

Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)

Focus on learners' gender and on target languages

Auteur: Inès Pinchart

Promoteur(s) : Meunier F.

Année académique 2022-2023

Master en langues et lettres modernes, orientation générale, à finalité didactique

Acknowledgment

I want to commence by expressing my heartfelt gratitude towards my supervisor, Dr. and Professor Fanny Meunier, whose expertise and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in guiding me through this journey. Her availability, invaluable feedbacks, and approachable nature during the arduous process of writing this Master's thesis have served as the driving force behind my unwavering motivation to write. It is with utmost sincerity that I affirm her assistance not only enabled me to successfully conclude this MA dissertation but also propelled me through five years of dedicated effort.

I extend my deepest appreciation to all the participants whose indispensable contributions provided the pivotal data that underpins the survey. Furthermore, my gratitude extends to the teachers who facilitated the distribution of the Google form, fostering active engagement from their students in this research endeavor.

In addition, I want to express my profound gratitude to my family and my boyfriend, whose unconditional support has been a steadfast anchor during this challenging journey spanning several months. I reserve a special acknowledgement to my sister, whose efforts to guide me in using SPSS were truly invaluable during the data collection phase. Being an aspiring psychologist, her assistance was indispensable in providing not only guidance for conducting the survey but also insightful advice for analyzing the results.

In retrospect, I can confidently assert that the path has been lengthy and demanding, yet the journey has undoubtedly been rewarding.

Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	- 7 -
1.1. Background to the study	- 7 -
1.2. Purpose of the study	- 7 -
1.3. Structure of the research	- 8 -
2. Theoretical framework.....	- 9 -
2.1. State of the art on anxiety disorder.....	- 9 -
2.1.1. Definition of anxiety disorder.....	- 9 -
2.1.2. Categories of anxiety	- 10 -
2.1.2.1. Trait anxiety and state anxiety	- 10 -
2.1.2.2. Situation-specific anxiety.....	- 11 -
2.1.3. Anxiety and gender.....	- 11 -
2.2. State of the art on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)	- 12 -
2.2.1. Contextualization of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)	- 12 -
2.2.2. Horwitz's Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)	- 13 -
2.2.3. The three main types of anxiety related to Foreign Language Learning.....	- 15 -
2.2.3.1. Communication apprehension.....	- 15 -
2.2.3.2. Test-anxiety.....	- 15 -
2.2.3.3. Fear of negative evaluation	- 16 -
2.2.4. The causes of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety	- 17 -
2.2.4.1. Personal variables influencing FLCA	- 17 -
2.2.4.1.1. Learner's gender	- 17 -
2.2.4.1.2. Learner's personality traits	- 19 -
2.2.4.1.2.1. Perfectionism	- 19 -
2.2.4.1.2.2. Fear of negative evaluation.....	- 19 -
2.2.4.1.2.3. Introversion.....	- 20 -
2.2.4.1.2.4. Low self-esteem.....	- 20 -
2.2.4.1.2.5. Learner's level of proficiency.....	- 21 -
2.2.4.1.2.6. Learner's inability to comprehend.....	- 21 -
2.2.4.2. External variables influencing FLCA	- 22 -
2.2.4.2.1. Teachers' attitude and pedagogical practices	- 22 -
2.2.4.2.2. Poor classroom atmosphere	- 23 -
2.2.4.2.3. Speaking activities	- 24 -
2.2.4.2.4. Presence of native speakers in a foreign language classroom environment.....	- 25 -
2.2.4.2.5. Different target languages	- 25 -
2.2.5. The impact of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA).....	- 28 -
2.2.5.1. Impact of FLCA on learners mental and physical behaviour	- 28 -
2.2.5.2. Impact of FLCA on learners' cognitive abilities and learning process.....	- 29 -
2.2.5.3. Impact of FLA on the classroom's dynamic	- 33 -
2.2.6. Foreign Language Anxiety-reducing strategies in the classroom.....	- 34 -
2.2.6.1. Sufficient preparation and practice	- 34 -
2.2.6.2. Teacher's behaviour and pedagogical practices.....	- 34 -
2.2.6.2.1. Acknowledging FLA in the classroom.....	- 34 -
2.2.6.2.2. Creating a benevolent classroom atmosphere	- 35 -
2.2.6.2.3. Adopting appropriate teaching practices	- 36 -
2.2.6.2.3.1. Encouraging attitude towards learners.....	- 36 -
2.2.6.2.3.2. Prioritizing in-class participation over assessment	- 36 -
2.2.6.2.3.3. Using language learning games	- 37 -
2.2.6.2.3.4. Using songs.....	- 38 -
2.2.6.2.3.5. Using technologies.....	- 39 -
2.2.7. The benefits of reducing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety	- 40 -
2.2.8. The importance of learning Foreign Languages for French-speakers	- 42 -
2.2.8.1. Importance of Foreign Languages in the era of globalization	- 42 -
2.2.8.2. Importance of Foreign Languages in Belgium (Brussels)	- 43 -

2.3.	Conclusion of the theoretical framework	- 45 -
3.	<i>Practical analysis</i>	- 47 -
3.1.	Research methodology	- 47 -
3.1.1.	Overview of the purpose of the survey	- 47 -
3.1.2.	Material (online questionnaire).....	- 48 -
3.1.3.	Procedure	- 52 -
3.1.4.	Participants	- 53 -
3.2.	Quantitative analysis	- 56 -
3.2.1.	Data collection instruments	- 56 -
3.2.2.	Data collection method	- 56 -
3.2.3.	Quantitative analysis.....	- 57 -
3.2.3.1.	Learners' quantitative data analysis	- 57 -
3.2.3.1.1.	Learners' profile data analysis.....	- 57 -
3.2.3.1.1.1.	Analyzing general anxiety levels.....	- 58 -
3.2.3.1.1.2.	Analyzing participants' affinity for language classes.....	- 59 -
3.2.3.1.1.3.	Analyzing participants' most anxiety-inducing FL (RQ2).....	- 60 -
3.2.3.1.2.	Horwitz's FLCA scale descriptive data analysis.....	- 63 -
3.2.3.1.2.1.	Descriptive analysis of the first questionnaire.....	- 63 -
3.2.3.1.2.2.	Descriptive analysis of the third questionnaire (RQ1)	- 65 -
3.2.3.1.3.	Correlational analysis	- 67 -
3.2.3.1.3.1.	Correlational analysis between FLCA scores and participant's overall anxiety- 67 -	
3.2.3.1.3.2.	Correlational analysis between FLCA scores and participants' liking of FLC .. - 68 -	
3.3.	Open-ended questions analysis	- 71 -
3.3.1.	Learners open-ended questions analysis.....	- 71 -
3.3.1.1.	Variables influencing learners' FLCA	- 72 -
3.3.1.2.	Impact on learners mental and physical behavior	- 73 -
3.3.1.3.	Learners' ideas to alleviate FLCA	- 74 -
3.3.1.3.1.	Teachers' methodology and pedagogical practices	- 74 -
3.3.1.3.2.	Teachers' characteristics.....	- 75 -
3.3.2.	Teachers open-ended data analysis.....	- 76 -
3.3.2.1.	Teachers' viewpoint on potential causes of FLCA	- 76 -
3.3.2.2.	Teachers' observation regarding the prevalent indicators of anxiety among learners	- 77 -
3.3.2.3.	Teachers' viewpoint on potential methods to alleviate FLCA.....	- 77 -
3.4.	Conclusion of the practical analysis	- 78 -
4.	<i>Discussion of the findings</i>	- 80 -
4.1.	Discussion and conclusion of the study	- 80 -
4.2.	Limitations	- 82 -
5.	<i>Sources</i>	- 83 -
6.	<i>Annexes</i>	- 93 -
6.1.	Annex 1: Horwitz's FLCA scale	- 93 -

List of abbreviations

FLCA	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
FLL	Foreign Language Learning
FL	Foreign Language
FLA	Foreign Language Anxiety

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

Learning a foreign language is rarely devoid of challenges. Beyond the linguistic aspects and communicative skills that need to be mastered, additional factors, such as the phenomenon of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), can prevent the successful learning of a language. While there are different definitions for Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, Zheng and Cheng (2018) define this phenomenon in a very general way as the fear you experience while speaking, writing in, listening to or learning a foreign language in a classroom. As mentioned by Horwitz et al. (1986) anxiety and motivation are not negatively correlated as, people suffering from FLCA can be strongly motivated to learn the language and even be good learners in other situations. However, once in the context of Foreign Language Learning (FLL), they experience a feeling of tension, worry, apprehension and nervousness that totally impedes their ability to perform successfully in a foreign language class. The exclusive manifestation of this anxiety within the context of a foreign language classroom (FLC) positions this phenomenon within the realm of “specific-anxiety reactions”. Contrary to people who are usually anxious in a wide range of situations, people suffering from Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) are solely anxious in the context of the language learning situation (Zeng & Cheng, 2018). Extensive research has revealed that a multitude of both personal and external factors can contribute to arousal of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Among these factors, gender emerges as a noteworthy personal variable that hold the potential to significantly impact FLCA. Notably, researchers including Pappamihel (2001), Cheng (2002), Elkhafafi (2003), Aydin (2009), French and Park (2013) and Gerencheal (2016) have empirically demonstrated that female learners were consistently more inclined to suffer from anxiety in the context of a Foreign Language Classroom (FLC).

1.2. Purpose of the study

As MacIntyre (1995) underlines, language classes stand out as particularly anxiety-inducing for a significant portion of students. Indeed, the phenomenon of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) affects a substantial number of individuals given that it is “one of the most common problem learners face during the learning process.” (Dutra & Finger, 2029: 12). Across numerous contexts encompassing fields like science, mathematics, and foreign languages (FL), anxiety has been found to have negative impact on learning.

This research idea was inspired by the desire to foster heightened sense of awareness among teachers and learners of Foreign Languages (FL). This MA thesis aims to investigate Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) among Belgian French speaking upper-secondary students. The focus will be on two distinct foreign languages: English and Spanish language programs. In addition, it also aims to determine if and to what extent gender disparities might contribute to FLCA. Carrying out this research is useful, although there have been a growing number of studies in recent years regarding FLCA, none has been conducted in our specific context (viz. the Wallonia-Brussels Federation of Belgium) focusing on gender's role. Furthermore, the second objective of this MA thesis is to determine whether or not a particular foreign language is more anxiety-provoking than another. Thus, the present study aims to answer the following research questions: "Does gender impact FLCA in Belgian French-speaking classroom? (RQ1) and "Does a distinct target foreign language exhibit a higher propensity for inducing anxiety among Foreign Language Learners (FLL)?" (RQ2).

This dissertation seeks to provide the two actors of this phenomenon with insights that can potentially mitigate the negative repercussions of FLCA. By shedding light on FLCA, this research aims to pave the way for improved learning experiences and enhanced outcomes for those who are impacted by this particular form of anxiety.

1.3. Structure of the research

This thesis is structured into two primary sections. The initial part introduces the theoretical framework and address the aforementioned research questions (RQ1 and RQ2). However, preceding the exploration of these research questions, several compelling topics are examined, encompassing the general definition and categories of anxiety, the Foreign Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) created by Horwitz et al. (1986), various categories of FLCA, potential triggers of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA), the impact of FLCA, strategies for anxiety alleviation within the Foreign Language Classroom (FLC), the benefits of reducing FLCA, and the contemporary significance of acquiring foreign language skills. The subsequent segment of this Master's thesis constitutes the practical aspect. Initially, the research methodology is expounded upon, followed by a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data. This section revolves around the examination of responses gathered via the Google Form, which aids in addressing the research questions (RQ1 and RQ2). Finally, an exploration of the quantitative data is undertaken.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. State of the art on anxiety disorder

This section aims at giving an overview of the psychological phenomenon of anxiety in general before defining the concept of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Considering this MA thesis is primarily devoted to FLCA, it is essential to gain a broader and clearer understanding of the general concept of anxiety. Macintyre (1999:28) endorses this approach and claims that it is “instructive to explore the links between it [Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety] and the rest of the anxiety literature”.

2.1.1. Definition of anxiety disorder

Anxiety has been established as one of the most important concepts in psychoanalysis. In recent years, due to the increasing concern people have for their mental health, there has been a growing interest in this phenomenon. Indeed, anxiety plays an important role in the development and functioning of the personality, and therefore has a powerful influence on human life (Levitt, 2015).

Anxiety is a universal, fundamental, unpleasant, and personal experience that may occur in reaction to a stressful situation. (Levitt, 2015). Horwitz et al. (1986: 125) define anxiety as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system”. It is important to note that anxiety can, however, be conceptualized in a variety of ways, and that there is no one and only way to define it (Levitt, 2015). The frequency and intensity with which individuals experience anxiety may fluctuate over time. However, when the symptoms are disabling and hard to control, then, it can be categorized as a disorder (Cohen et al., 2015). Indeed, this prevalent feeling of anxiety can completely impede some people from doing specific actions. The prominent symptoms to spot on an anxiety disorder would be recurrent headaches, fatigue, insomnia, and abdominal pain among others, especially during the early stages of life (Stein and Sareen, 2015). Indeed, as Bakhla et al. (2013) pointed out, “anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric diagnosis in school going children worldwide”. In this specific context, anxiety can prevent students from learning successfully. A detailed discussion of this type of anxiety is provided in section 2.2.

2.1.2. Categories of anxiety

There different types of anxiety can be distinguished: trait anxiety, state anxiety and situation-specific anxiety. In the following sections, each type of anxiety will be briefly described. Providing an explanation of these different types of anxieties will aid in clarifying some of the issues raised in the discussion to the research to follow (MacIntyre, 1999).

2.1.2.1. *Trait anxiety and state anxiety*

As Marx (2019) stated, at first only trait anxiety and state anxiety were defined in the field of psychology when it came to anxiety. Spielberger (1983) insists on the difference between those two concepts and explains both in his “State-Trait Anxiety Inventory”:

“Trait anxiety (T-Anxiety refers to relatively stable differences in anxious-proneness, that is, to differences between people in the tendency to perceive stressful situations as dangerous or threatening and to respond to such situations with elevations in the intensity of their state anxiety (S-Anxiety) reactions... The stronger the anxiety trait, the more probable that the individual will experience more intense elevations in S-Anxiety in a threatening situation.” (Spielberger, 1983, as cited in Campbell and Shaw, 1994).

To put it another way, trait anxiety is used to refer to a type of anxiety that is relatively permanent and specific to one’s personality (Scovel, 1978; Spielberger, 1983, MacIntyre, 1999; Marx, 2019). In some ways, individual who often feel anxious in a wide range of situations are shaped by their anxiety, which plays a significant role in their identity and personality (Horwitz, 2011 as cited in Marx, 2019). State anxiety, in contrast, can be defined as the anxiety that an individual experiences at a specific moment in time due to something that triggers this feeling of anxiousness (Effiong, 2013, as cited in Marx, 2019). MacIntyre (1995: 93) defines it as being “an immediate, transitory emotional experience with immediate cognitive effects”. In other words, state anxiety can be characterized as an emotional reaction to a stressful and definite situation at a particular moment in time. Additionally, according to Spielberger (1983), a variation in intensity and fluctuation over time can be observed with this type of anxiety. It can be summarized by stating that trait anxiety refers to the tendency to react in an anxious manner whereas state anxiety is an anxious reaction at a particular moment in time. Moreover, Campbell and Shaw (1994) claim that trait anxiety and state anxiety are linked but not similar.

2.1.2.2. *Situation-specific anxiety*

A third type of anxiety was identified later in addition to the first two. Just as its name suggests, situation-specific anxiety is a unique type of anxiety that is always experienced as a result of a recurring and specific situation, stimuli, or event (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991b, as cited in Marx, 2019; Al-Saraj, 2014). Essentially, situation-specific anxiety can be likened to trait anxiety except that in this case, the feeling of anxiety is occurring within a specific context or situation (MacIntyre, 1999). An example of situation-specific anxiety would be anxiety associated with the specific situation of learning a foreign language in a classroom, also commonly known as Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). In fact, considering that learning a language is a specific type of context, anxiety in that environment is part of situation-specific anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999). The three following subtypes of situation-specific anxiety can be distinguished: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Aydin, 2009). Since FLCA is a situation-specific anxiety, the discussion will be developed further in section 2.2.

