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An Investigation into Spanish EFL Learners' Anxiety

Um estudo da ansiedade em estudantes espanhóis de EFL

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ABSTRACT: This research article reports the results of a study designed to measure and analyse Spanish students' perceived anxiety when learning and using EFL inside the classroom. This article first includes a review of the literature on foreign language anxiety. Then it describes the participants of the investigation and the research methodology procedures. This is followed by the presentation and discussion of the results and, finally, the conclusions derived from this study. The resulting data revealed interesting information about the anxiety levels present among Spanish EFL learners. While relatively high levels of speaking anxiety have been identified, somewhat lower levels of listening anxiety associated with error correction, by contrast, have also been found. More specifically, the results suggested that the level of listening anxiety seems to slightly increase when error correction is somehow involved in the process.

KEYWORDS: differential anxiety reactions; language learning.

RESUMO: Este trabalho relata os resultados de um estudo destinado a medir e analisar a ansiedade observada por estudantes espanhóis na aprendizagem e no uso de EFL em sala de aula. Este artigo inclui, primeiramente, um apanhado da literatura sobre ansiedade no aprendizado de língua estrangeira. Em seguida, descreve os participantes e os procedimentos metodológicos da pesquisa. Na sequência, expõe a apresentação e a discussão dos resultados e, finalmente, as conclusões derivadas deste estudo. Os dados resultantes revelaram informações interessantes sobre os níveis de ansiedade presentes entre alunos espanhóis de EFL. Embora níveis relativamente elevados de ansiedade na fala tenham sido identificados, níveis ligeiramente mais baixos de ansiedade na escuta associada com correção de erro, por outro lado, também foram encontrados. Mais especificamente, os resultados sugeriram que o nível de ansiedade na escuta parece aumentar ligeiramente quando a correção de erros é de alguma forma envolvida no processo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: reações de ansiedade diversas; aprendizagem de línguas.

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Review of Literature

The humanistic view of education, and more specifically, the student-centered approach to language teaching, in which students' affective needs are seriously taken into account, seem to play an essential role in emphasising the importance of learner individuality or rather learner individual differences (SKEHAN, 1989; OXFORD; EHRMAN, 1993; OTTÓ, 1998; ROBINSON, 2001, 2002; COOPER, 2002; DÖRNYEI; SKEHAN, 2003; ELLIS, 2004; DÖRNYEI, 2005, 2006). SLA as a domain of research which contributes to the teaching and learning of foreign languages (KRAMSCH, 2000; SEIDLHOFER, 2003) has recently highlighted the importance of learner individuality so as to better understand how each student actually approaches classroom situations and experiences. Additionally, the learner-centred approach to language teaching takes *affect* into account in many ways. As Arnold (1999) reminds us, a broad understanding of affect is essential to guide and improve language teaching and learning.

Over the last decades the role of emotional aspects associated with language teaching and learning has been extensively debated (STEVICK, 1990; ARNOLD, 1999; DÖRNYEI, 2001). Among the affective variables which significantly influence SLA, the multi-faceted construct called *Foreign Language Anxiety* (henceforth, FLA) appears as one of the most outstanding individual learner differences variable that can predict or rather explain differential success in L2 learning. Since Horwitz *et al.*'s pioneering study in 1986 which generated considerable research interests in the nature of FLCA, a multitude of research studies into the subject has been conducted (MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1994a, 1994b; MACINTYRE, 1995, 1999, 2002; MACINTYRE *et al.*, 1997; SAITO *et al.*, 1999; OXFORD, 1999; KITANO, 2001; HORWITZ, 2001; DÖRNYEI, 2005; ELKHAFIFI, 2005; LIU, 2006, 2007, 2009; LIU; JACKSON, 2008; DEWAELE *et al.*, 2008; CHANG, 2008; ELLIS, 2008; YAN *et al.*, 2008; KOUL *et al.*, 2009; LIM, 2009).

FLA is generally believed to be the affective factor with the greatest potential to negatively affect the learning process (HORWITZ, 2001). Negative emotions such as anxiety which involves the "worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 27) may seriously affect our learning potential or abilities. As a matter of fact, this unfavourable emotional reaction causes tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with foreign language

learning (HORWITZ; YOUNG, 1991). However, anxiety also needs to be viewed as a normal human feeling because all human beings experience some kind of anxiety in particular contexts and situations because “even in optimum conditions, students can experience destructive forms of anxiety” (REID, 1999, p. 297).

