 2001). To argue about such a view, we may refer to the components of anxiety, which showed the twofold effects of anxiety on learning. These are worry and emotionally. The former is the cognitive component of anxiety, which has been shown to have a negative impact on performance whereas the latter is the second component, which does not necessarily have negative effects (in Dewaele, 2001). That is, worry conceived of form as the cognitive presentation of anxiety, whereas emotionality is the affective presentation (Meijer and Elshont, 2001: 96). There is a view held by Alpert and Haber (1960), Brown (1987) saying that language anxiety is not always negative i.e. there is sometimes a distinction between helpful anxiety and harmful anxiety. Our research suggests that language learning contexts are especially prone to anxiety arousal and here we agree with most of the workers on the field (Horwitz et al., 1986, MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989; 1991, Price, 1991; MacIntyre, 1995: 90), with estimating that up to half of all language students experience debilitating levels of language anxiety Campbell and Ortiz (1991: 159). Hence, the majority of language students are more likely to experience a level of anxiety most of whom suffer from harmful anxiety.

As concerns these two types of anxiety, Williams (1991: 21) suggested:

> [T]he emotional state of facilitating anxiety may be equivalent to a low anxiety state that diverts the student's attention only slightly from the learning task. On the other hand, debilitating anxiety would represent anxiety state that diverts a substantial amount of the state attention.

However, this effect anxiety has is complex and difficult to measure (Phillips, 1992: 02). Research into language anxiety has been characterised by sometimes conflicting evidence from instruments applied in different languages, measuring different types of anxiety, language skills, level of learning, and teaching methodology (Phillips, 1992: 15).

Now, we need to include anxiety's three constructs: communication apprehension, Fear of Negative Evaluation and test anxiety which are significantly tied to FLA. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) argued for the existence of an anxiety specific to FLL, conceptually related to the three specific varieties we just referred to. They have developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to capture the specific anxiety reaction of a student to a foreign language situation, and which integrates the above stated anxieties. Similarly, Nascente and Monteiro (2003) surveyed a study on a group of Brazilian students learning EFL investigated the three constructs of anxiety and noticed their real existence in the researched students. Horwitz et al. have first proved that each one of the varieties correlated significantly with anxiety in the language classroom and negatively correlated with the expected and obtained grades in the language course. MacIntyre and Gardner's (1991) study employed a separate dimension of language anxiety scales of communication apprehension; social evaluation and test anxiety were not associated with this dimension. Supporting the suggestion that language anxiety is a specific, relatively unique type of apprehension, it was also evidenced by Young (1990) that the most anxiety-provoking tasks in language classrooms involve public communication and/ or evaluation, comprising the three sources of anxiety identified by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Up to the point, this discussion makes it clear that anxiety is a complicated construct whose relation to performance is not simple (Lamberth et al., 1976: 331). In what follows, we would like to argue about this link as perceived by different researchers. That is, this claim is highly agreed upon by many researchers naming Young (1991) who pointed out that the relationship between language anxiety and language performance is not simple. Arnold, and Brown mentioned (In Arnold, 1999: 2) that: "*in the presence of overly negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, stress, anger or depression,*

our optimal learning potential may be compromised". Moreover, Gardner, Day and MacIntyre (1992) stated that language anxiety has been shown to impair the language learning process. Also research indicated that language anxiety has been found to correlate negatively with global measures of achievement such as objective tests and course grades (Gardner, Smythe, Clément, and Gliksman, 1976; Horwitz et al. 1986) as well as measures involving specific processes, such as vocabulary recall and short-term memory capacity (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991c). This is because of the various forms of effects anxiety has on acquisition as mentioned by Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982: 51) that the less anxious the learner is, the better language anxiety proceeds. Always under the same heading of anxiety and academic achievement, Gardner et al. (1976) found a high negative correlation of French classroom anxiety with achievement in eleven of fifteen cases in Canada-wide. In a study done by Muchnick and Wolfe (1982) anxiety correlated significantly with grades in Spanish knowing that the group they investigated was made of American students studying Spanish as a second language. Furthermore, Horwitz et al. (1986) argued for the existence of an anxiety specific to foreign language learning. In this, two studies showed significant correlations between foreign language classroom anxiety as measured by the FLCAS and final grades in language classes. Further, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) employed a paradigm to study anxiety and language learning, and found that the less anxious group showed significantly higher levels of vocabulary learning and recall when compared to the more anxious group. For Shmidt (1990), he hypothesised that in occupying the mental capacities with worry and anxiety about performance and/or social relations in class, valuable opportunities to 'notice' language may be being missed. A supporting view is the one made by Garcia-Soza who wrote that stress and anxiety can impair the area of vocabulary learning which becomes slower. Further, MacIntyre (1995) studied this area extensively and said that anxiety can interfere with the encoding, storage, and retrieval processes of language learning. Hence, he concluded that anxiety can affect not only performance, but also the effort spent on language tasks, especially that learners are more likely low in proficiency in the target language.