2.1.3. Anxiety and gender

Research indicates that anxiety levels in individuals can be influenced by various factors, including gender. Gender-related disparities in anxiety emerge early in life and persist into adulthood. Notably, girls tend to exhibit higher rates of anxiety disorders compared to boys. This discrepancy is particularly evident during adolescence, where adolescent girls have been found to be six times more susceptible to developing generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) than their male counterparts (McLean & Anderson, 2009: 498). These findings suggest that gender plays a significant role in shaping the prevalence and manifestation of anxiety disorders across different developmental stages (Toufexis et al., 2006). A detailed discussion of the impact of gender on foreign language classroom anxiety is provided in section 2.2.4.1.1. since it significantly influences the classroom environment.

2.2. State of the art on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)

2.2.1. Contextualization of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a special type of anxiety. In 1983, Spielberger described FLCA as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry. In addition to this definition, it can be stated that foreign language anxiety is a “distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986: 128). More recently, Zheng and Cheng (2018) defined FLCA in a very general way as the fear students experience while speaking, writing in, listening to or learning a foreign language in a classroom. According to the two authors, anxiety in the context of a Foreign Language Classroom (FLC) is a form of anxiety that is usually aroused by a specific type of situation related to the acquisition of a foreign language. This anxious feeling can appear either during a speaking, listening, writing, or reading activity in the target language. Since FLCA can appear solely in the context of classroom language learning, it can be classified among the category of ‘specific anxiety reactions’ (Horwitz et al., 1986). In fact, contrary to people who are usually anxious in a wide range of situations, people suffering from FLCA can be anxious only in the specific context of language learning. It is therefore relevant to analyse anxiety’s impact on learners, language use and on language learning (Botes et al., 2022).

“When I’m in my Spanish class I just freeze! I can’t think of a thing when my teacher calls on me. My mind goes blank.” (Horwitz et al., 1986: 125). Such a statement could have been the one of a large number of students learning a foreign language. In fact, “the prevalence of anxiety is high in school going children” (Bakhla et al., 2013). Statistics indicate that “one-half of all language students experience a startling level of anxiety” (Campbell & Ortiz, 1991, as cited in MacIntyre, 1995: 90). Anxiety in the context of language learning has been a research topic of interest for decades with the first review of the topic published by Scovel in 1978 (as mentioned in Botes et al, 2022). At first the findings, as far as the impact of anxiety in language learning is concerned, were described as mixed and confusing with no definite conceptualization of how and why anxiety impacts language learning (Botes et al., 2022). In response to Scovel’s concerns and with the hope of assessing foreign language students’ anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) came up with a clear definition of FLCA as well as a scale to

measure it: the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)¹. Thanks to this specific instrument made up of 33 items based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, it is now possible to measure reliably and effectively learners’ anxiety in a foreign language classroom context (Lin et al., 2015). Shortly after the FLCAS’s publication, a large number of research projects have been conducted worldwide by scientists such as MacIntyre, Gardner, Aida and, of course, Horwitz et al. providing the field with relatively clear and stable findings (Lin et al., 2015; Botes et al., 2022). According to Lin et al. (2015), in every case, the results showed that there was a negative correlation between FLCA and learners’ performance in language learning. Therefore, it demonstrates that anxiety has a detrimental impact on foreign language learning and on the well-being of FL learners (Lin et al., 2015). Since the 1970s, FLCA is one of the most well-documented foreign language-specific negative emotion that prevents the successful learning of a language alongside boredom, shame, and anger. (Horwitz et al., 1986).

2.2.2. Horwitz’s Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

As mentioned above, research on FLCA increased significantly when Horwitz et al. (1986) proposed this 33-items scale capable of measuring the fear of learning a foreign language in a classroom environment (Appendix n°1). This questionnaire was written in English and aimed at secondary, vocational, corporate, adult, non-formal and other profiles of learners of a foreign language (Al-Saraj, 2014).² The five-point Likert scale measurement ranging from ‘strongly agree’ (1) to ‘strongly disagree’ (5) was proven highly reliable in order to study the three following types of anxieties: communication apprehension (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, 24, 27, 29, 32, 33), test anxiety (items 8, 10, 21), and fear of negative evaluation (items 7, 13, 19, 23, 25, 31). Indeed, it had been, to this date, the most used tool, with a Cronbach alpha of .93, to assess Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) (Al-Saraj, 2014; Horwitz et al., 1986). As reported by Von Wörde (2003), this scale has been used for decades in many studies of anxiety in foreign language learning and found to be a highly reliable measure. It is likely that the FLCA’s success in conceptualizing language anxiety is due to its strong item selection, which was derived in part from the experience of working with anxious foreign learners who described testing, communicating, and worry about being negatively evaluated by others in the context of FL learning. In other words, these items are representative of the feelings of anxiety,

¹ A more detailed description of FLCAS is given in the following section.

² <https://learninglab.uni-due.de/research-instrument/13363>

nervousness, and unease that are encountered in foreign language classrooms (Botes, 2022; Horwitz et al., 1986). In order to provide a few examples, here is a sample of the first items included in Horwitz et al.'s FLCAS:

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes

Since FLCAS is used to measure participants' degree of anxiety in a well-defined context, it can be stated that Horwitz et al. used a situation-specific approach while creating their scale, which allows the identification of Foreign Language Anxiety from other types of anxiety (Al-Saraj, 2014). MacIntyre (1995) stresses that it is crucial to assess anxiety in the specific context of language learning in order to be able to obtain consistent relationships between those two variables. He also mentions that the FLCA scale is useful to identify learners who have experienced state anxiety and to predict those who will most likely experience it in the future. Its validity, however, was at risk due to problematic items and unclear factor structure (Botes et al., 2022). Consequently, a Short-Form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (S-FLCAS) was developed by MacIntyre in 1992 to address this problem by reducing the number of items from 33 to 8. Despite the deletion of 25 items, the scale remained valid and demonstrated similar internal consistency as Horwitz's 33-item FLCAS. Nevertheless, after testing it, it was found that both FLCAS and S-FLCAS produce similar results; therefore, Horwitz's scale remains applicable. (Botes et al., 2022).

In conclusion, since Scovel introduced FLCA in 1978, it has become a major concern in applied linguistics (Botes and al., 2022). Throughout the years, researchers have collected a great deal of information about this universal phenomenon demonstrating how anxiety negatively affects learners' learning abilities. A number of strategies were then also developed with the goal of alleviating the anxiety experienced by foreign language learners in order to contribute to their overall well-being (Dong et al., 2022; Botes et al., 2022).

2.2.3. The three main types of anxiety related to Foreign Language Learning

Communication apprehension, test-anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are the three main categories of situation-specific anxiety that are studied in Horwitz et al.'s foreign language anxiety scale (FLCAS). Each of these anxieties are discussed in the following section.

2.2.3.1. *Communication apprehension*

As defined by Horwitz et al. (1986), communication apprehension in the context of a foreign language classroom refers to the feeling of anxiety experienced from communicating with people. However, communication apprehension also includes the difficulty students experience when listening to a spoken message in a foreign language. The type of communication apprehension is described by Horwitz et al. (1986) as “oral communication anxiety” while the second description defines the concept of “receiver anxiety”. The feeling of apprehension or anxiety may come from the fact that students stress over making themselves understood in a language that differs from their mother tongue. As reported in his article, one of the most frequently cited concern of anxious foreign language students is definitely speaking the target language in class or in front of others. In fact, second language communication involves risk taking which is likely to challenge anxiety-prone learners and create negative emotions such as fear or panic (Horwitz et al., 1986). In this respect, since Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety is mainly caused by the social and communicative aspects it can be categorized as being a “social anxiety”. MacIntyre (1995) defined this latter by “the feelings of tension and discomfort, negative self-evaluations, and a tendency to withdraw in the presence of others”.

2.2.3.2. *Test-anxiety*

“Test anxiety” is the second type of anxiety analyzed in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety scale (FLCAS). It refers to “the worry about classroom performance associated with fear of failure” and can be classified in the category of “performance anxiety” (Horwitz et al., 1986). As stated by Tobias (1986), students who experience high level of anxiety may have difficulty managing both test requirements and concerns that may arise while taking a test. Indeed, affective preoccupations absorb their processing capacity and prevent them from using it to take the test (Tobias, 1986). Moreover, it has been observed that students suffering from FLCA tend to set excessively high expectations for themselves. Due to their high standards, anything that is not perfect to them is considered a failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). FLCA students

must therefore feel uncomfortable most of the time since language classes require continuous assessment (Horwitz et al., 1986). As long as evaluations and tests are central to the assessment of the learning process, anxiety will only keep flourishing. An immediate consequence of test anxiety that can be observed in FLCA students is that they spend a greater amount of time studying the week before and the last 24 hours before an exam than those who do not suffer from test anxiety (Tobias, 1986). It is also important to note that, during an oral test, both communication apprehension and test anxiety can be triggered (Horwitz et al., 1986).

2.2.3.3. *Fear of negative evaluation*

The third anxiety related to foreign language learning in Horwitz's FLCAS is "the fear of negative evaluation". According to Horwitz et al. (1986: 128), this aspect of the FLCAS can be described as "the apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate oneself negatively". The difference with "test anxiety" is that "the fear of negative evaluation" can happen in many other social situations that are not test-related. In fact, this fear of negative evaluation could, for instance, appear while speaking in foreign language class. In this situation, students are afraid of being judged by their classmates or by the teacher for the way they speak the foreign language. Since learning a foreign language requires continual assessments, language learners suffering from FLCA may often find themselves in an uncomfortable and vulnerable situation (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Researchers like Cheng et al. (1999) and Shao et al. (2019) claim that "communication apprehension" was the most relevant factor of FLCA to predict foreign language performance. Other researchers (e.g., He et al., 2021) argued that "the fear of negative evaluation" was the main factor that causes student's anxiety. Anxiety related to foreign language learning can also be seen as the transfer of other forms of anxiety, such as the three types of anxiety explained above (MacIntyre, 1999).

2.2.4. The causes of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

An array of internal (personal) and external variables was found to be connected to Foreign Language Anxiety (e.g., Dong L; Liu M and Yang F, 2022). Luszczynska's (2016) article entitled "Language anxiety correlates" serves as a reference article for this section. In fact, based on her article, the correlates of FLCA can be classified into two main different categories: personal variables and external variables. In addition, this section makes extensive use of Zheng and Cheng's article (2018). Although FLCA can be caused by a wide variety of variables, only the most important ones are addressed in the following section.

2.2.4.1. *Personal variables influencing FLCA*

2.2.4.1.1. Learner's gender

Whether or not learner's gender can be considered as one of the variables that may influence the learning of foreign languages has been the subject to much controversy (Marx, 2019; Gerencheal, 2016; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

On the one hand, some researchers claim that there is a strong correlation between foreign language anxiety and learners' gender. According to the results of their study, Pappamihel (2001), Cheng (2002), Elkhafafi (2003), Aydin (2009), French and Park (2013) and Gerencheal's (2016), female learners have higher anxiety levels in classroom settings than their male counterparts. Indeed, when focusing on Gerencheal's (2016) study findings, it can be observed that female participants have higher scores of anxiety compared to men in 14 items out of the 33 items constituting the FLCA scale. While men were only found to have a moderate anxiety level, females had rather high ones. A further example would be the study conducted by French and Park (2013), which demonstrated that South Korean females have a significantly higher level of language anxiety than males. Indeed, the FLCAS mean score for males was 2.675, while the FLCAS mean score for females was 3.001 (French and Park, 2013). In Mexico and Taiwan, Pappamihel (2001) and Cheng (2002) respectively reported similar results (as cited in Gerencheal, 2016). This significant difference is explained by Pierchurska-Kuciel (2012) by stating that women are more likely to experience anxiety as a result of biological factors. In fact, estrogen and other hormones have been implicated in affecting mood and emotional regulation and may influence anxiety levels. Women tend to feel more anxious when experiencing both increases and declines in their hormone levels (Toufexis et al., 2006). Due to fluctuating hormone levels, women are twice as likely to suffer from anxiety as men.

Looking at the statistics of surveys carried on in the US, the level of anxiety is also almost doubled for women compared to men (Stein and Sareen, 2015). In addition, it is reported that “well-established risk factors for generalized anxiety disorder include female sex, low socio-economic statuses, and exposure to childhood adversity” (Stein and Sareen, 2015: 2060). Spielberger’s (1983: 11) findings also suggest that “females are more emotionally labile than males and /or that they are more willing to report their feelings”. Women may be more encouraged to express and discuss their feelings, leading to higher rates of reported anxiety. Therefore, results from these studies imply that gender plays a key role in the regulation of anxiety (Toufexis et al., 2006).

Other researchers, in contrast, have demonstrated that women learn foreign languages more effectively and are less anxious than men (Park and French, 2013). Aida (1994) and Marx (2019) have concluded that there is no significant connection between foreign language anxiety and gender.

It is possible that such inconsistencies in survey findings can be attributed to differences in socio-cultural background of the respective countries. In fact, as Campbell and Shaw (1994), French and Park (2013) and Gerencheal (2016) conclude, a country’s overall culture may play a role in causing a higher level of anxiety among females or men learning a foreign language. Hence, that would explain why the results differ so widely from one researcher and country to another. Due to cultural norms, some male dominant societies, such as Korea or Ethiopia, have cultural norms which prevent women from speaking up as freely as men (Gerencheal, 2016). Therefore, it is likely that females are more anxious to speak once they are in foreign language classes because they are educated in a male dominant society and, thus, unfamiliar with expressing themselves. Consequently, such types of cultural norms encourage females to remain silent, which had an adverse effect in their educational advancement (French and Park, 2013; Gerencheal, 2016). In conclusion, gender may influence FLCA, but generalizations should be avoided since it varies greatly between studies. Moreover, individual experiences of anxiety can greatly vary, and not all women will experience higher levels of anxiety than men. Anxiety is a complex condition, and its development is influenced by a wide range of factors.

It is interesting to note, however, that some studies emphasize the difference between stress levels and the impact that stress might have. Tomova et al. (2014) for instance show opposing effects of stress on the two genders with women showing increases in self-other

distinction and men showing decreases. Despite their stress, women were found to flexibly disambiguate self and other under stress, and to provide more accurate social responses than men (who displayed less adaptative social regulation). Indeed, “females are more emotionally stable than males in their reactions to highly stressful or relaxing circumstances” (Spielberger, 1983: 19, as cited in Matsuda & Gobel, 2004: 23).

2.2.4.1.2. Learner’s personality traits

When it comes to learning foreign languages, learners’ individual differences play a significant role. In this section, the impact of perfectionism, fear of negative evaluation, introversion and low self-esteem on FL learners’ anxiety will be discussed.

2.2.4.1.2.1. Perfectionism

As Luszczynska (2016) reports, perfectionism can be defined as a personality trait characterized by exceedingly high standards accompanied by excessive self-criticism. In the context of a foreign language classroom, Wang et al. (2018: 130) state that “perfectionism contributes directly to language learning anxiety”. In fact, students who are perfectionists tend to be overcritical of themselves which plays an important role in causing anxiety. The process of learning a foreign language involves making mistakes and not always being 100% correct. Perfection-seeking students, however, tend to be more upset by their mistakes and overestimate their seriousness compared to their peers, which further contributes to anxiety (Luszczynska, 2016). Therefore, Hu and Wang (2014) conclude that perfectionist foreign language students may experience higher levels of anxiety. It is also important to note that foreign language anxiety shares some of the same characteristics as perfectionism in terms of how it impacts the learner. In fact, perfectionists and anxious learners fear negative evaluation, both are concerned about how others perceive and evaluate them. In other words, perfectionism is a significant predictor of foreign language classroom anxiety (Wang et al., 2018).

2.2.4.1.2.2. Fear of negative evaluation

As mentioned above, it is not uncommon for language students to feel concerned about the opinion of their classmates regarding their performance in the target language. Nonetheless, the gaze of peers may have a negative effect on foreign language learners. In fact, when FLL believe that they will be evaluated by others, they are likely to feel anxious and reluctant to

speak. They are so afraid of making mistakes or speaking the target language incorrectly in front of their classmates that when they are required to speak, their level of anxiety reaches unprecedented heights (Luszczyńska, 2016). In light of the above, it can be argued that the fear of negative evaluation is one of the factors that contribute to FLCA.