L2-related anxiety or FLA is generally viewed as a specific-situation anxiety experienced by non-native speakers when learning and using a second or foreign language in the classroom (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986; MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1994a, 1994b; MACINTYRE, 1995; HORWITZ, 2001). Oral production in L2 is then viewed as one of the greatest sources of anxiety in the classroom context (HORWITZ, 2001; GREGERSEN; HORWITZ, 2002; HAUCK; HURD, 2005; LIU, 2009). As a matter of fact, FLA has been almost entirely associated with the oral aspects of language use (AIDA, 1994; CHENG *et al.*, 1999; HORWITZ, 2001). Specifically, Gardner & MacIntyre (1993, p. 184) viewed language anxiety as “the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient”. Generally speaking, anxiety negatively affects L2 oral performance which is mainly viewed as a potentially stressful situation or rather an anxiety-provoking situation for some students (YOUNG, 1991; HORWITZ, 2001; KRASHEN, 2003; MATSUDA; GOBEL, 2004; SHEEN, 2008). Although oral performance is assumed to be the most anxiety-provoking situation (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986; AIDA, 1994; CHENG *et al.*, 1999; HORWITZ, 2001; VON WÖRDE, 2003) because of students’ fears of public speaking and embarrassment, the fact is that oral production activities need to be constantly encouraged in the classroom for the development of oral communication skills.

Throughout the last decades the issue of FLA and its negative effect or impact on language learning has been extensively debated (for reviews, see MACINTYRE, 1999; OXFORD, 1999; YOUNG, 1999; HORWITZ, 2001). The vast majority of empirical studies on FLA have offered evidence and supported the existence of a significant causal relationship or negative correlation between language anxiety and learning achievement (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986; MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1994a, 1994b; AIDA, 1994; MACINTYRE, 1995; SAITO; SAMIMY, 1996; MACINTYRE, 1999, 2002; HORWITZ, 2001; ELLIS, 2008). In fact, this emotional factor constitutes a serious obstacle or mental block against L2 learning which negatively interferes and influences L2 learning, culminating thus in academic underachievement (HORWITZ, 2001; DÖRNYEI, 2005).

That is, FLA is then viewed as a strong indicator of academic achievement. Although this correlational relationship between language anxiety and learning achievement – the higher the anxiety, the lower the performance – is already established in research literature (PHILLIPS, 1992; AIDA, 1994; SAITO *et al.*, 1999; CHENG *et al.*, 1999; HORWITZ, 2001), the fact is that the direction of such a relationship is certainly unknown yet. Specifically, Horwitz (2001, p. 121) reminds us that the issue of how anxiety exactly affects language learning is still unresolved: “It is often difficult to determine if anxiety has actually interfered with learning, thus influencing achievement levels [...] the issue is unresolved”. The fact is that researchers have been unable to explain in detail how anxiety affects language learning.

As regards the *beneficial/facilitating vs. inhibitory/debilitating anxiety* distinction, the fact is that most research studies have demonstrated that FLA can have a negative effect on language learning (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986; YOUNG, 1991; MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1994a; MACINTYRE, 1995; CHENG *et al.*, 1999; OXFORD, 1999; HORWITZ, 2001), although several researchers believed, in contrast, that FLA might have a beneficial effect on learning thus considering anxiety as facilitative rather than debilitating for second language development (CHASTAIN, 1975; SCOVEL, 1978; EYSENCK, 1979; BAILEY, 1995; SPIELMAN; RADNOFSKY, 2001). That is, it was believed that certain doses of anxiety do not necessarily have detrimental effects and, thus, can be positively associated with L2 achievement. Although most research studies have mainly concentrated on debilitating anxiety, it has also been suggested that FLA can have contradictory effects on language learning: “anxiety does not necessarily inhibit performance but in some cases can actually promote it” (DÖRNYEI, 2005, p. 198).