It is indeed the link we try to establish between all the generalities we have stated about anxiety, its causes and effects, and foreign language learning that characterizes our detailed literature review. Moreover, when talking about language and classroom, we may find ourselves obliged in a way or another to evoke evaluation and learners' academic achievement. Hence, because language anxiety is the issue under discussion, learners' performance should be related to the four skills of language. This is, then, what we have focused on in this paper after hinting at the two kinds of anxiety: facilitating and debilitating, and their impact on learning a target language. However, our aim is to try to overcome this pedagogical problem i.e. the harmful kind of anxiety. This, naturally, led us to select what seems appropriate in our context through the data we have collected to help both learners and educators cope with anxiety.

2. Methodology

A. The Setting and Subjects

This study was designed to identify the perceptions of first-semester university students towards feelings of anxiety experienced during FLL. We started our work with an ethnographic study based on our direct relationship with the students, direct contact, direct conversations mainly about the LMD system introduced in 2004/2005 when the study was undertaken and the type of instruction they undertake. Then, this helped us construct our questionnaire to gather data about their attitudes, perceptions and opinions.

Our work deals with new learners of EFL in an Algerian university setting. However, this situation is highly specific because though we deal with first year university students, not all university students (our population) are inscribed in the LMD system especially that its application this year is a

piloting phase and only four universities in the whole country are applying it. Again, even if students may exist in other universities, not the same learning conditions, the environment students are in or the circumstances research is held in are to be the same. Thus, our investigation is aimed at establishing the link between anxiety and FLL within a particular group of 359 first year students aged between 18 and 22 years old attending university courses of the English curriculum. Specifically, the objective of this study was to investigate the perceptions of a sample size of 100 students surveyed at Abderrahmane Mira University, Bejaia during the examinations' first week of their first-semester English class.

Dealing with anxiety in FLL drives us towards the study of this construct in relation to a foreign language. In our case, we deal with learning English at university level which is a foreign language in the Algerian educational context. Our problem is stated as:

> *How can the anxiety felt by first year students of English at*
> *university level when learning English as a foreign language*
> *under the new applied system; LMD, be used in a better way?*

Here, we assume right from the beginning that anxiety already exists in our students because they, first, have to do with English in a new manner, and second, they are included in a new system which has never been applied in the Algerian educational system. Any novelty generates anxiety and any doubt about the future is by definition an anxiety-breeding factor. One can, then, imagine the attitudes first year students of English, who attend university courses for the first time, have especially if associated with all the changes encountered exceptionally in 2004/2005. From such a situation, we can derive our hypotheses which we try to prove by the end of this investigation. We have three hypotheses that we state as follows:

1. Foreign language learners feel anxiety before attending their courses at university level and during their foreign language classes as well.

2. Foreign language learners are conscience of their anxiety and relate it to foreign language learning. They mostly feel it when speaking or when being assessed

3. Foreign language learners possess diverse empirical means to reduce this anxiety.

The age group has been selected carefully in this paper. This is because we need young adults who are more likely able to express their ideas and conscious of their attitudes and the anxiety they may feel. This sample is what is appropriate for the present research in order to test the selected hypotheses. Many reasons can be attributed here. First, first year students are young adults who attend university foreign language classrooms. Then, we need to test the students' attitudes towards this feeling of anxiety and young adults are more capable to speak about their feelings compared to children or teenagers. We also prefer working with first years because beginners at university are more likely to experience anxiety compared to other levels. Finally, we should refer to the availability of two trends of first year students in Bejaia during the 2004-2005 academic year. We should, then, conduct our survey on one group only. The group, which is more relevant to our subject matter, is the LMD system group. It is evident that beginner learners of a foreign language experience a degree of anxiety, but being included in a totally new system is more likely to lead to further anxiety.