2.2.4.1.2.3. Introversion

In general, introverts are considered as shy, reserved, self-restrained and uninterested in socializing (Hu and Wang, 2014). Therefore, introvert foreign language learners usually display many of the characteristics listed previously. Being an introvert in a language class may present significant challenges to the learning process since these students are historically considered more anxious than others (Hu and Wang, 2014). Indeed, “people who are shy and introverted are likely to develop language anxiety, possibly because they are less willing to engage in the communication necessary for language learning success” (MacIntyre, 1999: 33). For one to learn a foreign language effectively, it is necessary to be somewhat outgoing in order to speak the target language in role plays or small oral activities in group settings. In this regard, foreign language classes may be perceived by introvert students as a source of anxiety since they are obliged to leave their comfort zone. Consequently, extroverts may possess a greater capacity to learn a foreign language than introverts (Luszczyńska, 2016).

2.2.4.1.2.4. Low self-esteem

Individuals with high self-esteem tend to be much less critical of themselves and their abilities than those with low self-esteem. This is why, in the context of foreign language classes, self-esteem plays a significant role in determining the degree of anxiety students experience. Students who underestimate the quality of their foreign language skills tend to suffer more from anxiety in the FL classroom (Jin et al., 2021). In fact, as stated in Hu and Wang’s (2014: 123) article, “Among those highly anxious language students, those with high self-esteem might handle their anxiety better than those with low self-esteem, resulting in better performance”. In other words, if FLA students are less confident in their ability to use the language, their level of anxiety will be impacted and their capacity to focus on academics decreases (Sylvester, 2003).

Comparison is another common habit of FL students with low self-esteem. However, by constantly comparing their performance to that of their peers and by downplaying their

capabilities, they increase their level of anxiety. Furthermore, because they place themselves at a very low level on the pedestal, their perception of others' abilities is often idealized (Hu and Wang, 2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that students with low self-esteem experience a higher level of anxiety (MacIntyre, 1999).

2.2.4.1.2.5. Learner's level of proficiency

Learners' level of proficiency in the foreign language is another internal variable that may impact students' anxiety. In fact, it is likely that upper-secondary school students feel more anxious about foreign language classes than lower-secondary school students (MacIntyre, 1999). Djafri and Wimbarti (2018: 5) explain this by stating that upper-secondary school students "are now in intermediate level of second language learning, with increased difficulties of foreign language learning compared to basic level, and where bigger challenges start to reveal themselves". Therefore, students at a higher level of proficiency are confronted with subjects of greater difficulty. Consequently, students may lose confidence and develop negative emotions such as FLCA (Yang et al., 2022). Moreover, since learners are older and have progressed further in the subject, they are more aware of their mistakes and "more self-critical of their outcome in terms of accuracy", which could lead to increased anxiety (Dutra & Finger, 2019: 214). Additionally, there is the possibility that higher proficiency levels will come with higher expectations from the teacher, resulting in an increase in anxiety on the part of FL students (Luszczyńska, 2016).

2.2.4.1.2.6. Learner's inability to comprehend

In the case of anxious foreign language learners, the inability to keep up during FL classes can be a major source of anxiety (difficulty to understand what the teacher or peers are explaining or saying, difficulties to follow/understand input in the target language, etc.). In fact, according to MacIntyre (1999), there is no doubt that if a learner undergoes many difficulties in comprehension, this will result in an increased feeling of anxiety in that individual. This inability to comprehend can be due to the speed of the teacher's speech, but it may also be related to the difficulty of the topic being discussed (Von Wörde, 2003).

In summary, it appears that the development of language anxiety is largely determined by learners' personality traits. A person who is perfectionist, shy, introverted, or has a low self-esteem appear to be more likely to suffer from language anxiety. However, other external variables may also play a role.

2.2.4.2. External variables influencing FLCA

2.2.4.2.1. Teachers' attitude and pedagogical practices

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety interrelates to a wide display of foreign language teacher variables such as the teacher's attitude and pedagogical practices (Dewaele et al., 2017, 2019b). In fact, it is well known that from one language teacher to another the pedagogical practices and the attitude in class may vary. However, it is important to note that those two variables can have a really big influence on students, their level of anxiety and, thus, on their performances (Hu and Wang, 2014). In fact, as stated by Luszczynska (2016), anxiety experienced by learners in the classroom may result from incompatibility between the teacher's style and personality and students'.

Firstly, students' anxiety may be caused by the teacher's excessive strictness and demanding nature as well as his or her constant emphasis on the importance of being 100% accurate when students want to express themselves in the foreign language (Hu and Wang, 2014). The only outcome of this practice is that it puts pressure on students, and they do not feel at ease when they have to express themselves in front of their teacher, since they are aware that he or she will not be tolerant of any mistake they make. Nevertheless, it is logical that the learner will not always be correct since he or she is still in the process of learning the language.

As far as error correction is concerned, the fact that the foreign language teacher is intolerant and stops the learner to reprimand him or her at each mistake can really create a fear of speaking (communication apprehension) among anxious learners. Some teachers correct every mistake and in addition they do so in an unfriendly manner which will only increase learners' anxiety. (Hu and Wang, 2014; Von Wörde, 2003)

Another pedagogical practice that may cause anxiety among stressed language learners is the way in which teachers call on students to provide the answer to an exercise. Von Wörde (2003) describes the practice of calling on students one after another in seating order as an extremely anxiety-provoking technique. According to several of the foreign language learners he interviewed, this practice could be compared to an execution. In fact, one of them gave his opinion about it and said, "I think that [this practice] builds tension, builds anxiety, just sitting

there knowing that in a few minutes you're about to be called, and it's almost *execution style*" (Von Wörde, 2003: 6).

Then, Von Wörde (2003) states in his article that a lack of respect from the teacher also has a significant effect on the level of anxiety among language learners. Indeed, depending on the way they act and speak in class, some teachers may appear rude, mean, intimidating and condescending to their students. Since this behaviour may make students feel uncomfortable in class, it could negatively impact the degree of anxiety.

Providing too much material at once to anxious foreign language learners is also seen as a pedagogical practice which should be avoided. Many students may for instance feel unable to keep up with all the rules and vocabulary required to speak the target language (Luszczyńska, 2016). As a consequence, students who are anxious may experience anxiety due to the volume of material to be covered. Furthermore, the level of anxiety will increase if the teacher simply continues the class without caring about the students who may feel lost in the midst of all the material.

In light of this and based on the results of Djafri and Wimbari's (2018) study, it can be concluded that students' perceptions of teachers' behavior have a significant correlation with their anxiety regarding foreign languages. In fact, as stated in their article (p.12), this study demonstrated that "student's perception of teacher's behavior significantly affects foreign language learning anxiety, in which the more negative the perception is, the more anxious the student would be."

2.2.4.2.2. Poor classroom atmosphere

Another factor that may impact students' level of anxiety is the learning environment. In fact, MacIntyre (1995) claims in his paper that the social context can seriously influence students' level of anxiety, the cognitive process but above all the language learning. Therefore, in this section will be discussed the fact that learning a language in a poor classroom atmosphere may be another contributing factor to FLCA.

First of all, according to Hu and Wang (2014), the competitiveness in the language classroom can lead to language anxiety. In fact, it is believed that a studying a language in a non-stop competitive atmosphere makes students, especially anxious ones, even more nervous.

Secondly, a poor group dynamic and a lack of sense of community among learners can also impact anxiety and create a stressful atmosphere. Consequently, students will feel less comfortable speaking during oral activities and more anxious as they fear negative evaluations from their peers (Von Wörde, 2003). As a result of not getting along with one another, not knowing one another, or not speaking together, learners may have a greater fear of being judged by their peers than they would be in a group where classroom mates know one another and are on good terms.

Finally, a lack of a good relationship between the teacher and the students may also influence the level of anxiety. Indeed, if the teacher is too strict, too serious, never gives encouragements but only critics, corrects every students' mistakes and forces his or her students to speak, it is likely that he or she will create an anxiety-prone environment which will have a detrimental effect on the learning process and on students' degree of anxiety (Hu and Wang, 2014).

2.2.4.2.3. Speaking activities

According to Von Wörde (2003), numerous researchers, such as Horwitz (1986) and Young (1990), have concluded that speaking the target foreign language in class is the most anxiety-provoking activity. Indeed, as stated by Hu and Wang (2014), the prospect of giving an answer out loud, delivering a class presentation or engaging in speaking activities can be extremely stressful for students suffering from anxiety.

On one hand, the anxiety that students might experience when speaking in class may be due to communication apprehension. They may be shy and fear public speaking. In FLC, when students are asked to speak with their peers or in front of the class in the target language, it can happen that anxious students feel it as a threat of being exposed. Thus, their level of anxiety may increase during speaking activities.

On the other hand, it may also be caused by the fear of negative evaluation. In fact, this fear has been shown to be positively correlated with anxiety, as reported by Luszczynska (2016). The major problem is that the speaker, during an oral activity, is usually the center of attention, which triggers anxiety for those FLCA students. In fact, Watson and Friend (1969: 455) confirmed this statement in their study by claiming that “people who fears other’s evaluations don’t want to be the center of attention”. Those students are afraid of being judged by their classmates and anxious about what they may think of their capabilities in the target language. Watson and Friend (1969) concluded that some learners are more anxious than others in social interactions, and they therefore place a greater emphasis on how others evaluate them. However, when anxious students refrain from participating in speaking activities due to their anxiety, they hinder their ability to learn a new language (MacIntyre, 1999).

2.2.4.2.4. Presence of native speakers in a foreign language classroom environment

The presence of native speakers in a foreign language classroom may cause some students to feel stressed about being compared to them and their level of proficiency in the target language. Because of this, native speakers can be considered as a factor that induces anxiety. Moreover, as stated by Von Wörde (2003), teachers might be tempted to adjust the complexity of the class to a higher level due to the presence of native speakers. As a matter of fact, teachers tend to alter the difficulty to the proficiency levels of native speakers. It may, therefore, result in a rise in anxiety for some anxiety-prone learners.

2.2.4.2.5. Different target languages

In the field of foreign language acquisition, it is duly acknowledged that learners’ native language exerts a discernible impact on the difficulty with which they acquire proficiency and fluency in the target foreign language (Cortés, 2005). The relative difference of grammatical structures, phonological patterns, or lexical formations between learners’ native language and the targeted foreign language can significantly negatively impact the level of difficulty encountered. Indeed, the greater the dissimilarity between a foreign language (FL) and an individual’s mother tongue, the more pronounced the challenges in acquiring and effectively utilizing it. This heightened level of difficulty in learning is intrinsically associated with an elevated susceptibility for learners to manifest anxiety-related responses (Cortés, 2005). This

assertion finds support within the article of Von Wörde (2003:8) wherein the later writes: “The perception that a language is difficult seems to suggest that it is also anxiety-provoking”. Conversely, “similarities in the mother tongue and target language can facilitate the learning” consequently decreasing the likelihood of learners experiencing heightened anxiety (Cortés, 2005: 240).

In virtue of their affiliation with the Latin language group, French speakers possess an advantage over people who have, for instance, Arabic or Russian as their mother tongue and seek to acquire Spanish or English as foreign languages (Cortés, 2005; Djafri & Winbarti, 2018). Nevertheless, notwithstanding the comparative ease that French speakers experience in acquiring both Spanish and English, it is conceivable that they might exhibit a more pronounced tendency for proficiency in one of the two languages.

Firstly, with respect to phonetics and pronunciation, French-speaking learners may find an ease in mastering Spanish. Indeed, English pronunciation can be challenging for French speakers due to its diverse range of vowel sounds, consonants clusters, and unpredictable stress patterns. In her article, Horgues (2013: 41) writes:

“In French, stress pertains to the level of the group of words rather than to the individual word, which has no real accentual autonomy. Therefore, it is not surprising that French learners of English are faced with a major challenge (...). Some intonational contexts impose a bigger constraint on French learners of English than others.”

Subsequently, this complexity within English phonology could potentially increase anxiety levels during verbal interactions in the English language. In contrast, the phonetic and pronunciation systems of French and Spanish have more similarities than those of French and English. This similarity may help French speakers with pronunciation in Spanish, making the process of speaking Spanish less stressful (Dupoux et al., 2008).

Secondly, it is notable that both French and Spanish belong to the Romance language family, engendering shared similarities in terms of grammar and syntax (Cortés, 2005). This observation aligns with the findings elucidated by Hardiansyah (2022: 45):

“There are several kind of grammar similarities that can be found between Spanish and English. These similarities can be found in several fields of grammar such as the indicative present, possessive adjective, the reflexive and reciprocal verbs, definite article, adjective rules, and indirect object pronoun. The similarities range from the function, characteristic, until syntax and word order.”

Within this context, French speakers might find some comfort in recognizing similar grammatical when studying Spanish. This familiarity might potentially lead to lower anxiety levels compared to the process of learning English, which is characterized by different grammar rules and structures.

Finally, English is often perceived as more accessible due to its global status as *lingua franca* and its wide adoption in various fields such as media, music, popular culture, sciences, etc. As claimed by Seidlhofer et al. (2006: 3), “The omnipresence of English in Europe has led to numerous discussions about its widespread functions and special status compared to all other European languages.”. This perception might alleviate anxiety levels among French-speaking learners, given their likelihood of reading or hearing English in their daily life. In contrast, Spanish, while also widely spoken in the world, might not be heard as much as English in Belgium everyday life , culminating in augmented anxiety levels among learners.

However, it is important emphasize that the level of ease when speaking a foreign language is inherently subjective, as it is based on the unique perspective of each individual learner. Factors such as personal linguistic aptitude, prior language learning experiences and cultural exposure contribute to the individualized nature of language acquisition and proficiency.

2.2.5. The impact of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA)

Up to now many studies have shown that foreign language classroom anxiety has a detrimental effect on language learning. However, some researchers such as MacIntyre (1995) also mention the positive effect of anxiety on language learning. In this section, both positive and negative impacts of FLCA on learners mental and physiological behaviour, on learner's cognitive abilities and language learning process and on classroom's dynamic will be addressed.

2.2.5.1. Impact of FLCA on learners mental and physical behaviour

Anxiety can have a negative impact on learners' mental and physical behaviour. In fact, as Horwitz et al. (1986) state in "The Modern Language Journal", language learners suffering from FLCA can be strongly motivated to learn the language and can even be good learners in other situations. However, once in the context of Foreign Language Learning (FLL), several mental and physiological negative reactions caused by anxiety can occur. Firstly, learners suffering from Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) might experience negative mental reactions such as self-depreciation, lower self-esteem or self-confidence, as well as a feeling of paralyzing fear, tension, worry, apprehension, or nervousness. (Horwitz et al., 1986). Secondly, once confronted by far or near with the target language, learners suffering from FLCA might also have physical reactions caused by anxiety such as difficulties to concentrate, become forgetful, sweat, foot tapping, clammy hands, cold fingers, shaking, getting all red, knotting stomach, pounding heart, sleeping disturbance and adopt an avoidance behavior by missing classes and postponing homework (Horwitz et al., 1986; Von Wörde, 2003). The negative impact of FLCA on the learner is undeniable. In fact, this mental and physical block against learning the language can represent a significant obstacle in the learning process which is indispensable to be able to speak another language (Horwitz et al., 1986). As reported by Botes et al. (2022), MacIntyre and Gardner (1988) stated that repeated occurrences of the emotional discomfort and worry about authentic self-presentation associated with using the Foreign Language merge over time into a pattern that affects how learners perceive themselves and, thus, their performance in the FL.