Several research studies have suggested certain teaching strategies to reduce the debilitating effects of learner anxiety or rather to create a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere (CAMPBELL; ORTIZ, 1991; CROOKALL; OXFORD, 1991; YOUNG, 1991, 1999; TSIPLAKIDES; KERAMIDA, 2009; LIZUKA, 2010). The fact is that most research studies have concluded with similar suggestions and several pedagogical implications have been drawn. Obviously, FLA calls for the attention of language teachers (HORWITZ, 2001) who play a fundamental role in the anxiety experienced by learners inside the classroom. As a matter of fact, L2 teachers need to appropriately face and handle this educational problem within the limits of their classrooms. The fact is that L2 teachers need to make a greater effort to make classroom

interventions aimed at helping anxious learners overcome or at least keep their anxiety levels to a minimum (AIDA, 1994) by making language learning interesting and fun, less stressful for them. In this sense, it needs to be made clear that what is effective for an anxious student may not necessarily be effective for another. More friendly, relaxing and supportive learning environments need to constantly be encouraged or created in the classroom context so as to relieve the tension derived from language anxiety (VON WÖRDE, 2003; TURULA, 2004). More positive reinforcement through positive comments and words of encouragement has also been suggested to be highly helpful (HORWITZ, 2001). In short, creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere should be one of the main responsibilities of L2 teachers. In this sense, Arnold & Brown (1999) remind us that an emotionally safe classroom atmosphere is essential to avoid the development of threatening or anxiety-provoking situations. Accordingly, pleasurable learning experiences need to constantly be assured in the classroom context.

Despite being the most highly investigated individual difference in SLA research, FLA can also be regarded as the most misunderstood affective variable of all (SCOVEL, 2001) because as Dörnyei (2005) reminds us language anxiety – the subject of this review – is seen as a complex psychological construct with several different facets. FLA is generally viewed as a serious, complex and multidimensional problem that negatively affects oral communication skills and learning in general (ONWUEGBUZIE *et al.*, 1999). In this sense, research on FLA is fundamental to our understanding of how learners actually approach second language learning.

Research Question

As suggested above, understanding FLA is essential to gain an insight into the learners' affective domain. Although most research studies focused on university students in a second/foreign language setting (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986; HORWITZ; YOUNG, 1991; MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1994a; AIDA, 1994; KITANO, 2001; LIU, 2006; LIU; JACKSON, 2008), the relationship between anxiety and achievement in younger learners, as Horwitz (2001) pointed out, still remains relatively unexplored. Accordingly, the current study aims to address this important gap in the research literature by measuring the anxiety levels experienced and perceived by Spanish secondary school students. Attention was mainly focused on learners' beliefs, experiences and feelings about themselves learning English as a second/foreign language.

It needs to be made clear that this research study is not to establish a link between language anxiety and performance, because this is already well established in the literature. Specifically, the following research question was formulated to guide the present study:

- What are the anxiety levels experienced and perceived by Spanish EFL students?

Research Methodology

Participants

The present research study has been carried out in schools located in Extremadura, an autonomous region of western Spain, on the border with Portugal, where English represents only one compulsory subject in school curricula. It needs to be mentioned that English is taught as a foreign language from the first year of schooling in primary schools for three hours per week. In lower and in most upper secondary schools, English is taught for at least four hours per week.

A total of 217 Spanish secondary school students participated in the investigation voluntarily. We collected data from four high schools which were randomly selected, particularly two classes from each school. After receiving 217 questionnaires, the researcher discarded 9 invalid questionnaires which were either incomplete or failed to follow the instructions of the questionnaire. Accordingly, the valid response rate was 95,8% and a total of 208 questionnaires were identified as valid data for statistical analysis in the present study. A sample of 208 Spanish secondary school learners was eventually employed. The group of subjects was constituted by 86 (41.3%) males and 122 (58,7%) females students. Of the 208 students 101 (48.5%) were in the first year of Bachillerato and 107 (51.5%) were in the second year. Their average age was 17, ranging from sixteen to nineteen. Additionally, the participants in the survey had studied English for 14 years on average. The average classroom level was intermediate. In addition, the vast majority of these learners (96%) had never visited an English-speaking country, and only a small minority (4%) had spent some time (a few weeks) in either Great Britain or the USA.