According to the afore-said hypotheses, anxiety is considered as part of the classroom atmosphere. Thus, we should establish a link between this anxiety and the students' feelings, attitudes and learning strategies. For reminder reasons, our objectives are to describe and determine the learners' impressions about the anxiety experienced in their foreign language classes. In other words, what do students say about their experiences in the foreign language classroom when feeling anxious?

When living an anxiety state, questions like why and when they feel it are required from them. Students are also asked to speak about their strategies and how they manage to reduce anxiety. These aims show clearly that our study relies on the students' own experiences in a very specific situation, with a specific population as well. This makes our work unique for it studies the anxiety experienced by Algerian students at the University of Abderrahmane Mira, Bejaia. Thus, the work may be the pioneer that studies the relationship anxiety has with learning English as a foreign language in the Algerian LMD system.

B. Design

The nature of the subject we are investigating, which is anxiety, leads us first explore the theme thorough ethnographic methods and then complete our observations with the use a quantitative approach through questionnaires. The reason behind is the difficulty we may encounter to observe this complicated psychological construct; thus completing our observations needs the questionnaire here. It is easier for us and more appropriate to use the questionnaire as an instrument for data collection.

We have used the self-completion questionnaire as a means for data collection. This procedure took place in three amphitheatres and one big classroom during the second exam of the first-semester. To say a word about the procedure we followed, we need to present some details about the data collecting process. The administration of the questionnaire was carefully held. All LMD students are 359 in number divided into 14 groups. Five groups contain 27 students each and the remaining number (i.e. 8 groups) include 26 students each.

We have taken randomly 8 students from each group from the overall list of the group. Hence, a total of 112 students have been selected. This method is used for the reason of giving a homogeneous chance to every student. The time of this operation was about 15 minutes per group. We have administered all the questionnaires on Monday, February 28th.

We need to explain now the reason behind the choice of the time we had for this operation. This was the second examination passed by first year LMD system at university level. Our selection is based on the following assumptions:

• The students' first assessment was organized for both groups i.e. LMD system and usual system at once. Thus, the procedure is to be more complicated for it is hard to manage in the presence of the group we do not need to survey. This examination is intended to students inscribed in the LMD system only.

• Students have already experienced at least one test and, thus, they are supposed to live the anxiety generated by assessment and this is one of the constructs of anxiety i.e. Fear of Negative Evaluation. The result is, then, the ability to answer the third section of the questionnaire appropriately.

Students have already ample time during the entire semester for them to make judgments and, thus, be able to answer all the questionnaire items which range from the students' attitudes before attending their classes, during the learning process and once preparing for the examination's period.

C. Results

In our participant observation, and through direct contact with the learners as well as the events that took place during the early academic year, we could notice that 50% of the students of English that were about 700 in number rejected the system. Riots characterized the administration's decision to enrol everybody in the system. After such a rejection, the administration accepted to let the students choose to study in either system. In 2004-2005, the department of English in Bejaia worked

with both systems to respond to the students' needs. Since our work is based on anxiety, we chose the LMD group to associate this phenomenon to first EFL and to the LMD system as well.

In the observation and the discussion we held with LMD students, we could derive a number of elements related to their attitudes towards their teachers and their classes as well. The following tables summarize all of them with the percentage of each option in relation o the direct question we asked in our ethnographic method from 151 views on table 01 and 2.

Table 01: *Students' Proposed Attitudes towards their Teachers*

Neutral attitudes	Positive Attitudes	Negative Attitudes
- Some of them advocated that they have no right to judge	-Most teachers are doing their works and prove their competence (35: 48.61%). -Some teachers have very helpful, kind, respectful, simple and understanding personalities. (23: 31.94%). -Some teachers have the sense of responsibility and ready to help at any time (7: 9.72%) -Some teachers have efficient teaching methods and appropriate behaviours (4: 5.56%) -Some teachers are cooperative and try to help students get rid of their reticence (3: 4.13%).	-Teachers are not understanding, easy-going and show off (12: 17.39%) -They speak quickly when explaining and students cannot attain (8: 11.59%) -Teaching methodology and the teachers' pedagogy is not appropriate (use of handouts without explanation, they do not give students opportunities to perform) (20: 28.99%) -Some teachers are not specialized (7: 10.14%) -Favouring some students at the expense of others (4: 5.8%) -Some teachers do not respond to the students' queries (4: 5.8%) -Some teachers do not seem English-like (11: 15.94%).
	Total: 10: 100	Total: 72: 100	Total: 69: 100%