2.2.5.2. *Impact of FLCA on learners' cognitive abilities and learning process*

Learners' mental and physical reactions mentioned in the previous paragraph can impede students' learning process and ability to perform successfully in a foreign language class (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety can make the individual unreceptive to language input (Krashen, 1980) and hence have a detrimental role on cognitive abilities. Studies have shown that memory is disrupted by stress and anxiety since once confronted to those mechanisms body's resources, such as the nervous system which has an essential role in memory and learning, are strained (Robinson et al., 2013). In fact, by causing disruption in the frontal lobe of the brain, anxiety significantly impairs students' learning abilities (Arnold and Brown, 1999). Consequently, FLCA learners' cognitive resources are divided between negative and unpleasant thoughts unrelated to the task and cognitive resources used to perform the task. Conversely, learners who are less anxious have more cognitive resources accessible to complete the task (Luszczyńska, 2017). Whereas MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b: 87) report that language anxiety "can interfere with the acquisition, retention and production of the new language", some other researchers such as Tobias, MacIntyre, and Gardner argue that negative or debilitating anxiety affects all three stages of the learning process: the input – information processing – the output (Luszczyńska, 2017). The following graphic shows the debilitating effects of anxiety on the three stages of the learning process of a foreign language : Input, Processing, and Output:

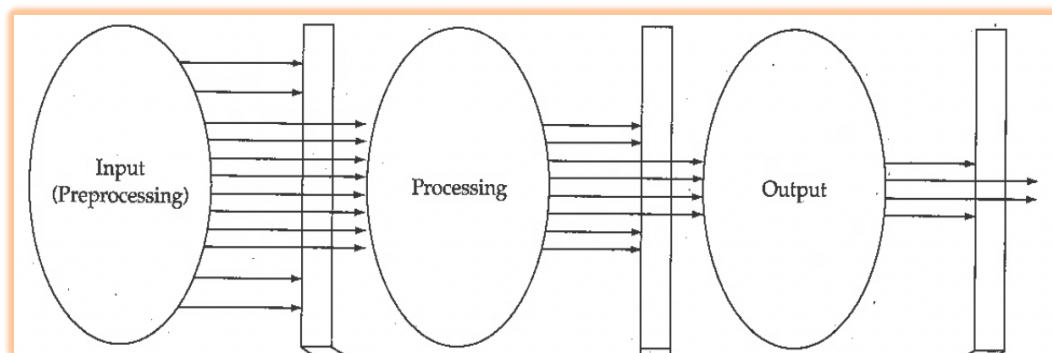


Figure 1. The effects of anxiety on second language learning from instruction

As described by Luszczyńska (2017), the *input* refers to the phase during which the material is presented to the students. *Processing* refers to all the process of recording, organizing, storing, and recalling the input. As for the *output*, it can be defined as the learner's performance in relation to any measure that demonstrates that the teaching objectives have been achieved. As it can be observed in the graph, although the arousal of anxiety may negatively affect cognitive performance at any of these stages, the phases most affected by anxiety during

the learning process are the *processing* and the *output* phases (MacIntyre, 1999; Luszczynska, 2017). In fact, anxiety can hinder learning during the preprocessing phase, when the input is presented to the learner, by preventing the new information from being recorded by the learner. It is during this exact phase that anxiety is the most detrimental to the learning process since it acts as a distraction and affects the amount of information that will be available at the processing phase (MacIntyre, 1999). In that sense, both short-term and long-term memory are restricted by anxiety (MacIntyre, 1995). By acting as a filter, FLCA hampers the proficiency of the foreign language. For instance, an anxious foreign language learner in class will make little progress because he will spend more time reflecting on his anxiety than on the input and the task carried out (Luszczynska, 2017). Tobias (1986) also points out that anxiety may hinder the ability to take in information, process it, and to retrieve it when asked. Finally, MacIntyre (1995) reported that Eysenck (1979) also supports this theory. In fact, he states that:

“Worry and task-irrelevant cognitive activities associated with anxiety always impair the quality of performance. The major reason for this is that the task-irrelevant information involved in worry and cognitive self-concern competes with task-relevant information for space in the processing system. As a result, highly anxious subjects are effectively in a dual-task or divided attention situation, in contrast to the non-anxious subjects who primarily process task-relevant information (p.364).”

In other words, anxious students may experience thoughts of failure, worry and self-depreciation during the learning process, resulting in impaired cognitive performance. In light of the limited capacity of the human brain to process information, such types of thoughts compete for cognitive resources with normal cognitive demands (MacIntyre, 1999: 35). Consequently, anxious learners are less likely to progress quickly, will be less competent and produce less output in the target language than students who are more relaxed and able devote more of their attention to the learning content (Schwarzer, 2013; Luszczynska, 2017). Accordingly, the negative impact of FLCA on the learning process is undeniable, anxiety is a factor that negatively influences a successful language learning process (Luszczynska, 2017). Students can experience a difficulty in speaking in class, an uncomfortable feeling when responding to a drill or delivering prepared speeches, they can also hear a loud buzz whenever the foreign language teacher is speaking the target language, or even forget all they know about the language when they are asked to put it into practice (Horwitz et al., 1986). The apprehension FLCA students have towards a foreign language can be at the origin of careless errors in spelling or syntax. In fact, even though students suffering from FLA know a specific grammar point,

the feeling of anxiety and nervousness make them forget everything they know during a test or an oral exercise. (Horwitz et al., 1986). Therefore, as mentioned above, missing class, avoiding studying and postponing homework are among the most common behaviors of students suffering from anxiety in order to relieve it (Horwitz et al., 1986). Moreover, some researchers such as Aida, Horwitz, MacIntyre, Gardner and Young have all showed that there was a negative correlation between foreign language learning anxiety and learners 'grades in several foreign language classes (Luszczyńska, 2017). A restriction of the use of short-term memory and long-term memory has been proven by MacIntyre and Gardner with students having problems to recall vocabulary items due to anxiety (MacIntyre, 1995). In that respect, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety can be described as harmful or debilitating since it reduces the learner's performance through anxiety, doubt and reduced participation or avoidance of language activities (Luszczyńska, 2017).

A cyclical reaction can be seen between anxiety, cognitive abilities, and learner's behavior (MacIntyre, 1995) (see figure 2). According to MacIntyre (1995), this reaction can be observed in the following situation: "A demand to answer a question in a second language class" (p.92). In fact, asking a student a question may cause him or her to become anxious; anxiety leads to worry and rumination. Cognitive performance is diminished because of the divided attention and therefore performance suffers, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self-deprecating cognition which further impairs performance, and so on (MacIntyre, 1995)

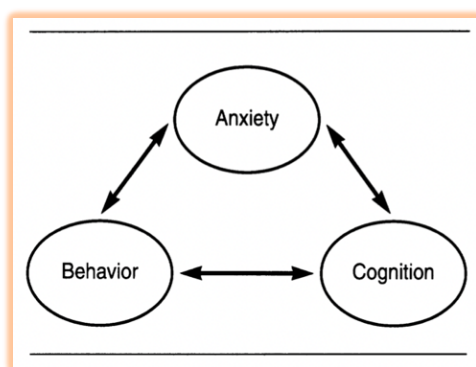


Figure 2. Recursive relations among anxiety, cognition and behaviour (MacIntyre, 1995)

Despite this rather negative picture of the effects of anxiety, it has also been suggested that language learners suffering from FLCA can use it as a trigger to improve performance (Horwitz et al., 1986). Some researchers, such as French and Park (2013), have concluded that there can also be a positive correlation between FLCA and the learning of a foreign language (Luszczyńska, 2017). Brewer (2010) pointed out in his book "Un regard agentique sur l'anxiété

langagière” that while some students display avoidance behaviour when they decide, out of anxiety, to skip lessons or to put off their schoolwork, other students, concerned about the quality of their academic performance, seem to use their anxiety to intensify their efforts to succeed (Luszczyńska, 2017). In fact, “students who experience anxiety feel the need to compensate for the negative effects of anxiety arousal by increased effort at learning” (Price, 1991 as cited in MacIntyre, 1999: 34). Thus, language anxiety can play a facilitating role and have a positive impact in foreign language learning since a slight strain might be useful to learn a language (MacIntyre, 1995). In that sense, FLCA can be described as positive or facilitating anxiety since it is leading to increased efforts and, therefore, better grades (Luszczyńska, 2017). Indeed, over-learning such as overstudying and overpreparing is reported as being related phenomena of positive FLCA (Horwitz et al., 1986).

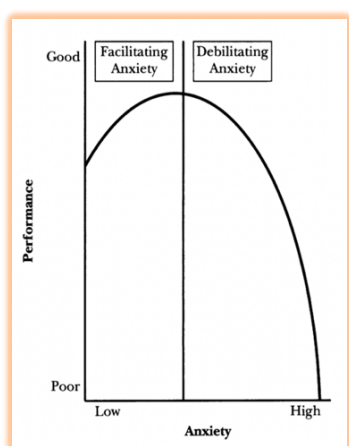


Figure 3: Inverted “U” relation between anxiety and performance

However, MacIntyre (1995: 92) explains that the impulse provoked by anxiety can “influence both the quality of the performance and the amount of effort invested in it”. In fact, there is a very thin line between facilitating anxiety and debilitating anxiety. As illustrated in figure n°3, this curvilinear relationship between anxiety and performance can be represented by an inverted “U” (MacIntyre, 1995).

MacIntyre (1995) reports that if the task is straightforward, then, anxiety has a positive effect and improves performance. On the contrary, if the task is difficult, the impact of anxiety on performance is negative and decreases performance. This subsection can, therefore, be closed by stating that anxiety can either have negative or positive effects on the foreign language learning process depending on the learner’ level of anxiety and the difficulty of the given task.

2.2.5.3. *Impact of FLA on the classroom's dynamic*

Students suffering from Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) experience individual mental and physical consequences. In addition to this, it is important to note that their internal anxiety also affects the overall dynamic of the classroom. As stated by Luszczynska (2017), when learners are anxious, their self-esteem is reduced, their self-confidence is diminished, and they are less inclined to take risks. In general, in class these learners tend to remain silent, do not respond or do not take part in oral activities or oral interactions. In fact, results show that anxious language learners participate less in class activities than relaxed learners (Spolsky, 1989, as cited in Luszczynska, 2017). According to some FLCA students, “*nothing should be said in the foreign language until it can be said correctly*” (Horwitz et al., 1986: 127). However, it is natural and part of the process to make mistakes when learning a new language. Consequently, a lack of participation of FLCA students can be pointed out and thus, the whole dynamic of the classroom is impacted. This unreal expectation of communicating perfectly in the foreign language before fluency is attained must only increase learners' level of anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Other typical behaviors of anxious foreign language learners are to hide in the last row, to seem to be unprepared or indifferent, and, in some cases, anxiety can even be the trigger to skip classes. All those strategies to hide their anxiety can, somehow, have an impact on the way the course takes place (Horwitz et al., 1986).

To conclude this section, it can be claimed that anxiety is one factor among others that can impact, often negatively but also positively at times, the successful learning of a foreign language. Therefore, strategies need to be implemented by both teachers and learners to support foreign language learning. To that end, several ideas will be given in the following section.

2.2.6. Foreign Language Anxiety-reducing strategies in the classroom

Since anxiety represents an important obstacle to the successful learning of a foreign language, it is crucial for the teacher to implement strategies to allay learners' anxiety. Here are some suggestions directed at reducing FLCA to help both teachers and students to improve language learning outcomes.

2.2.6.1. *Sufficient preparation and practice*

The first strategy to remedy learners' anxiety is good preparation and practice. In fact, anxious learners could significantly reduce their level of anxiety by preparing themselves and practicing sufficiently (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). A majority of foreign language learners underestimate their language capacity, however, with good preparation they could stop feeling inferior to their peers and gain greater level of confidence. Consequently, their level of anxiety would decrease considerably (as cited in Mahmud and Suryana, 2015). Similarly, Ganschow and Sparks (1996, as cited in Mahmud and Suryana, 2015) claim that poor abilities may contribute to language anxiety and, thus, that anxiety can be reduced through effective preparation. However, as Mahmud and Suryana (2015: 49) point out, "it seems that preparation is a suitable strategy for some language learners, but not for all". Indeed, individuals with trait anxiety is likely to be anxious regardless of the circumstances, even when properly prepared. Therefore, spending a considerable amount of time and effort compensating for the effects of language anxiety may be more beneficial for individuals with state anxiety rather than individuals with trait anxiety (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994; MacIntyre, 1999).

2.2.6.2. *Teacher's behaviour and pedagogical practices*

Amongst teachers' arsenal of strategies for helping anxious students cope with their anxiety, the following can be found.

2.2.6.2.1. Acknowledging FLA in the classroom

The first thing that teachers should do, as stated by Horwitz et al. (1986), is to acknowledge that anxiety is a common disorder among foreign language students and prevent this phenomenon by providing a short speech to students at beginning of the school year. As Von Wörde's research (2003: 4) pointed out, "anxiety can be reduced for many students merely by knowing that they were not alone in their fears or beliefs". The latter (2003) claims that having

a supportive teacher who understands and acknowledges learners' anxious feelings toward languages is crucial for a successful learning process. Moreover, Mahumud and Syryana (2015) suggest that teachers peer up anxious students and make them partners because peer-seeking allows anxious students to compare themselves with classmates that suffer from the same problem. As a result, students with FLCA may experience lower levels of anxiety. There is, however, the possibility that this strategy creates a barrier between anxious and non-anxious learners in the classroom.

2.2.6.2.2. Creating a benevolent classroom atmosphere

Secondly, creating a relaxed and benevolent classroom atmosphere could have a positive effect on learners' foreign language acquisition and reduce their anxiety levels, which in turn, could improve their ability to learn foreign languages. (Horwitz et al., 1986). In his book Gardner (2010: 139) insists on the fact that negative teacher's personality, behaviour and teaching methods will have a detrimental effect on learners' language anxiety and, hence, on achievement and motivation. For the same reasons, Hu and Wang (2014) emphasize that teachers have an important role to play in order to reduce anxiety in the classroom. Indeed, it is extremely important to provide a learning environment where students can speak without the fear of being judged by their teacher or classmates, where students are not forced, but encouraged to speak (Von Wörde, 2003). For this to occur, Luszczynska (2016) explains that teachers should be kind, and not overly serious. In fact, the latter claims that teachers who display a positive, friendly, and relaxed attitude towards their students and who provide them with an informal learning environment may be able to reduce the levels of anxiety in their classrooms. According to von Wörde (2003), having a fun class or nurturing a close relationship with the students can effectively reduce stress and increase learners' self-esteem. Gardner (2010) also endorses this statement and provides several recommendations on how to achieve it. As an example, teachers should address learners by their names, and discuss personal topics with them class, as this will facilitate a closer relationship between them and the teacher. Moreover, Von Wörde (2003), points out that creating a sense of community among the students may also contribute to the reduction of anxiety. The more closely students are connected to one another, the less likely they are to judge or tease one another. Thus, a pleasant learning atmosphere with a sense of connectedness among students will be able to reduce learners' fear of negative evaluation and communication apprehension (Hu and Wang, 2014). Moreover, a warm learning environment without stress may help students to feel more motivated to learn (Elkhafaifi, 2005).

2.2.6.2.3. Adopting appropriate teaching practices

Thirdly, appropriate pedagogical practices may also be implemented to alleviate anxiety in foreign language classrooms. For instance, adopting an encouraging attitude toward learners, focusing on participation, using games, songs or even technologies. Those strategies are discussed in the following subsections.

2.2.6.2.3.1. Encouraging attitude towards learners

Teachers should attempt to convey to students with unrealistic expectations concerning their knowledge of a foreign language that it is normal not to know everything and that this is not a sign of poor performance. It is essential that teachers help students develop greater self-confidence by encouraging them to stop underestimating their capabilities and to accept that mistakes are a natural part of learning. Consequently, continuous positive feedback and encouragement should be provided rather than criticism (Elkhafaifi, 2005; Hu and Wang, 2014). Furthermore, rather than correcting every student's mistake with a negative attitude, teachers should use correction methods that are gentle on students who are anxious (Luszczyńska, 2016). In fact, as stated by Hu and Wang (2014: 123), "Teachers should be tolerant of students' language mistakes, help students form tolerance of ambiguity and stand students' imperfect language". As an example of correction method, Guerencheal (2016) claims that "teachers should provide correct linguistic feedback for students through modeling (e.g., by repeating what the student said, but with the correct grammar) rather than harsh overt correction". As previously mentioned, teachers should emphasize to students that making mistakes does not indicate failure. As well, they should also encourage their students to take risks in class and to simply try their best even if they are uncertain of the answer (Elkhafaifi, 2005).