Instrument and Data Collection Procedure

Generally speaking, the measurement of affective variables in L2 learning involves an enormous complexity (GARDNER; MACINTYRE, 1993; BROWN, 1994; BAILEY, 1995). In this sense, quantitative research methods have been traditionally employed when researching language anxiety. For the present research study data have been collected through a closed questionnaire served as a research instrument and designed to measure language anxiety perceived by Spanish learners when learning and using EFL inside the classroom. Participants were given the best-known and most widely used questionnaire FLCAS – Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale – from Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986), based on the measurement of L2-related anxiety, which provides us with quantitative data from Spanish EFL learners. The 33-item questionnaire used has a Likert-scale format with five possible responses, ranging from (1) Strongly agree to (5) Strongly disagree. It needs to be made clear that the items or statements presented in FLCAS are reflective or indicative of (1) communication apprehension, (2) test-anxiety, and (3) fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom (HORWITZ *et al.*, 1986). Given that the FLA construct is, to a large extent, moulded around the speaking component, communication apprehension or speech anxiety then appears as the most outstanding or influential component of the FLA construct (AIDA, 1994; PÉREZ-PAREDES; MARTÍNEZ-SÁNCHEZ, 2000). Possibly the three aforementioned classical FLA components are “mere analogies and perhaps FLA is something else or something different” (PÉREZ-PAREDES; MARTÍNEZ-SÁNCHEZ, 2000, p. 347).

FLCAS can be actually used by either researchers interested in the topic of language anxiety or by reflective teachers interested in what is actually happening in their classrooms. It should be said that this scale has been extensively used in many research studies on FLA (MACINTYRE; GARDNER, 1989; AIDA, 1994; SPARKS; GANSCHOW, 1996) and has been translated into several languages including Spanish and Chinese. The questionnaire was distributed to the students in Spanish, using thus the Spanish version of the FLCAS (PÉREZ-PAREDES; MARTÍNEZ-SÁNCHEZ, 2000; see appendix) which is faithful to the original English research instrument. Since the FLCAS was originally written in American English and after presuming that the misunderstanding of the statements could pose serious problems, special care is assumed to have been taken in the translation process in order to preserve the original meaning of the English items to the maximum.

The questionnaire used was administered by the researcher himself, who explained in Spanish through clear and simple instructions the overall purpose and potential usefulness of the survey, made it clear to the participants that the questionnaire was not a test, and that their responses would be used for research purposes only. Additionally, it needs to be made clear that the real aim of the study was not openly presented to the participants so that students' responses could not be biased by the researcher's goals. In fact, the research being conducted was actually presented as a study on the general topic of *foreign language anxiety*. After reminding our group of informants of the importance of giving honest answers, they were assured of the confidentiality of the data. In this sense, Oppenheim (1992) reminds us of the general belief that anonymous questionnaires encourage the informants to be more honest and sincere when answering the statements which must be counterbalanced by the possibility that people lose interest in the research study because of its impersonality.

Subjects were asked to think of their previous English learning experiences and to describe their feelings. In fact, participants responded to statements regarding their reactions to L2 classroom experiences. They were requested not to consult their classmates while working with the questionnaire in order to ensure that the answers actually reflected each student's own opinions and feelings. Subjects completed the questionnaire during their scheduled language class in March 2012, at the end of the second term of the academic year. The questionnaires were completed anonymously in class and handed back on completion.

Analysis and Discussion of Results

Based on the result of descriptive statistics, the resulting data revealed interesting information data about the anxiety levels experienced and perceived by the sample of population. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were only utilized for descriptive statistics to answer the aforementioned research question. Data were analysed by quantifying the number of respondents who agreed or disagreed to different degrees with the different aspects indicated by each statement or item contained in the questionnaire. Although there are no precise guidelines as to the analysis of the responses given to the FLCAS, literature suggests adding the points of the 33 item five-point Likert scale by giving a value of 1 to the response "strongly agree", and a value of 5 to "strongly disagree". In the case of negatively phrased statements, the values would be reversed (2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 18, 22, 28 & 32). The calculated averages of participants' responses to all FLCAS items are reported in TAB. 1.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics of FLCAS Measure