Table 02: *Students' Learning Experiences in the Classroom*

Neutral Case (52:48.6)	Comfortable Situations (20: 18.69%)	Uncomfortable Situations (35: 32.71%)
No case to mention in either situation.	-When teachers are understanding, simple and kind. -When there is a mutual respect between teacher and his students. -When they are ready to help at any time. -When teachers create a warm atmosphere by their positive characters and, thus, positive behaviour with students -When teachers do their best to make students understand.	-When teachers force students to use mere English (Deprive learners from the first language completely). -When teachers humiliate the student when asking questions. -When teachers do not answer the learners' questions. -When teachers refuse to repeat in case students' requirements necessitate this. -When teachers are the victims of their psychological state (bad mood) and, thus, behave accordingly. -When teachers underestimate the learners' contribution (i.e. see their questions stupid). -When teachers do not take into account the real standard of students.

After having data about our research context, we could confirm that negative attitudes towards teachers and uncomfortable situations are existing parameters. Hence, the risk of elevated anxiety can occur under such circumstances. In what follows, we shall present the results of our questionnaires before drawing conclusions.

After the statistical readings of the obtained results from the students' answers, and after the interpretation of their responses; we have reached rich conclusion which goes even beyond our three hypotheses.

To begin with, we are going to group the questions according to the revealed impressions. That is, as our questionnaire is made up of three sections which are respectively: *English Learning background, Participation in the Classroom, and Homework, Tests and Exams.* The first section shows the participants' attitudes towards their English classes before attending it and during experiencing a university foreign language classroom. In this section, questions 2 and 3 are directly related to whether feelings of anxiety in an English classroom occur in our participants or not when facing it for the first time. Results from item 2 showed that a rate of 53.37% of the subjects felt uncomfortable, stressed, afraid and anxious or afraid because of the noticeable newness (24.82% for the former and 26.95% of the latter). Item 3 asks our respondents to justify their choice in the previous question. Here, 8.66% related feelings of anxiety to language proficiency and to the problem of integrating within the group whereas a higher proportion of 34.64% related it to the novelty factor. Of course, there is a whole chapter aimed at testing the existence of anxiety in students in 8 tables gathering data about the students' attitudes about their English classroom. Our first hypothesis was successfully validated as the results revealed that our researched group experienced anxiety before coming to university and during attending their courses as well.

Our second section deals with the students' participation in the classroom where we can gather data about their feelings of anxiety. This can be possible when students interact in the classroom and be evaluated either by the teacher or their peers. The aim behind asking questions about participation and student-student interaction or student-teacher interaction is to relate the students' perceptions in the learning environment to some reasons that create anxiety in students of a foreign language. Here, we have referred to two constructs of anxiety that are communication apprehension and Fear of Negative Evaluation. The second chapter tries to test our second hypothesis. Hence, we aim at finding out the relationship foreign language anxiety has with speaking and assessment. We have got some evidence about the students' attitudes towards feelings of anxiety to see whether our subjects are conscious of their feelings of anxiety or not. Question 7 showed that 11.29% of the participants avoid participation because of their fear of the others' thoughts and 15.32% of them behave the same way because of their difficulty in the oral skill with a number of 27.42% claiming that the reason is their doubt in their answers as well as in their abilities. All these rates can give a hidden background to the study of anxiety so that they are more likely to be among the causes generating language anxiety. Item 8 is also related to this issue of interaction as 11.01% of the respondents feel foolish and discouraged when some students laugh at them in case of error whereas 13.76% feel worried, inferior and incapable. According to the students' answers, 35.78% of them provided us with other reasons and 26.65% of this number revealed that they felt stressed, annoyed and shy. Question 9 asks the subjects about their feeling when failing to achieve a task. Here, 14.82% of the respondents are extremely anxious, shocked and no longer motivated and this is a serious problem in an educational setting like learning a foreign language because this anxiety is of the debilitating kind. A significant rate is the group of learners that is 47.22% who said that they feel anxious, worried and willing to try again in such a case. Here the anxiety is of the facilitating type. We have also tried to relate anxiety to speaking to prove the second part of the second hypotheses. 11.57% of the respondents opted for the "yes" choice for item 5 where participants claim that they feel troubled when feeling inability to perform orally. This number is completed by the 44.63% of the students who feel troubled but not all the time and not in all cases whereas 28.1% conditioned this negative feeling to the teacher, the asked question, the discussed subject, the situation they are in, the content and their psychological state at that time. Moreover, in trying to combine anxiety and assessment, we have prepared some questions for such a sake. Item 10, 11i and 11ii are cases in point. In item 10, 17.65% of the subjects feel disturbed and inhibited when the teacher tests them orally whereas 36.27% of them feel anxious about the results. This question gives details about both the speaking skill and evaluation. Item 11i asks the participants