2.2.6.2.3.2. *Prioritizing in-class participation over assessment*

In foreign language classrooms, similar to other academic disciplines, evaluative assessments have been shown to serve as strong indicators of academic performance (Aydin et al., 2020). Nonetheless, such assessments may induce considerable levels of anxiety among students. Rotenberg (2002: 21) states that: "assessment methods which focus students and instruction on 'outcomes' or 'test results' rather than 'mastery of skills' and 'cognitive process' may indirectly undermine efficacy and negatively impact learning."

To address this issue, teachers should place a greater emphasis on fostering active participation within the classroom rather than solely relying on evaluation, which can substantially alleviate students' anxiety levels (Rotenberg, 2002). In fact, by prioritizing in-class participation as a primary focus over constant assessment, foreign language classrooms foster a safe and supportive learning environment. Luszczńska (2016) similarly advocates for the primacy of active participation in classroom activities with a reduction in the significance of exam scores.

In conclusion, the literature suggests that a shift towards promoting active engagement and reducing the sole reliance on evaluative assessments can effectively address the issue of anxiety in foreign language classrooms, while simultaneously improving the overall learning atmosphere.

2.2.6.2.3.3. Using language learning games

Games were not always regarded as a didactic resources; however, in contemporary times, they have gained significance within the pedagogical domain. Research indicates that the utilization of learning games serves as an effective means to reduce students' foreign language classroom anxiety.

Firstly, engaging in learning games leads to increased production of endorphins, which have stimulating properties and thus become efficacious tools for enhancing academic performance (Lorente, 2012). Games activate cognitive strategies, facilitating quicker and easier learning, with an increased likelihood of transferring acquired knowledge to other situations in the future. For some learners, learning through games significantly aids comprehension and memorization. Moreover, games are particularly effective in motivating students, heightening their attentiveness, and fostering active participation in the learning process (Chou, 2014; Macedonia, 2005). Additionally, learning games offer an alternative learning approach distinct from repetitive and conventional written exercises (Macedonia, 2005).

Furthermore, language learning games play a fundamental socializing role in the interactions with peers, enhancing learners' sense of classroom integration and fostering a feeling of belonging through closer relationships with both peers and teachers. Consequently, language learning games present an excellent opportunity for developing group dynamics and

promoting a more favorable classroom atmosphere, thereby serving as a valuable means of alleviating anxiety (Lorente, 2012; Yang et al., 2022).

Finally, games and fun activities may help create a peaceful and relaxing classroom environment, which in turn diminishes anxiety levels among students and enhance their ability to learn (Chou, 2014). Lorente (2012: 7) agrees with this viewpoint in her article, stating: “Playful activities are a way, a resource to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom that helps reduce students’ anxiety and enhances learning.”³ (Translated from Spanish).

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that what motivates certain students might not necessarily hold true for others. Hence, teachers must be mindful of employing learning games judiciously to attain positive outcomes in the classroom. Lorente (2012: 10) asserts:

*“Games must align with the objectives and contents of the program; they must have a clear function within the didactic planning, they should not be used as a filter activity and should not lose sight of the students’ learning level, needs and interest.”*⁴ (Translated from Spanish).

2.2.6.2.3.4. Using songs

As it has already been stated previously, teacher’s methodology influences greatly students’ level of anxiety. According to the results of a study conducted by Dolean in 2014, music may be another valuable tool in a foreign language classroom for reducing students’ anxiety.

“A large body of research has shown that music can enhance the cognitive variables involved in (second) language learning performances, but the past decade has seen a veritable surge of studies, especially from the field of neurosciences, providing solid evidence reinforcing the connection between the two.” (Dolean, 2014: 640).

As a matter of fact, incorporating songs into foreign language classes can be an effective method for decreasing anxiety as well as increasing motivation and improving academic performance (Dolean, 2014). In fact, according to scientific evidence, listening to music can contribute to individuals’ well-being by triggering the release of a tranquilizing hormone,

³ Original Spanish version : « Las actividades lúdicas son una vía, un recurso para crear una atmósfera relajada en la clase que ayude a reducir la ansiedad de los alumnos y favorezca el aprendizaje. » (Lorente, 2012: 7).

⁴ Original Spanish version : Los juegos deben corresponderse con los objetivos y contenidos del programa; tener una función clara dentro de la planificación didáctica prevista, no como actividad de relleno y sin perder de vista el nivel de aprendizaje de los estudiantes, sus necesidades e intereses.” (Lorente, 2012: 10).

known as prolactin, in the brain (Huron, 2006). Music has been shown to positively affect individuals' mood as it tends to bring them a sense of pleasure and happiness, as well as make them become more active and willing to participate (Chou, 2014; Dolean, 2014). Therefore, this method may contribute to the reduction of anxiety and to establishing a positive classroom environment, both of which can have a positive impact on improving the quality of learning for students.

Additionally, as mentioned above, the teaching of songs in foreign language classrooms may have a significant positive impact on student achievement. Indeed, using music to teach a foreign language provides arousing stimuli to students, which modulates their memory, increase the motivation of the learners, and facilitate the learning process (Chou, 2014; Dolean, 2014). For instance, vocabulary items encountered in songs are more likely to be memorized, since it is more fun, entertaining and motivating, than those discovered when reading a table on a piece of paper (less arousing stimuli). However, this strategy is mainly efficient for rather anxious students at the early stage of the learning phase (Dolean, 2014).

2.2.6.2.3.5. Using technologies

In this digital globalization era, modern technologies have experience exponential growth and development (Berg-Beckhoff et al., 2017). The utilization of digital tools in foreign language classroom has been found to yield significant benefits for learners with high anxiety (Yang et al., 2018; Chang et al., 2020). Embracing digital technologies may play a pivotal role in moderating Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) among students with high anxiety, as online language learning tools can create a less stressful and more accommodating learning environment (Yang et al., 2022).

Using technologies also allows to “provide an authentic context that reflects the way the knowledge will be used in real life” (Herrington et al., 2014: 70). In other words, students can develop language skills more effectively than with a textbook by immersing themselves in real-world situations through virtual learning experiences, which has been regarded as a valuable alternative approach to foster authentic and meaningful language learning development (Yang et al., 2022 : 4, as cited in Chang et al., 2020). Engaging with technologies not only fosters enjoyment in the learning process but also contributes to the enhancement of students' memory

retention since the visual representation of learning content facilitates better absorption of knowledge (Yang et al., 2022).

Moreover, English digital learning tools are well-suited to assist teachers and guide students in their language acquisition journey (Krystalli et al., 2014). Departing from traditional learning practices and embracing digital alternatives has been shown to boost learning motivation among students (Chang et al., 2020). Examples of technologies that can be effectively integrated into foreign language classrooms include Kahoot, Flowchase, Quizzlet, Wooclap, Whooo's reading, Mindmeister, and Newsela.

In conclusion, the integration of digital tools within foreign language classrooms offers valuable benefits, particularly for students with high anxiety. Embracing technology not only creates a less stressful learning environment but also provides students with engaging language learning experiences, fostering motivation and improved retention of knowledge.

2.2.7. The benefits of reducing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety

Scholars in the literature have commonly acknowledged that Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a concern for both language learners and teachers (MacIntyre, 1999; Jin et al., 2021). Its impact extends beyond individual feelings of unease, affecting the overall classroom dynamic and students' language performance, making it crucial to address and mitigate. This section explores the impact of FLCA on classroom dynamics and language performance, highlighting the benefits of reducing anxiety levels for both teachers and students.

Firstly, reducing FLCA leads to several positive outcomes in the language learning environment. By fostering a low-anxiety atmosphere, an effective learning environment is established, enabling increased participation from all students and diminished avoidance behavior. In fact, Gardner (2010: 185-888) wrote in his book "Motivation and Second Language Acquisition" that:

"A tense classroom atmosphere arouses student's anxiety which hinders students' motivation and effectiveness in language learning, while a relaxed atmosphere helps students express their opinions and make them feel at ease even when they make mistakes".

Consequently, this enhanced engagement positively influences students' interest and active involvement in the classroom (Campbell and Show, 1994). Furthermore, students feel at ease to speak in the target language in front of their classmates, creating a more active and engaged classroom. Lowering anxiety levels also encourages students to dare to speak, even when they anticipate making mistakes, instilling confidence in their language abilities (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

Secondly, empirical studies by scholars such as Young (1991) have consistently demonstrated the negative influence of FLCA on language learning and performance. Therefore, the reduction of students' anxiety levels can have a positive impact on language acquisition. Lowering FLCA levels fosters increased motivation among students, thereby encouraging active engagement in language learning (Young, 1991). Moreover, reduced anxiety leads to improved oral proficiency since students feel more confident speaking in front of their peers. Creating a low-stress learning environment, as advocated by Campbell and Show (1994), facilitated language acquisition by allowing students to focus on learning without undue anxiety. When teachers address and alleviate students' anxiety, "they give them chances of success, their self-esteem and confidence can also be improved" (Hu and Wang, 2014: 124). Therefore, students can overcome learning barriers, reveal their full language learning potential, and perform better academically.

In conclusion, foreign language anxiety exerts a significant influence on both classroom dynamics and language performance. By recognizing its impact and actively reducing anxiety levels, teachers can create a positive and effective language learning environment, ultimately benefiting students, and facilitating their language acquisition journey. If teachers adopt a positive mood, support, and encourage students it will give them strength to accomplish things that they find at first difficult, increase their self-esteem and also their confidence. In that sense, they will push their limits which will have a positive impact on their involvement in the classroom and on their performance in the target foreign language (Hu and Wang, 2014).

2.2.8. The importance of learning Foreign Languages for French-speakers

*“One language sets you in a corridor for life.
Two languages open every door along the way.”*
Frank Smith (1992).

2.2.8.1. Importance of Foreign Languages in the era of globalization

In the age of globalization, Foreign Languages (FL) such as English and Spanish have gained profound significance due to their role as international communication tools. These languages stand as some of the most widely spoken in the world, underlying their paramount importance.

The case of English is particularly striking, gathering over 375 million native speakers and 1.5 billion non-native speakers (Mundi Linguae, 2021). These impressive figures underline the pervasive influence of English worldwide, positioning it as a lingua Franca (Murray, 2006). Indeed, no other language has managed to match the extent of its global dominance. For that reason, English holds the distinction of being the most widely spoken language on a global scale (O'Donnell & Toebosch, 2008). With the globalization, an impressive number of people (native and non-native) use English daily for diverse purposes such as work, social interactions, and travel (Murray, 2006; Phillipson, 2009). Indeed, English takes a prominent role in numerous fields encompassing finance, scientific research, technology, engineering, medicine, trade, business, literature, advertising, the film industry, higher education, the internet, fashion, and tourism, among others (Rao, 2019). In his article, Phillipson (2009: 336) clearly illustrates the aforementioned assertion:

“ (...) , the use of English is increasing throughout Europe: as the dominant corporate language; 70%+ of films on TV and in cinemas in Europe are Hollywood products; youth is consumerist, Coca-colonised, and more familiar with U.S. products and norms than others; English is the most widely learned foreign language and other foreign languages are mostly in retreat; research is increasingly published in English, which is seen as more prestigious than a national language. These developments all impact on other languages, with English as a foreign language in continental Europe transforming into a kind of second language. ”

(Phillipson, 2009)

In today's context, the prevalence of resources such as advertisements, scientific reviews, Instagram posts, scientific reviews, movies, YouTube videos, and more presents a challenge for individual who are not proficient in English or struggle with Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Luxury brands, corporations, influencers, Youtubers, and a multitude of others often opt to present their content in English, seeking to connect with a broader audience. Even in instances where the content is not English, anglicism are increasingly included (Murray, 2006). English enables individuals to access to a wealth of information and opportunities in a global scale. The omnipresence of English should serve as a motivating factor for both Belgian French-speaking learners and teachers to address and mitigate FLCA. In a world characterized by globalization, struggling with language anxiety poses significant intricacies. Whether in a professional setting or travelling, the fear of communicating in a Foreign Language (FL) can greatly restrict individuals' interactions. Proficiency in languages like English and Spanish also plays a crucial role in fostering connections with a much broader spectrum of people beyond solely French speakers. The importance of speaking diverse foreign languages in today's remains undeniable.

While Spanish may not have achieved the same level of global diffusion as English, it is continuously extending its influence worldwide (Niño-Murcia & Godenzzi, 2008). Gathering over 500 million native and non-native speakers (Mundi Linguae, 2021), Spanish stands as another vital language in the global landscape.

2.2.8.2. Importance of Foreign Languages in Belgium (Brussels)

Even within their own country, Belgian French-speakers find English to be quite essential for communication. Despite French, Dutch and German being the official national languages, English is frequently considered the fourth language in Brussels. This distinction arises from Brussels' status as an international capital, where English holds equal importance alongside French and Dutch. Additionally, given Brussels' role as the capital of Europe, Spanish has gained significance in Belgium, ranking among the top ten most spoken languages in the country (O'Donnell & Toebosch – 2008).

“English, already reinforced in its importance due to Brussels' position as the headquarters of both NATO and the European Union, will expand further among Francophones and Dutch speakers who do not want to learn or use each other's language.”

(O'Donnell & Toebosch, 2008: 155).

As highlighted in the aforementioned passage, Brussels serves as the headquarters for NATO and the European Union, resulting in a concentration of international organizations. Consequently, individuals associated with these organizations, whether in proximity or from afar, often utilize English for communication.

Mastering foreign languages undoubtedly presents diverse job opportunities for students in their future careers and lives. In contemporary society, being multilingual offers a substantial edge, with many companies valuing employees who can proficiently engage and work across various languages. It enables businesses to access global market and establish connections with clients worldwide (Ilyosovna, 2020; Rao, 2019). Notably, English and Spanish stand out as two for the most widely spoken languages within corporate settings, proving invaluable for conducting international business (Murray, 2006).

In conclusion, the significance of learning foreign languages in today's world extends beyond mere communication. It empowers individuals with opportunities, and, as the world continues to evolve, the ability to navigate its linguistic complexities becomes an essential skill for personal growth. Consequently, struggling with Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is very problematic as it can truly close doors to future job opportunities.

2.3. Conclusion of the theoretical framework

In the initial section of the theoretical framework, a survey of the anxiety literature was undertaken. This involves a comprehensive explication of the phenomenon by means of a rigorous definition. Then, a discerning classification of anxiety was executed, distinguishing between distinct categories such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation-specific anxiety. Given that Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) falls within the realm of situation-specific anxieties, it served as the foundational premise for commencing the second section of the theoretical framework.

As previously stated, the second section of the theoretical framework involves a comprehensive inquiry into the literature pertaining to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). This investigation encompassed a thorough analysis of its conceptualization, underlying causes, impact on language learners, and potential coping strategies. The findings of the review revealed that individuals experiencing Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) face a substantial obstacle that hampers their language learning process. It can be concluded from the conceptualization that the pioneering work of Horwitz and other researchers has played a crucial role in shaping the extensive scope of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety as we know it today. Notably, the introduction of the FLCA scale in 1986 has facilitated a wealth of research, thereby expanding the knowledge base surrounding this subject. In the subsequent phase, a systematic elucidation of the three principal types of anxiety linked to foreign language learning. Then, an array of internal and external factors related to the phenomenon of FLCA was examined. Among the internal and personal variables influencing FLCA, several significant elements emerged, including the learner's gender, personality traits such as perfectionism, fear of negative evaluation, introversion, low self-esteem, proficiency levels, and comprehension abilities. Likewise, among the external variable, distinct aspects surfaced as contributing factors to FLCA. These encompassed the teacher's attitude and pedagogical practices, the overall classroom atmosphere, the nature of speaking activities, the presence of native speakers in the classroom, as well as the diversity of target languages being studied. Subsequently, an extensive analysis was conducted to assess the influence of FLCA on learners and the dynamics within the classroom setting. The findings revealed that FLCA has the potential to adversely affect learners' mental and physical behavior, cognitive abilities, learning process and overall classroom dynamic, signifying a potentially debilitating aspect of anxiety.