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM ANXIETY						
	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Statement 1	17,02%	41,49%	14,89%	21,28%	5,32%	100,00%
Statement 2	13,83%	20,21%	13,30%	39,89%	12,77%	100,00%
Statement 3	9,57%	19,68%	17,55%	29,79%	23,40%	100,00%
Statement 4	10,64%	26,06%	17,55%	28,19%	17,55%	100,00%
Statement 5	21,28%	28,72%	24,47%	12,77%	12,77%	100,00%
Statement 6	27,66%	32,98%	17,55%	14,89%	6,91%	100,00%
Statement 7	20,21%	26,06%	27,13%	20,21%	6,38%	100,00%
Statement 8	9,57%	31,91%	22,34%	27,13%	9,04%	100,00%
Statement 9	20,21%	35,11%	15,43%	19,15%	10,11%	100,00%
Statement 10	60,11%	26,06%	5,85%	4,79%	3,19%	100,00%
Statement 11	18,09%	21,28%	43,62%	10,11%	6,91%	100,00%
Statement 12	17,02%	30,32%	15,43%	23,94%	13,30%	100,00%
Statement 13	17,55%	19,68%	17,55%	27,13%	18,09%	100,00%
Statement 14	19,68%	21,28%	23,40%	23,40%	12,23%	100,00%
Statement 15	15,43%	39,36%	22,34%	11,17%	11,70%	100,00%
Statement 16	8,51%	19,15%	20,21%	26,60%	25,53%	100,00%
Statement 17	20,74%	25,00%	20,21%	25,00%	9,04%	100,00%
Statement 18	5,85%	22,87%	29,79%	30,85%	10,64%	100,00%
Statement 19	7,45%	16,49%	25,00%	35,11%	15,96%	100,00%
Statement 20	11,70%	23,94%	20,21%	26,06%	18,09%	100,00%
Statement 21	4,79%	10,11%	17,02%	36,70%	31,38%	100,00%
Statement 22	15,43%	26,06%	27,13%	23,94%	7,45%	100,00%
Statement 23	20,21%	29,26%	22,87%	17,55%	10,11%	100,00%
Statement 24	13,83%	20,21%	18,09%	33,51%	14,36%	100,00%
Statement 25	10,11%	16,49%	20,21%	36,17%	17,02%	100,00%
Statement 26	15,96%	15,96%	18,62%	25,00%	24,47%	100,00%
Statement 27	9,04%	27,13%	19,68%	32,98%	11,17%	100,00%
Statement 28	18,62%	30,32%	29,79%	18,09%	3,19%	100,00%
Statement 29	10,11%	30,85%	23,40%	26,06%	9,57%	100,00%
Statement 30	17,02%	26,06%	18,62%	23,40%	14,89%	100,00%
Statement 31	9,57%	19,68%	11,17%	31,91%	27,66%	100,00%
Statement 32	15,96%	20,21%	32,45%	20,74%	10,64%	100,00%
Statement 33	13,30%	42,02%	23,40%	15,43%	5,85%	100,00%

Note: Scores are based on a 1 to 5 scale in which 1 represents “strongly agree” and 5 represents “strongly disagree”.

TAB. 1 reports the data obtained from learners’ responses with percentages of students selecting each alternative. Although the data shown in

TAB. 1 reveal slightly different percentages of responses, the data obtained are consistent enough to draw overall conclusions. After the data-gathering process, the next step was to synthesise and analyse the results.

As regards students' communication apprehension, and more specifically, speaking anxiety, we appreciated high levels of speaking anxiety in different statements. It needs to be mentioned that communication apprehension contains a group of items or statements indicating speech anxiety, shyness and bodily reactions derived from speaking in the foreign language. Specifically, the evidence of students' lack of self-confidence when speaking the foreign language is mainly revealed by the fact that approximately 58,51% of the respondents recognised that they never felt quite sure of themselves when they were speaking in their foreign language classes (statement 1), albeit only 28,72% of the participants felt confident when they spoke in foreign language class (statement 18). Additionally, similar percentages can be found in statements 9 & 33 because more than half of the participants (55,32%) got nervous when they had to speak without preparation in language class (statement 9) or when the language teacher asked questions which they had not prepared in advance (statement 33). Besides, nearly 43,08% of the respondents felt overwhelmed by the number of rules they had to learn to speak a foreign language (statement 30).

With respect to listening anxiety reactions, relatively somewhat lower levels of listening anxiety have been found because, specifically 36,70% and 40,96%, respectively, of the participants felt nervous when they did not understand what the teacher said in the foreign language (statements 4 and 29). Quite in consonance with students' level of worry about making mistakes in language class (52,66%, statement 2), however, it has been found that the level of listening anxiety slightly increased when error correction was involved in the process, since 54,79% of the respondents recognised that they got upset when they did not understand what the teacher was correcting (statement 15). It needs to be mentioned that all these statements (4, 15 and 29) mainly concern the students' fear of not understanding their teacher.