about their attitudes towards tests and examinations. Here, the answers were revealing too. That is, 45.19% of the learners feel afraid when thinking of exams and another 24.04% of the subjects feel insecure. When asking students to justify their choices in this question, many options have been classified. The most revealing rate is 32.17% where respondents related their fear to their ignorance of the system putting focus on the LMD system. Some students who feel anxious because of exams conditioned this either to their lack of experience, lack of learning proficiency and their low self-concept (13.04%) or to their fear of negative evaluation, fear of failure and feelings of incapacity. All in all, 64.34% claim to feel anxious though the reason is different. Thus, our second hypothesis has been authenticated. Finally, our third hypothesis has to do with feelings of anxiety and coping strategies. We need here to go through the three sections constituting this last chapter aiming at testing the third hypothesis. In the first section, items 4i and 4ii try to reveal some information about the students' strategies to handle their anxiety during their courses. 29. 41% of the subjects prefer to work individually in the classroom and this is in itself a strategy to avoid negative evaluation by their classmates. Another learning strategy is the learners' tendency to work either in pairs or in small groups where they manage to handle their stress and anxiety. These are 95. 61% of the subjects who opt for this solution to make their learning process develop or their emotional problems managed. To get justifications upon their answers in item 4.ii, six other options have been added. Firstly, 14.81% of the subjects like to work alone because their personality is not sociable, but strong enough to work individually. 13.9% of them refer this preference to work alone because of their need of time and to avoid the students' negative interference. A number of 56.48% of the participants like pair works or in small groups to exchange ideas, 6.48% because foreign language learning needs group works whereas 1.85% claimed that it is necessary to manage stress and anxiety. In the second section, the aim behind is to relate anxiety to speaking, be it a factor taking part at all levels of anxiety. Items 6 and 7 are revealing here. In question 6, 22.86% of the subjects prefer being corrected in private and after the end of the activity when making mistakes. This means that they fear negative evaluation from the students' part. Moreover, 11.29% of the participants fear of the others' thoughts and this is the reason behind avoiding participation. 15. 32% of the respondents avoid participation in the classroom because of their difficulty in the oral skill while 27.42% of them doubt about their answers and in their abilities. Finally, the last section reveals much information about the students' attitudes about their teachers as well as the learning situations. Two concluding open questions are asked in our questionnaire asking students about their personal appreciation of the learning environment and the teachers as well. Generally, we got 47.41% of the answers on item 12 show the positive attitudes the participants have towards their teachers whereas 45.18% opted for the negative view, whilst 7.41% declared their neutral position feeling unable to judge their teachers. Concerning comfortable situations as experienced during their lectures in the first semester, 18.69% of the students provided examples about comfortable experiences whereas 32.71% claimed that they had unpleasant experiences in at least one module. The remaining rate is placed to the neutral position where learners experienced neither of the cases.

Conclusion

Therefore, we have reached the same conclusion many researchers have found about anxious learners. For instance, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a, b) characterize the anxious student as an "individual who perceives the second language as an uncomfortable experience, who withdraws from voluntary participation, who feels social pressures not to make mistakes, and who is less willing to try uncertain or novel linguistic forms" (1991a: 112). This is, indeed what we have reached and the subjects showed that they, sometimes, feel uncomfortable in their foreign language classes and they, then, escape participating in the classroom. Moreover, distrusting themselves, anxious students try to flee from activities to which they see themselves ill prepared for, offering to themselves fewer

opportunities of learning and practising the target language. The process occurs in the opposite direction with more relaxed students. This research has confirmed the fact that there is a reciprocal relationship between FLA and proficiency levels. All what can we say is that FLA has proved once again to be a factor impeding foreign language learners to progress in spite of their ways to manage their stress and anxiety.