Conversely, an interesting observation emerged, indicating that FLCA could also yield positive outcomes by serving as motivating force propelling learners to enhance their performance. In this context, anxiety assumes a facilitating role. Notwithstanding its potential for facilitation, the extant literature emphasizes the paramount importance of anxiety reduction. Then, a dedicated section was allocated to the exploration of strategies aimed at alleviating anxiety within the foreign language classroom. Although the list presented is not exhaustive, several interesting ideas advised by researchers were discussed. From the perspective of students, it was suggested that adequate preparation and practice for language classes can prove effective. Additionally, teachers can implement various strategies, including acknowledging FLCA, fostering a benevolent classroom atmosphere by adapting their personality and behavior to create a comfortable environment for students, and promoting a sense of community among learners. Furthermore, adopting an encouraging attitude towards language learners, prioritizing in-class participation over assessment, incorporating learning games, songs, and technological tools are also recommended practices. It can be concluded that the pursuit of anxiety alleviation is worth considering, as a low-anxiety classroom environment remains substantial for both the overall classroom dynamic and students' language performance. Moreover, within the current context of globalization, the acquisition of foreign languages is imperative. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that teachers receive appropriate education and awareness regarding the issue of FLCA to equip them with the necessary tools to address it effectively. To this end, the following compilation comprises books and articles that offer compelling insights and may engender interest : *How languages are learned* by Patsy M. Lightbown and Nina Spada (2021), *Language Learning Strategies: What every Teacher Should Know* by Rebecca L. Oxford (1990), *Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety* by E.K. Horwitz, M.B. Horwitz and J. Cope (1986), *Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning* by L. Hu and N. Wang (2014), *Impact de l'anxiété sur l'apprentissage des langues* by S. Łuszczynska (2017), *Affect in Foreign Language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere* by D.J. Young (1999).

3. Practical analysis

3.1. Research methodology

3.1.1. Overview of the purpose of the survey

Although Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a well-documented subject in the literature, there is potential to expand the discussion in some respects. For instance, a majority of the previous research has been conducted among learners of foreign languages living in India, Japan, Korea, Ethiopia, but very few studies have taken place in Belgium. Therefore, this survey is worthy of attention because FLCA appraisal can be very different from high school students living in Belgium to students living in other countries. In addition, despite a substantial amount of research, studies focusing on language anxiety and gender have not been conclusive and none have been conducted among upper-high school students in the French-speaking parts of Belgium. For that reason, the practical analysis aims to address the following questions:

1. Does gender impact FLCA in Belgian French-speaking classroom?
2. Is there an impact of the origin of the foreign language on the level of anxiety among FLL?

The primary goal of this survey was to attempt to capture French-speaking Belgian upper-secondary school students' opinion on anxiety in the environment of a language classroom. Currently, the number of Belgian high school students learning a Foreign Language as a compulsory course has reached more than 365.381 (Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, 2022). Given the lack of research on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety among Belgian high school students focusing on gender, it is crucial to establish links between FLCA and gender and investigate the effect on Belgian student's foreign language learning. Moreover, since foreign language classroom anxiety can considerably affect many aspects of foreign language learning, it is crucial to spread awareness amongst students as well as teachers and to conduct as much research as possible on this phenomenon. This chapter will first present the materials and the procedures employed to conduct the survey, along with an overview of the participants' profile. Subsequently, the focus will shift towards the quantitative analysis encompassing a comprehensive examination of the instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and survey results. Finally, a comprehensive discussion and conclusion of the practical analysis will be provided.

3.1.2. Material (online questionnaire)

To assess learners' level of anxiety in Spanish and English classes in the French-speaking region of Belgium, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire that was divided into three parts. The first part was aimed distinguishing the student's profile. For that matter, personal questions, mainly in relation to the foreign language they are learning, were asked to the participants. For instance, students had to provide their gender, their age, the name of the school they are in, their year of study, the langue(s) they are learning, their level of proficiency, how much they enjoy learning foreign languages and, finally, their level of anxiety when they are in language classes. The answers to those questions were crucial to enhancing the data analysis and determining the influence of gender on foreign language classroom anxiety. The second part of the questionnaire was mainly made up of Horwitz et al.'s Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (1986) and aimed at measuring students' self-reported level of anxiety. In fact, the original FLCA scale was first analyzed, then modified, and finally translated into French since the research focused both on English learners and Spanish learners. As it had previously been mentioned, the FLCA scale is a 33-item and five-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. The set of questions was aimed at analyzing three specific anxieties: communication apprehension (8 items), test anxiety (5 items) and fear of negative evaluation (9 items) (Von Wörde, 2003). Each item could be ranked on a 5 Likert scale: 1= strongly agree (*Tout à fait d'accord*), 2= agree, 3= neutral, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree (*Pas du tout d'accord*). Items are worded in such manner that a rating of 5 indicates a low level of anxiety, while other items are worded so that a low rating (1 or 2) indicates high anxiety.



1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tout à fait d'accord				Pas du tout d'accord

Figure 4: Example of response to each of the questions

This survey has a majority of Likert scale questions lending themselves to a quantitative analysis. However, in the third part of the questionnaire, two open-ended questions were added to capture learners' opinion about the phenomenon of FLCA. The reason for employing different methods was to obtain a fuller and more complete picture of the research situation. Among those open questions, the first one was compulsory and asked students the name of the secondary school they are in. The second open question, however, was non-compulsory and asked students to give the teacher some tips on how to decrease the feeling of anxiety in class. This latter was added in the questionnaire to elicit learners' point of view and to retrieve

interesting information. Participants were notified when an answer was mandatory by a red cross next to the question.

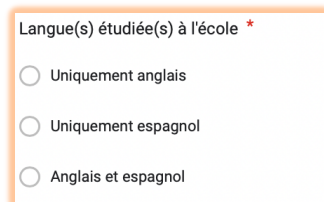
In addition, it is important to note that eight out of the thirty-three items in the questionnaire have been reverse-coded. In fact, those items were reflecting a lack of anxiety, thus, to remain in the direction of anxiety, the following positive items have been reversed and reinterpreted, then translated into French. Some of the items were simply reversed using the negative adverb ‘not’ to create negatively worded statement (e.g., ‘I don’t worry about making mistakes in FL class’). Here is the list of all the items that have been reversed:

Item n°... /33	Original item	Reverse coded item	French translated item
2	I do not worry about making mistakes in language class.	I worry about making mistakes in language class.	J’ai peur de faire des fautes en cours de langue.
5	It wouldn’t bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	It would bother me to take more foreign language classes.	Cela me dérangerait d’avoir plus de cours de langue.
8	I am usually at ease during my tests in my language class.	I am usually not at ease during tests in my language class.	En général, je ne suis pas à l’aise pendant les tests de mon cours de langue.
14	I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	I would be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	Je serais stressé(e) de parler la langue étrangère avec des natifs.
18	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	I don’t feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	Je ne me sens pas sûr(e) de moi quand je parle à mon cours de langue.
22	I don’t feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	I feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.	Je me sens obligé(e) de bien me préparer pour les cours de langue.
28	When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.	When I’m on my way to language class, I feel very unsure and anxious.	Quand je m’apprête à aller en cours de langue je me sens peu confiant(e) et stressé(e).
32	I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	I would probably feel uncomfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.	Je me sentirais probablement mal à l’aise en présence de locuteurs natifs de la langue étrangère.

Table 1 : Reversed questionnaire items

An advantage of reverse coding items in the questionnaire is that it allows to see whether or not the respondents are paying attention to the content of the questionnaire. Moreover, having in a Likert-format scale, items that are not going in the same direction can create confusion and make it difficult to interpret the results when analyzing the data. Indeed, as mentioned above, the items have been reworded so that a rating of five indicates a low level of anxiety, whereas other items have been reworded so that a low rating (1 or 2) indicates a high level of anxiety. Mixing items that are going in the sense of anxiety with items that are stating the opposite might beget threats to the reliability. In fact, it is important to remain consistent in the sense of the questions, thus, this practice is commonly used and quite logical (Dewale et al., 2016: 56). To use the SPSS program, it was mandatory to recode the negative items (the ones that were not going in the sense of anxiety).

It is important to mention that three questionnaires were created: one for students learning only English, one for students learning only Spanish and, one for students learning both foreign languages. The very first question was designed to direct students to the appropriate questionnaire. As a result, students were asked if they were studying only English, Spanish or both English and Spanish (see picture below).



Langue(s) étudiée(s) à l'école *

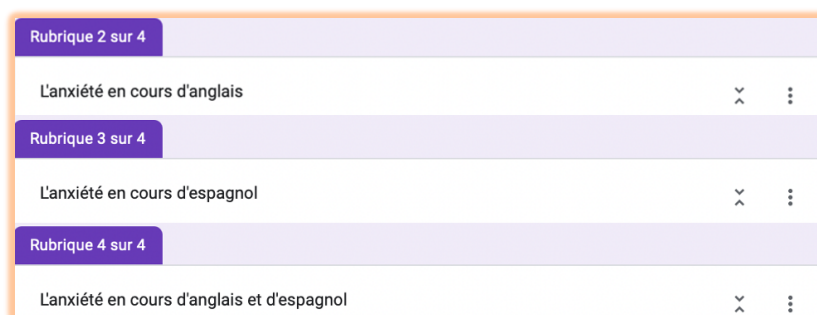
☐ Uniquement anglais

☐ Uniquement espagnol

☐ Anglais et espagnol

Figure 5 : First question of the google form

Once students answered that first question, they were directed directly to the appropriate questionnaire (see picture below). Making a distinction between the languages studied by the participants provided an opportunity to analyze the difference in anxiety levels between those in English classes and those in Spanish classes.



Rubrique 2 sur 4

L'anxiété en cours d'anglais

Rubrique 3 sur 4

L'anxiété en cours d'espagnol

Rubrique 4 sur 4

L'anxiété en cours d'anglais et d'espagnol

Figure 6: The three different questionnaires of the google form

In addition to the students' questionnaire, a separate google form was also developed to collect the opinions of teachers regarding the phenomenon of FLCA. To understand its purpose, participants could read a short text before answering the questions. After that, teachers were required to answer a relatively small number of questions.

The questionnaire was mostly made up of closed-ended questions (8) and only a few open-ended questions (3) were asked. For the google form to be submitted, each question had to be answered. Only two of the questions were concerned with the creation of a teacher's profile (e.g., asking for the region where they work and the languages they teach), the remaining questions were focusing on FLCA.

The main purpose of this second questionnaire was to be able to compare the perspectives of students and teachers regarding FLCA in the end. Here is the list of questions that were provided to teachers:

- Are you familiar with the concept of "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety"?
- Do you consider anxiety to be a hindrance to the acquisition of a foreign language?
- What factors do you believe contribute to students' feeling of anxiety in language classes?
- Based on your observations during your career, what are the most common manifestations of anxiety in students?
- In terms of anxiety, do you observe a difference between male and female students?
- In your opinion, does English causes more anxiety than Spanish (or the other way around?)
- Have you ever tried reducing anxiety in your classroom(s) by implementing some techniques?
- Can you suggest any strategies that may help reduce the anxiety that some students experience during language lessons?
- Which one of the following strategies would you be prepared to use in class to alleviate language anxiety?

3.1.3. Procedure

The data were collected in 2023 using the free online software Google Forms, which enables the creation of surveys as well as sharing them with others. The questionnaire was first delivered to a list of upper-secondary school teachers of English and Spanish in the French-speaking part of Belgium. It was decided to focus on FLCA among upper-secondary school students of English and Spanish since FLCA is anticipated to manifest more prominently in higher grade levels, as detailed in section 2.2.4.1.3.

Teachers who agreed to participate in the study were first asked to answer the questionnaire designed specifically for them and then, to provide their students with the second questionnaire. A QR code redirecting directly to the questionnaire was created to make the process easier and faster for both teachers and students. Its purpose was to facilitate and motivate teachers and students to take part in the research project. Students were given the QR code to the google form at the end of their scheduled language classes or via email by their assigned teachers.

A note explaining the research process and assuring their confidentiality was provided to the students prior to their participation in the study. The questionnaire was completed by students during the last week of the academic year. The purpose of giving them the questionnaire at the end of the year was for them to reflect on the entire experience they had in their respective language classes.

The participants filled out the form and took part in the research on a voluntary basis during their free time after school. Nevertheless, if students participated in the survey and provided their email address, a gift of 30 euros was potentially at stake at FNAC to increase participation rate. Thanks to anonymity, students were able to open up about how they really feel in language class without having to think about what their teacher or classmates are going to say.

3.1.4. Participants

The initial section of the Google Form was designed with the objective of constructing the participants' profile. To do so, respondents were prompted to provide answers to the following questions:

- Are you a male or a female?
- How old are you?
- What is the name of your school?
- At which academic grade level are you enrolled?
- How many hours do you have per week of the target foreign language?
- Would you characterize yourself as predominantly anxious or calm?
- Do you like foreign language classes?
- Is it common for you to experience anxiety during your foreign language classes?
- Within the context of foreign language learning, in what scenario do you typically find yourself experiencing heightened levels of anxiety? (e.g., oral production, tests, ...)

Upon examining the collected data, the subsequent conclusions were drawn. A total of 80 Belgian upper-high school students of English and/ or Spanish classes participated in the research on a voluntary basis. These participants can be divided into two groups based on gender. In accordance with self-identification, the sample consists of 30 males and 50 females. As a result of the language(s) studied at school, three distinct categories can be identified among the students:

- 22 students solely learning English [9 males (40.9%) and 13 females (59.1%)]
- 3 students solely learning Spanish [2 males (66.7) and 1 female (33.3%)]
- 55 students learning both English and Spanish [19 males (34.5%) and 36 females (65.5%)]

As evident from the aforementioned, there exists a notable lack of homogeneity in the distribution of responses across the three distinct questionnaires. Given the relatively modest scale of the total sample size ($n=80$), partitioning it into three sections has resulted in constrained quantity of respondents allocated to each respective questionnaire. Notably, the questionnaire designed for students learning both English and Spanish stands out with the highest count of responses, rendering it the foundational dataset for the ensuing practical analysis. However, it is imperative to underline that for preliminary data analysis purposes,

encompassing aspects such as learners' profile questions or students' point of view through open-ended questions, the use of all three questionnaire remains imperative.

Students who participated in this study came from seven different schools, each of which is located in a French-speaking regions of Belgium (red area in the map below). The following is a list of the schools involved in the research. On the map, each school is represented by a red dot.

- Communauté scolaire Sainte-Marie (Namur)
- Collège Notre-Dame de la Paix (Erpent)
- Collège de Godinne-Burnot (Profondeville)
- Collège Sainte-Croix et Notre-Dame (Hannut)
- Lycée Martin V (Louvain-la-Neuve)
- Institut de la Providence (Wavre)
- Institut Notre-Dame de Loverval (Charleroi)

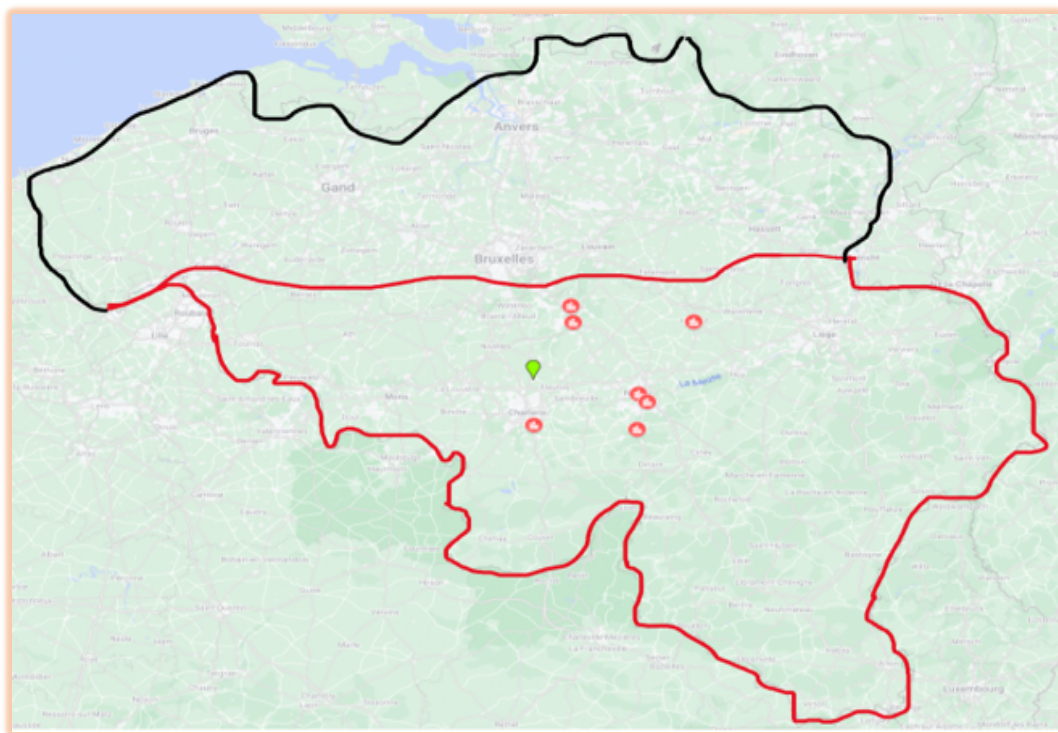


Figure 7: Geographic distribution of educational institutions involved in the survey

It is important to note that, in spite of the relatively small size of the sample (N=80), it is fairly representative, as the participants come from schools located throughout the French-speaking region of the country.