As regards students' test anxiety, the resulting data revealed that while the vast majority of the respondents (86,17%) were worried about the consequences of failing the subject (statement 10), only 41,48% said that they usually felt at ease during tests in language classes (statement 8). As for the anxiety experiences felt inside the classroom, nearly half of the participants (47,34%) recognised that in class they could get so nervous that they forgot

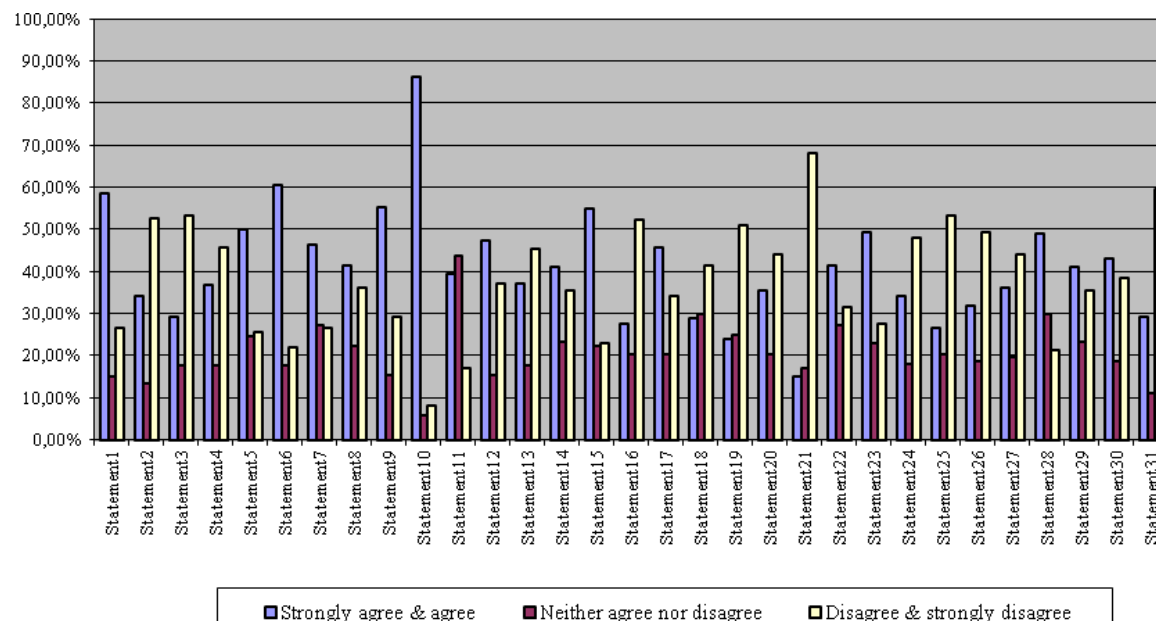


FIGURE 1- Graphical representation of Spanish EFL students' perceived anxiety.

things they actually knew (statement 12) while nearly two thirds of the subjects (60,64%) found themselves thinking about things that had nothing to do with the course or rather engaged in thoughts irrelevant to the course (statement 6). However, nearly half of the participants (48,94%) acknowledged feeling very sure and relaxed when they were going to the English class (statement 28). While about 45,74% of the respondents would often skip English classes because they did not feel like going to the language class (statement 17), half of the participants (50%) surprisingly recognised, in contrast, that they would not mind taking more foreign language classes (statement 5). Finally, it needs to be made clear that what items or statements 5, 6, 17 & 22 appear to have in common is that they mainly measure anxiety only in an indirect way and, accordingly, are not very informative of learners' language anxiety. In fact, all these statements mainly refer to learners' attitudes to English classes.

Concerning students' fear of negative evaluation, an important factor involved was students' fear of making mistakes because more than half of the subjects (52,66%) showed their disagreement with the statement 2, that is, they actually worried about making mistakes in the language class. Additionally, nearly half of the respondents (49,47%) had a permanent feeling that the other students spoke the foreign language better than they did (statement 23) while a similar percentage of the students, specifically 46,27%, believed that the other students were better at languages than they were (statement 7). The fact is that both statements 7 & 23 are somehow related to the students' fear of doing worse than their classmates.

In short, the top five sources of foreign language classroom anxiety among the students surveyed in this study are shown in TAB. 2.

TABLE 2
Top five sources of anxiety

Ranking	FLCAS Statements
1	10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
2	6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
3	1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
4	9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
5	33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

As can be seen from the data presented in TAB. 1 and illustrated in FIG. 1, several statements generated high levels of agreement (“strongly agree“ and “agree”). As reported in TAB. 2, we can see that the statement which obtained the highest percentage is statement 10 which concerns students’ test anxiety, followed by statement 6 which also refers to test anxiety, albeit it appears to measure this in an indirect way, being not very informative of learners’ anxiety when asking about learners’ inclinations to engage in thoughts irrelevant to the course. In fact, statement 6 is somehow related to students’ attitudes to English classes. The next highest average was obtained from statement 1 which assesses students’ communication apprehension, and more specifically, their lack of communicative confidence. Similarly, statement 9, which also received a relatively high level of agreement, is directly related to communication apprehension, and more specifically, speaking anxiety. Finally, statement 33 mainly makes reference to students’ fear of negative evaluation. What is then true is that nearly all these statements somehow reflect anticipated anxious behaviour.