As noticed through the discussion we have provided here, it seems evident that language learning classes are places of tension. Then, after reaching convincing evidence, we need to work on the learners' strategies to overcome pedagogical problems and anxiety in special setting.

Through this modest work, we hope that we have been able to add some details to the anxiety's body of knowledge. However, this research remains the starting point of the study of anxiety within the LMD system which brings new ways of teaching and new teaching units never attempted before in the Algerian English learning process. No one can claim the results of this system in at least in the three to eight years of application neither at the level of FLL nor at the level of the psychological state of the learners. It is up to future research projects to find out future results of this system upon both the students and their learning proficiency.

Questions remain regarding the influence of language anxiety on oral exam performance, how it interacts with other personality variables such as learning styles, motivation, and personality types, and what techniques are effective in controlling it. Moreover, students revealed diversified attitudes towards their teachers and the classroom environment as well. Therefore, we can add this question to the range of pedagogical problems and which need be researched for is:

> *Is the existing tension in our EFL classes and the stress students live is in part due to the teachers, to the classroom environment? Are teachers aware of this fact and are they trying to help their students get rid of their reticence?*

In sum, our main attention is focused on the participants' beliefs, experiences, and feelings in order to generate an enlightening narration of the participants' perspectives of FLA. Additionally, the strategies learners use to handle this anxiety may be of paramount importance for future research as well as for the teaching methodologies instructors use. Stating the students' attitudes towards ELT and towards the LMD system particularly might help us overcome the existing problems and try to avoid future ones.

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Appendix

The Questionnaire Designed for Students (the English Vesion)

Dear Students:

We would be highly honoured if you could answer sincerely and frankly the following questions behind which we aim at getting some information about your feelings as new learners of English as a foreign language, when facing the classroom for the first time. In addition, suggestions from your personal experiences on when, why and how these emotions of worry are lived, if any, are welcome for your viewpoint may be very useful to understand better foreign language learners' positions and attitudes.

Please, put a tick   in the appropriate box,   or give a full   answer whenever necessary.

√

I. English Learning Background

1. Do you like to study English as a foreign language?

   a. Yes

   b. No

2. Before you study it at university level, did you think that…

   a. learning English would be easier?

   b. learning English would be more difficult?

3. **i.** How did you feel when you faced the English classroom for the first time? (*You can stick more than one option).*

   a. Uncomfortable, stressed, afraid and anxious

   b. Afraid because of the noticeable newness

   c. Relaxed

   d. More optimistic and more self-confident

   ii. Say why for each answer you give?

………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. **i.** In class, do you like learning…?

   a. individually

   b. in pairs

   c. in small groups

ii. Justify your answer:

………………………………………………………………………………………………

B. Participation in the Classroom

5. Would you be troubled by the feeling of incapability, if at all, if you had to answer orally?

   a. Yes

   b. No

   c. Sometimes

   d. Others……………………………………………

6. When you speak and in case of error, do you want to be corrected…..

   a. immediately, in front of everyone?

    b. later, at the end of the activity or the course, in front of everyone?

    c. later, in private?

    d. not to be corrected at all

7. Do you avoid, if at all, participation in the classroom because of:

    a. Your difficulty in the oral skill?

    b. Your doubt about your answers as well as your abilities?

    c. Your carelessness and lack of interest?

    d. your fear of the others' thoughts?

8. In case some students laugh at you when you make mistakes, do you feel:

    a. Foolish, discouraged?

    b. Worried, inferior, incapable?

    c. Indifferent, careless?

    d. Others……………………………………………………

C. Homework, Tests and Exams

9. How do you feel if you fail in achieving a task?

    a. Anxious, worried and willing to try again?

    b. Look yourself down (not worthy)?

    c. Extremely anxious, shocked and no longer motivated?

    d. Optimistic and willing to take risks again?

10. When the teacher tests you orally, do you feel:

    a. Disturbed and inhibited?

    b. Anxious about the results?

    c. Optimistic and sure about your abilities?

11. **i.** When you think of tests and examinations, do you feel:

    a. Afraid, anxious and worried?

    b. Insecure?

    c. Secure and sure?

  ii. Say when ? And why?

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[i] LMD : Licence, Master, Doctorat