Since the study was exclusively targeted at upper-high school students, namely 4th, 5th, and 6th graders, it is not surprising that the data indicate the participation of students ranging in age from 15 to 19. The major purpose for focusing on those years of study is because students may experience greater anxiety in these classes since the material is more challenging and difficult at higher levels of school. An overview of the participants' year of study is provided below:

- 20 students in 4th grade
- 25 students in 5th grade
- 35 students in 6th grade

It is also important to note that school curricula regarding languages vary depending on the preferences of each student. Because of that, a wide variety of profiles can be observed in the survey:

- student with 2 hours/ week of English
- Students with 4 hours / week of English
- Students with 2 hours / week of Spanish
- Students with 4 hours / week of Spanish

As far as their proficiency in the target language(s) is concerned, it can be stated that students' proficiency in English ranged from B1- to B2+ and their proficiency in Spanish ranged from A1 to B2. As we may guess, all classes contained mixed proficiencies.

As for teacher participation, despite the huge number of teachers contacted, only eight responded to the Google form created specifically for them. Among the participants, three come from Namur (37.5%), one from Bruxelles (12.5%), another one from Wavre (37.5%) and the last one from Mons (12.5%). There are three of them that teach only English (37.5%), three others are solely dedicated to teaching Spanish (37.5%) and two remaining teach both English and Spanish (25%).

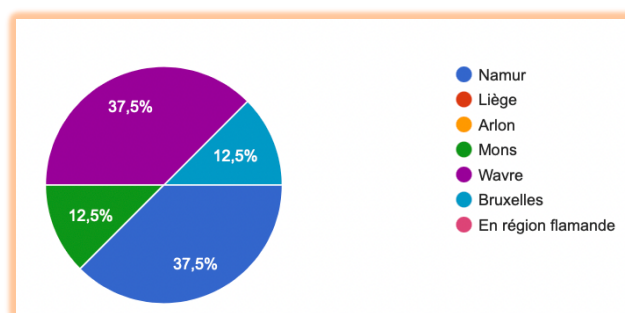


Figure 8: Geographical distribution of teachers within various regions

3.2. Quantitative analysis

This section primarily centers on the descriptive analysis of the quantitative data. It commences by elucidating the instruments employed for data collection, subsequently detailing the methodology employed, and ultimately discussing in detail the quantitative section of the survey.

3.2.1. Data collection instruments

The quantitative data were analyzed through SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and Excel to find out relative mean values. The main objective of this analysis is to discern potential variations in Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) levels between female and male learners, as well as to ascertain if particular foreign target languages exhibited higher susceptibility to anxiety. To achieve this, the procedure involved computing the mean value of each participant and subsequently establishing the presence or absence of such differences.

3.2.2. Data collection method

Initially, data acquisition was conducted using an online Google Form. Following the completion of the questionnaire by the participants, the data were subsequently organized within an Excel spreadsheet and imported automatically into the SPSS software. Ultimately, the data extracted from the Google Form were subjected to computation and analyzed employing the SPSS program or directly analyzed within the Google Form. To calculate the data, Horwitz et al. (1986) introduced a scoring system for the responses in the FLCAS scale. The FLCAS score is derived from 33 items and can span a range of 33 (as the least anxiety) to 165 points (as the most anxiety) since each item is rated in a 5-point Likert Scale. The summation of individual item scores allowed for the assessment of students' anxiety levels. Then, based on their anxiety scores (as presented in Table 1), participants are categorized into one of the three distinct levels of anxiety. As it can be seen by the table below, the higher the score, the more anxious the student is.

Anxiety level	Score range
1. Low anxiety	33 to 66
2. Moderate anxiety	67 to 99
3. High anxiety	100 to 132
4. Very high anxiety	133 to 165

Table 2: Categorization of anxiety levels based on Horwitz's score ranges

However, the present study modified the scoring system to make it more intuitive and to facilitate the participants' understanding. As a result, each item was strategically rephrased to articulate an anxious feeling (e.g., "I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class"). Indeed, the wording of the items and the scoring scale were reversed, so that the lower scores now indicate higher levels of anxiety. Therefore, the score can range from 33 (as the most anxiety) to 165 (as the least anxiety). Given the modifications, the interpretation of the score ranges would be as follow:

Anxiety level	Score range
1. Very high anxiety	33 to 66
2. High anxiety	67 to 99
3. Moderate anxiety	100 to 132
4. Low anxiety	133 to 165

Table 3: Reversed categorization of anxiety levels based on Horwitz's score ranges

3.2.3. Quantitative analysis

The objective of this section is to undertake a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data acquired from the two Google Forms focusing on the two research questions listed in the introduction. Primarily, the learners' questionnaire will be subjected to examination, followed by the analysis of teachers' questionnaire.

3.2.3.1. *Learners' quantitative data analysis*

As mentioned above, learners' questionnaire comprised three distinct sections. Initial inquiries were designed to establish learners' profile. Subsequently, the second part consisted of Horwitz et al. (1986) 33-item multiple-choice questionnaire. The last section (open-ended questions) will be discussed in section 3.3.

3.2.3.1.1. Learners' profile data analysis

Within the learners' profile questions, certain inquiries possess the potential to discern the predisposition of participants toward experiencing foreign language classroom anxiety. Within this segment, the answers of all three questionnaires will be used.

3.2.3.1.1.1. Analyzing general anxiety levels

Participants were prompted to respond to the query ‘In general, I consider myself to be ...’ and presented with the choice between “stressed/ anxious” or “calm/relaxed”, it became clear that individuals opting for “stressed/anxious” could be reasonably classified within the high FLCA level group, providing an initial insight to the overall anxiety levels prevalent among upper-secondary students in the French-speaking region of Belgium. The outcomes indicated that among 80 participants, a majority (42 participants) commonly experience a state of anxiety, while 48 participants (48%) generally do not encounter such feelings of anxiety (see Figure 9). The data will be compared with the final anxiety scores collected from the survey to determine how many of the general anxious learners also experience anxiety in the specific context of the foreign language classroom (see section 3.2.3.1.2.3.). This analysis aims to establish whether a correlation exists between general anxiety and Foreign Language Classroom anxiety (FLCA). Individuals with general anxiety might have heightened fear of being judged negatively by others. In a foreign language classroom, this fear can intensify as they worry about their language skills being evaluated by peers and teachers. Moreover, general anxiety can lead to negative self-evaluation and self-doubt. This can be especially pronounced in the context of language learning where individuals might doubt their language abilities. While general anxiety might play a role in contributing to FLCA, it is important to note that such a relationship not an obligatory outcome.

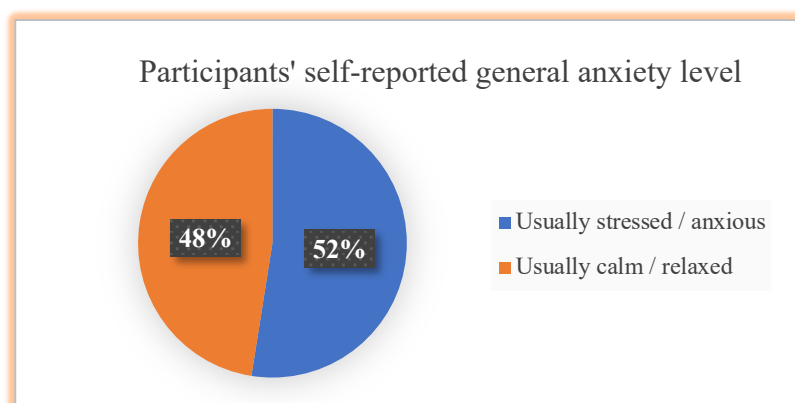


Figure 9: Overall participants' self-reported general anxiety level

It is interesting to note the significant difference in self-reported general anxiety based on gender. Indeed, from the provided information, the self-reported anxiety level among female participants is substantially higher (72%) than that among males (21%) (see Figure 10). This discrepancy in reported anxiety levels between genders could potentially indicate underlying differences in the way females and males perceive and respond to FLCA (Dewale, 2016). However, it is important to consider additional factors that could contribute to this observation, such as the sample size or cultural influences.

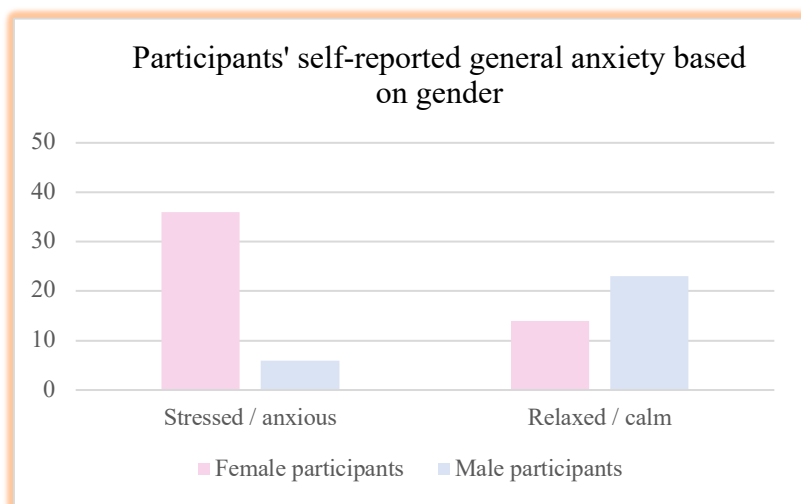


Figure 10 : Participants’ self- reported general anxiety based on gender

3.2.3.1.1.2. Analyzing participants’ affinity for language classes

The 8th question within learners’ profile section (“Do you like foreign language classes ?”) requests students to gauge their affinity for language classes on a graduated scale. As the previous one, this query serves as a preliminary indicator of potential FLCA symptoms. With five distinct response options ranging from “I love it” to “I hate it”, it is noteworthy that individuals exhibiting a lack of liking or expressing aversion towards foreign language classes (choosing responses such as “I don’t like FLC” / “I hate FLC”) might be more inclined to experience elevated levels of anxiety in comparison with participants who indicated positive sentiments like “I love FLC” or “I like FLC” (Dewale et al., 2016). Although an individual might hold a favorable view of language classes and still experience FLCA, the question serves as an initial indication of their potential vulnerability to FLCA. Upon examining the data, a significant majority of the participants (82%) exhibit positive sentiments toward Foreign Language Classes (FLC). In fact, we can see that 17 participants (21%) love FLC, 49 participants (61%) like FLC, 9 participants (11%) remain indifferent, 3 participants (4%) do not like FLC and finally, 2 participants (3%) hate FLC (see Figure 11). This variation in

responses reflects a diverse range of attitudes towards language classes. As exposed above, it can be expected that learners who harbor negative sentiments towards FLC will likely experience higher levels of anxiety regarding FLC when compared to their counterparts with more positive feelings. Section 3.2.3.1.2.4. will be specifically devoted to an in-depth examination of the prevalence of this phenomenon among the participants of the third questionnaire.

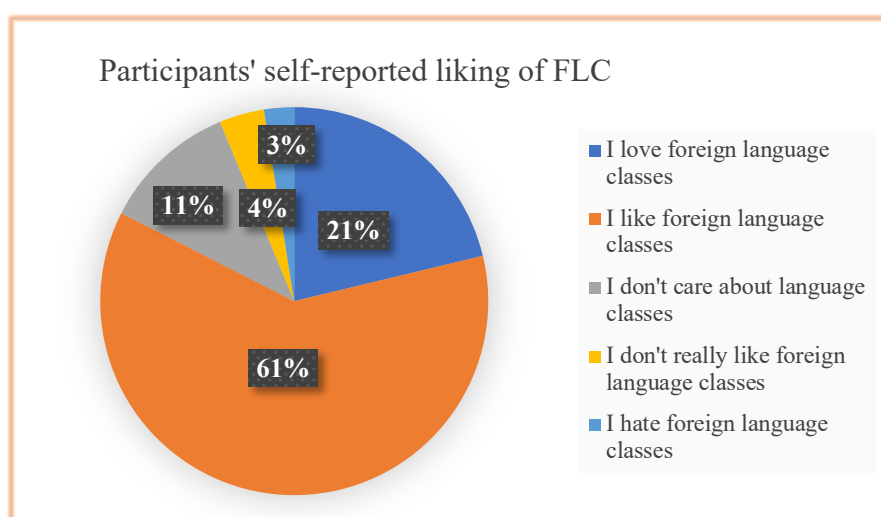


Figure 11: Participants’ self-reported liking of FLC

3.2.3.1.1.3. Analyzing participants’ most anxiety-inducing FL (RQ2)

The ultimate interesting inquiry situated within learners’ profile section is exclusively featured in the third questionnaire. Participants learning both English and Spanish were solicited to select the option that most accurately aligned with their experiences. The available choices encompassed: “I experience heightened anxiety in my English class”, “I experience heightened anxiety in my Spanish class”, “I am equally as anxious for my English class as for my Spanish class”, and “ In general, I am not anxious for my language classes”. The collected data proved to be of a significant utility in addressing the second research question, namely, “Does a distinct target foreign language exhibit a higher propensity for inducing anxiety among Foreign Language Learners (FLL)?”. Originally, the intent was to examine and juxtapose the data from the participants responding to the first questionnaire (exclusive English learners) with the data obtained from the second questionnaire (focused on Spanish learners) and to draw conclusions. Nonetheless, owing to the limited participant count in the second questionnaire, it has become imperative to center our analysis for the second research question on the responses obtained from the previously mentioned question. The results revealed that among the 55 participants, 15 learners (27.3%) reported heightened anxiety towards English classes, 9

participants (16.4%) exhibited greater anxiety in Spanish classes, 8 learners (14.5%) expressed comparable levels of anxiety in both English and Spanish classes, ultimately, 24 participants (43.6%) indicated a lack of anxiety during foreign language classes (FLC) as depicted in Figure 12. However, when specifically considering participants experiencing anxiety it becomes evident that English has a higher count of learners with anxious tendencies.

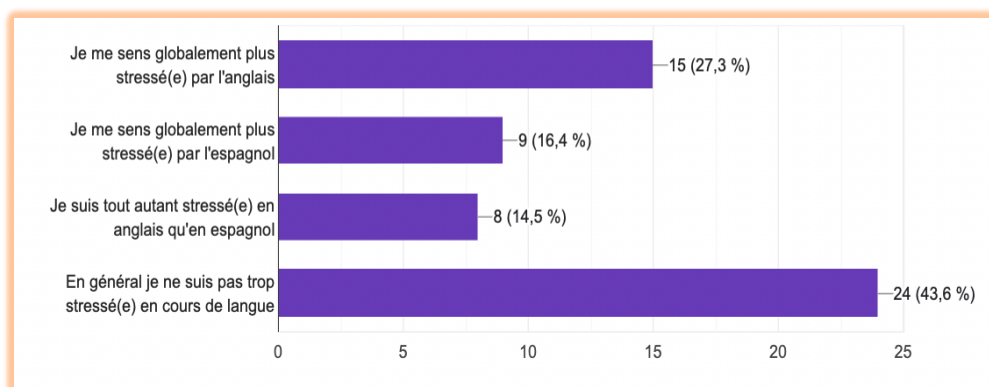


Figure 12: Participants' perspective on the most anxiety-provoking FL

Based on the presented data and outcomes, several conclusions can be drawn. Indeed, the analysis indicates that a significant portion of learners (24 = 43.6%) experience varying levels of anxiety based on the target foreign language. Indeed, the data suggests that English classes are more anxiety prone than Spanish classes which might imply that learners find the English language context (classroom atmosphere, teachers' behavior, expectations on the level of proficiency, etc.) more anxiety-inducing. However, a considerable portion of participants (24= 43.6%) indicated not experiencing stress during FLC. For a more distinct representation of the contrast between the answers of participants experiencing anxiety in FLC, the responses of those who indicated absence of anxiety were omitted (see Figure 13). The graphical illustration highlights with greater clarity the inclination of learners to experience anxiety within English language environments (47%). These findings underline the importance of considering individual variations in the perception of language-related anxiety.