Conclusions

The main goal of the present research study is to contribute to the research literature on language anxiety by investigating Spanish EFL learners’ anxiety levels perceived and experienced inside the classroom. After briefly analysing those statements or items from the FLCAS which generated high levels of agreement and/or disagreement, the resulting data revealed interesting information about the anxiety levels present among Spanish EFL learners. Results from several statements indicated that there was a relatively high level of concern over foreign language lessons in general, both outside and inside the classroom, and more particularly, test anxiety, as suggested by statement 10. While relatively high levels of communication apprehension and, more specifically, speaking anxiety have been identified, somewhat lower levels of listening anxiety associated with error correction, by contrast, have also been found. More specifically, the results suggested that the level of listening anxiety seems to slightly increase when error correction is somehow involved in the process.

The results reported in the present research study somehow exceed those of Horwitz *et al.*’s study, showing some outstanding differences of even over 40%: statement 6, concerning learners’ inclinations to engage in thoughts irrelevant to the course, was endorsed by 60,64% in our study against 26%

in Horwitz *et al.*; statement 10, regarding students' test anxiety, was endorsed by 86,17% in our study against 42% in Horwitz *et al.*; statement 13, which referred to students' reticence to participate voluntarily, was endorsed by 37,23% in our study against 9% in Horwitz *et al.*; statement 25, concerning the worry about getting left behind in the language class, was endorsed by 26,60% in our study against 59% in Horwitz *et al.*

The existence of relatively high levels of anxiety among the subjects surveyed who had accumulated a long experience as learners of EFL led us to conclude that FLA is not necessarily characteristic or exclusive to beginners because experienced learners also suffer it. Besides, the findings of this study somehow support or corroborate the conclusions of other research studies in suggesting that anxiety negatively affects the second language learning experiences in different ways and that alleviating, at least to an extent, its effects is thus essential. Accordingly, the findings of the present study were generally consistent with previous research efforts.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations in the research design make it difficult to make overall generalizations about the potential implications of this research. Accordingly, the present research study must be interpreted in the light of its limitations. The results obtained should be interpreted with caution for several reasons. Regarding the population sample, it is almost impossible to draw any overall conclusions for TEFL, because the number of participants was relatively small to make any attempt at generalising results to other classroom contexts. Because of the limited size of the population sample (n=208), research findings call for replication on larger populations and in other classroom contexts. Despite the fact that this study was conducted in a classroom setting which gives it high ecological validity, our results should be taken as indicative of the need for further research on this issue.

Although FLA construct has long been recognised, it is far from being completely understood and thus requires further clarification. Further research is then needed to address several unresolved issues concerning the FLA construct (DÖRNYEI, 2005). What is true is that FLA still remains theoretically unexplored or, at least, an overall consensus of opinion as to its nature has not yet reached (HORWITZ, 2001) because we still have no clear theoretical understanding of the circumstances in which certain levels of language anxiety can be helpful and facilitating (OXFORD, 1999). Clearly,

more research into the components of FLA also needs to be done to make clear its ultimate nature. To what extent anxiety negatively affects language learning is still a question to be answered. More specifically, the issue of understanding the relationship between anxiety and achievement is still unresolved (HORWITZ, 2001) because the effects of FLA on language learning/use are varied and numerous, and not completely understood. As Phillips (1992) stated, its influence is highly complex and difficult to measure.

These days new trends in FLA research attempt to identify particular aspects of L2 teaching and learning which provoke anxiety. As a matter of fact, further studies should focus on the relationship between language anxiety and some other variables such as language aptitude, input or L2 exposure, teaching methodology and so on. Specifically, promising research directions would be, among others, to determine if anxiety levels decrease as exposure to the second language increases. On the other hand, the great variability in learners' anxiety reactions also deserves attention. In this sense, it would be interesting to collect additional data of individual participants. More specifically, little attention has been given to the differences between the levels of FLA of one person studying two foreign languages simultaneously (DEWAELE, 2002; DEWAELE *et al.*, 2008). Obviously, this issue also calls for further investigation. Similarly, further investigations in a variety of settings with younger learners who have different backgrounds are needed to better understand its real impact on L2 learning. Further research on what kind of classroom environment would alleviate learners' anxiety would then be highly helpful. Likewise, specific skills anxieties should be carefully analysed.

Although language anxiety has been mainly investigated from the students' perspective, anxiety research from other viewpoints, such as those of teachers, still remains unexplored. Language anxiety from the teacher's perspective, especially as to how they perceive and deal with student anxiety in their actual teaching practices, is considered as an attempt to provide some alternative insights into the phenomenon of language anxiety from a different perspective.

Prospective studies could explore all these issues by utilizing additional research methods such as longitudinal studies which could perhaps provide more conclusive results in the future. In short, the complex and multi-dimensional nature of language anxiety still requires further investigation from a variety of perspectives or approaches. Both cognitive and affective components of anxiety need further research.

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**APPENDIX: TRANSLATED VERSION OF THE SURVEY
INSTRUMENT
FLCAS Adaptation (Pérez-Paredes y Martínez-Sánchez, 2000)**

Instrucciones: Las siguientes afirmaciones se refieren a diversas situaciones frecuentes en el aprendizaje de un idioma. Su tarea consiste en valorar su grado de acuerdo o desacuerdo con cada una de las siguientes afirmaciones, utilizando para ello la siguiente escala.

Nombre: _____ Apellidos: _____

Edad: _____ Sexo: _____ Colegio: _____ Curso: _____

No es preciso, si no lo desea, que ponga su nombre, pero sí su edad y sexo.
GRACIAS.

1	2	3	4	5
Estoy totalmente de acuerdo	Estoy de acuerdo	No sé	No estoy de acuerdo	Estoy totalmente en desacuerdo

1. Nunca estoy completamente seguro de mí mismo cuando hablo en la clase de idioma extranjero.
2. No me preocupa cometer errores en clase.
3. Tiemblo cuando sé que me van a preguntar en clase.
4. Me asusta no entender lo que el profesor está diciendo en idioma extranjero.
5. No me molestaría en absoluto asistir a más clases de idioma extranjero.
6. Durante la clase, me doy cuenta que pienso en cosas que no tienen nada que ver con la clase.
7. Pienso que a los otros compañeros se les dan mejor los idiomas que a mí.
8. Normalmente estoy a gusto cuando hago exámenes en clase.
9. Me pongo muy nervioso cuando tengo que hablar en clase y no me he preparado bien.
10. Me preocupa las consecuencias que pueda traer el suspender.
11. No entiendo por qué alguna gente se siente tan mal por las clases de idioma extranjero.
12. En clase, me pongo tan nervioso que se me olvidan algunas cosas que sé.
13. Me da corte salir voluntario en clase.
14. Creo que no me pondría nervioso si hablara el idioma extranjero con una persona nativa.
15. Me irrita no entender lo que el profesor está corrigiendo.

16. Aunque vaya con la clase preparada, me siento nervioso.
17. A menudo no me apetece ir a clase.
18. Me siento seguro a la hora de hablar en la clase.
19. Me da miedo que mi profesor corrija cada fallo que cometo.
20. Siento cómo mi corazón palpita cuando sé que me van a pedir que intervenga en clase.
21. Cuanto más estudio, más me lío.
22. No tengo ninguna presión ni preocupaciones para prepararme bien las clases.
23. Tengo la sensación de que mis compañeros hablan el idioma extranjero mejor que yo.
24. Me da mucho corte hablar en la lengua extranjera delante de mis compañeros.
25. Las clases transcurren con tal rapidez que me preocupa quedarme atrasado.
26. Comparativamente, estoy más tenso y me siento más nervioso en la clase de idioma extranjero que en otras clases o que en mi propio trabajo.
27. Me pongo nervioso mientras hablo en clase.
28. Antes de entrar a clase, me siento seguro y relajado.
29. Me pongo nervioso cuando no entiendo cada una de las palabras que mi profesor dice.
30. Me abruma la cantidad de cosas que hay que aprender para poder hablar otro idioma.
31. Temo que mis compañeros de clase se rían de mí cuando hablo en otro idioma.
32. Creo que me sentiría a gusto hablando entre nativos que hablan el idioma que estudio.
33. Me pongo nervioso cuando el profesor pregunta cosas que no me he podido preparar.

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