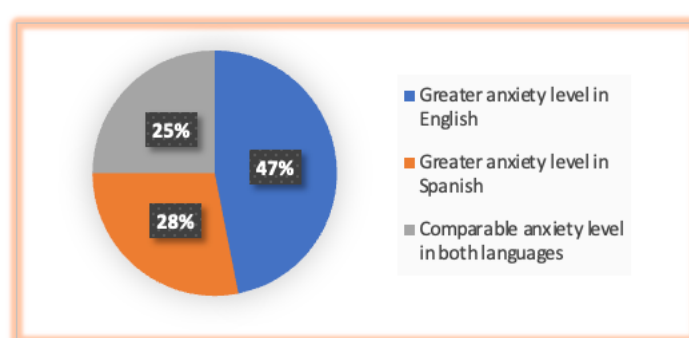


Figure 13: Participants' perspective on the most anxiety-provoking FL

Another interesting perspective emerges from the examination of the different viewpoints expressed by male and female participants in relation to this particular question (Figure 12). In pursuit of achieving a balanced representation of participants across gender categories, a deliberate selection process was employed. Given that the male subgroup consists of 19 participants, it necessitated the random selection of 19 female participants from the pool of 36 who actively engaged in the third questionnaire. The numeric value “0” represents the 17 female learners who could not be included in the analysis to maintain gender parity within the sample composition. As delineated by the data presented in Table 4, a significant proportion of female respondents opted for the initial alternative (“I experience heightened anxiety in my English class”), while conversely, a substantial majority of male participants favored the ultimate option, namely “In general, I am not anxious for my English classes”. This observation, although drawn from a limited sample (38 participants), enables the deduction that English language classes evoke a heightened sense of anxiety among female participants in contrast to Spanish language classes. As mentioned earlier in Figure 10, these statistical findings reaffirm the marked propensity of male participants to exhibit a lower inclination toward experiencing anxiety.

Frequency of the anxiety level depending on the foreign language						
Gender			Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Missing values	Valid	English	4	23,5	23,5	23,5
		Spanish	4	23,5	23,5	47,1
		Both languages	4	23,5	23,5	70,6
		Never	5	29,4	29,4	100,0
		Total	17	100,0	100,0	
Female	Valid	English	8	42,1	42,1	42,1
		Spanish	3	15,8	15,8	57,9
		Both languages	4	21,1	21,1	78,9
		Never	4	21,1	21,1	100,0
		Total	19	100,0	100,0	
Male	Valid	English	3	15,8	15,8	15,8
		Spanish	2	10,5	10,5	26,3
		Never	14	73,7	73,7	100,0
		Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Table 4: SPSS table showing the frequency of the anxiety level depending on the foreign language

In summary, the results derived from this section accentuated a significant prevalence of general anxiety among the surveyed upper-secondary students. Furthermore, an additional deduction can be drawn, underlying that anxiety levels among learners may exhibit fluctuations depending on the specific foreign language class they are in, namely English or Spanish in this survey. Female learners exhibit higher self-reported levels of FLCA compared to their male counterparts, particularly in English classes.

3.2.3.1.2. Horwitz's FLCA scale descriptive data analysis

The second part of the Google Form questionnaire was designed to evaluate the degree of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) using the scale devised by Horwitz et al. (1986). As delineated in Section 3.1.2., a modification was implemented on the scale to ensure that all the items were positively worded, reflecting feelings of anxiety. Additionally, the scores of reversed items were correspondingly reversed to uphold uniformity across the entirety of the items. Each item's value was attributed as "1" for "strongly agree" and "5" for "strongly disagree". Consequently, within the context of this survey and in contrast to Horwitz et al.'s established scoring system, an elevated score denotes a low level of anxiety, while inversely, a reduced score signifies a high level of anxiety. The objective of this quantitative analysis was to categorize the participants into four distinct groups of FLCA, namely "very high anxiety level", "high anxiety level", "moderate anxiety level", and "low anxiety level" (see Table 5). Among the total of 80 participants, each individual was assigned to one of the group mentioned above based on their final score.

FLCA level	Score range
1. Very high anxiety	33 to 66
2. High anxiety	67 to 99
3. Moderate anxiety	100 to 132
4. Low anxiety	133 to 165

Table 5: Reversed categorization of anxiety levels based on Horwitz's score ranges

In the context of the present section, conclusions were drawn based on the utilization of data derived from both the first questionnaire (pertaining to learners solely studying English) and the third questionnaire (involving learners studying both English and Spanish).

3.2.3.1.2.1. Descriptive analysis of the first questionnaire

The first questionnaire encompasses a participant pool consisting of 22 English learners, comprising 9 males and 13 females. Given the limited number of male learners, and with the intention of preserving gender parity, 9 female learners were deliberately and randomly selected from the pool of 13 respondents. Upon achieving equitable representation of both male and female participants in Table 6, subsequent steps involved the summation of scores within each column and the computation of the mean for each respective gender subgroups. Subsequently, every participant was categorized into specific groups based on their levels of anxiety.

Male participants	Final score (.../165)	FLCA level group	Female participants	Final score (.../165)	FLCA level group
1	131	Moderate	1	63	Very high
2	157	Low	2	79	High
3	100	Moderate	3	88	High
4	90	High	4	33	Very high
5	134	Low	5	124	Moderate
6	88	High	6	63	Very high
7	135	Low	7	145	Low
8	117	Moderate	8	39	Very high
9	125	Moderate	9	160	Low
TOTAL	1077	/	TOTAL	794	/
Mean	119.66	Moderate	Mean	88.22	High

Table 6: FLCAS scores and categorization of English learners into anxiety level groups

As can be seen from the table (above) and in accordance with the scoring system presented in table 5, it is discernible that female English learners, exhibiting an anxiety mean of 88.22 out of 165, are more anxious than their male counterparts scoring an anxiety mean of 119.66. Notably, in terms of anxiety level categorization, an observation can be made that a majority of female learners fall within either the “very high” (4 learners out of 9) or “high” (2 out of 9) anxiety level groups. In contrast, male participants predominantly feature a substantial proportion within the “low” anxiety level (3 out of 9) category and a majority within the “moderate” anxiety level. Despite the limited sample size, it becomes apparent that a significant proportion of the female learners’ group experience a notable anxiety within the context of their English classes. Conversely, male English learners seem to exhibit a more relaxed attitude during their English lessons. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the subjectivity of FLCA. This becomes evident upon examining Table 6, where despite a significant majority of learners within the “very high” or “high” anxiety level groups, there are nonetheless two individuals whose scores are nearly at upper limit, indicating an almost minimal level of anxiety. It can be observed that, overall, English classes evoke a notable sense of anxiety, as evidenced by nearly half of the learners demonstrating a considerable anxiety level.

3.2.3.1.2.2. Descriptive analysis of the third questionnaire (RQ1)

For the purpose of assessing the impact of gender on FLCA, a descriptive analysis of the third questionnaire (English and Spanish) was conducted. To do so, participants were divided into two groups based on their gender. Initially, the sample encompassed 19 male and 36 female participants. However, to examine the variance in FLCA levels depending on gender, it was imperative to establish a balanced sample composition. To this end, 19 female participants were randomly selected from the pool of 36 respondents. Notably, participants were requested to respond, keeping in mind both of their foreign languages, given that the third questionnaire targeted students learning both English and Spanish. Table 7 (below) reveals the difference between male and female learners studying English and Spanish as foreign languages. This analysis includes the final scores achieved by each participant, along with their corresponding FLCA levels.

Male participants	Final score (... /165)	FLCA level group	Female participants	Final score (... /165)	FLCA level group
1	99	High	1	45	Very high
2	110	Moderate	2	72	High
3	135	Low	3	35	Very high
4	113	Moderate	4	78	High
5	156	low	5	109	Moderate
6	102	Moderate	6	82	High
7	107	Moderate	7	76	High
8	92	High	8	53	Very high
9	143	Low	9	85	High
10	127	Moderate	10	97	High
11	107	Moderate	11	118	Moderate
12	150	Low	12	76	High
13	155	Low	13	136	Low
14	165	Low	14	146	Low
15	140	Low	15	92	High
16	160	Low	16	85	High
17	153	Low	17	73	High
18	138	Low	18	35	Very high
19	165	Low	19	73	High
TOTAL	2517	/	TOTAL	1658	/
Mean	132.47	Low	Mean	87.26	High

Table 7: FLCAS scores and categorization of both English and Spanish learners into FLCA level groups

The above table highlights a notable contrast between male and female learners concerning their Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) levels. Through a comprehensive examination of descriptive statistics pertaining to the gender distribution among students, the results demonstrate that the average FLCA score for female participants (N= 19) was found to be M= 87.26. In contrast, for their male counterparts (N=19), the corresponding average FLCA score was calculated as M=132.47. Minimum score for females was 35, while the maximum one was 146, whereas the minimum and maximum scores for males were 92 and 165 respectively. It can be concluded that language classes exert a relatively minor influence on the anxiety levels of male participants, if any. Conversely, female participants exhibit a notable predisposition to high levels of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). This has been confirmed by several studies (Pappamihel, 2001; Cheng, 2002; Elkhafafi, 2003; Aydin, 2009; French and Park, 2013; Gerencheal, 2016), in which they also found that females showed higher anxiety level than males. Consequently, it is apparent that gender plays a discernible role in influencing FLCA.

The collective analysis of all participants yielded an average Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) score of 109.86. This score indicates an intermediate level of anxiety for the participants within the present sample. These mean scores serve as central indicators that shed light on the average FLCA level experienced by each gender group. The substantial disparity between the average scores attributed to females and males underlines the presence of diverse levels of anxiety within the context of foreign language learning, as discerned from the corresponding FLCAS scores (see Figure 14). Indeed, there were 4 (11%) participants that fell into the “very highly anxious” category. Subsequently, 13 (34%) participants were found to be “highly anxious”. On the other hand, 8 (21%) participants ascertained to be “moderately anxious”, while the remaining 13 (34%) participants were categorized as “slightly anxious”.

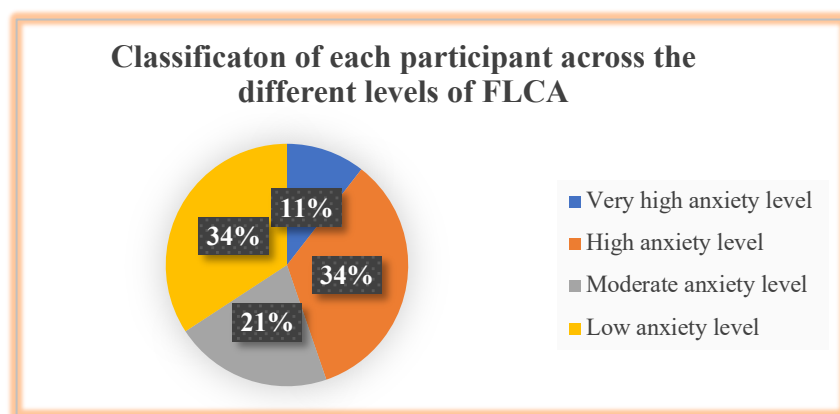


Figure 14: Classification of each participant across the different levels of FLCA

3.2.3.1.3. Correlational analysis

The objective of this section was to ascertain potential correlations between the aforementioned final FLCA scores and specific variables, namely participants overall anxiety level and their inclination towards foreign language classes.

3.2.3.1.3.1. Correlational analysis between FLCA scores and participant's overall anxiety

As previously indicated in section 3.2.3.1.1.1., the objective of this analysis was to ascertain the presence of a potential correlation between overall anxiety levels and FLCA within the third questionnaire sample. To achieve this, the scores of each of the 29 learners who self-reported a general inclination toward anxiety within their “learner’s profile” were scrutinized. This examination aimed to ascertain whether their final FLCA scores corresponded with the aforementioned self-reported statement.

Self-reportedly generally anxious participants	Final FLCA level group	Concordance with general anxiety
9	Very high anxiety level	Yes
16	High anxiety level	Yes
4	Low anxiety level	No

Table 14: Correlation between FLCA scores and overall anxiety

As can be seen from the table above, out of the 29 learners who indicated a habitual tendency towards anxiety in their daily lives, 9 participants were positioned within the group of “very high anxiety level, 16 were designated within the “high anxiety level” and an additional 4 participants were categorized under the “low FLCA level”, 16 were classified in the “high anxiety level” and 9 participants in the “very high anxiety level”. The obtained findings lead to the conclusion there is a positive correlation between overall anxiety and FLCA. Indeed, a significant majority (69%) of the 29 learners encounter general anxiety in addition to experiencing Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. However, it is noteworthy that 31% of the participants who self-reported a general inclination towards anxiety do not report feeling stressed during their FLC experiences. A definitive insight arises from the analysis, indicating that a general predisposition towards anxiety does not necessarily entail the occurrence of

FLCA. Nevertheless, it is notable that a significant correlation often exists between these two phenomena in a majority of cases in this sample.

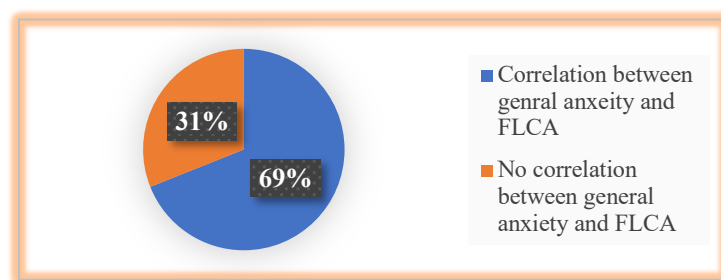


Figure 15: Graphic representing the positive correlation between FLCA scores and overall anxiety

3.2.3.1.3.2. Correlational analysis between FLCA scores and participants' liking of FLC

Within section 3.2.3.1.1.2., an examination was conducted to evaluate the feelings of all participants toward Foreign Language Classes (FLC). The results indicated a substantial majority (82%) of participants expressing favorable sentiments towards FLC by selection options such as "I love FLC" or "I like FLC". Additionally, 11% displayed unfavorable feelings towards FLC. It is hypothesized that individuals with unfavorable feelings towards FLC are more likely to experience heightened levels of FLCA compared to those harboring more positive sentiments. The purpose of this section was to investigate the potential existence of such a correlation within the context of this study, utilizing the sample from the third questionnaire.

	Positive feelings towards FLC ("I Like/ love FLC") Total: 47 learners	Negative feelings towards FLC ("I hate FLC") Total: 8 learners
High anxiety levels	17	8
Low anxiety levels	30	0

Table 15: Classification of learners based on their anxiety levels and liking of FLC

As depicted in the presented table, the third questionnaire comprised 47 learners (85%) out of 55 expressing favorable feelings towards foreign language classes, while 8 participants (15%) expressed a dislike for FLC. The hypothesis asserting a potential correlation between negative sentiments and elevated anxiety levels was verified within this sample. Similarly, the observation that individuals with positive sentiments towards FLC tend to experience lower levels of anxiety in the language learning environment was also confirmed. Nonetheless, it is

essential to acknowledge certain exceptions, such as it can be seen with the 17 learners holding positive feelings towards FLC displayed high levels of anxiety. It can be concluded that there is a negative correlation between participants' feeling towards FLC and their anxiety levels in the context of FLCA. Indeed, individuals with positive feelings towards FLC are more likely to exhibit lower levels of FLCA, while those with negative feelings towards FLC are more likely to experience higher levels of FLCA. These findings align with the results reported by Dewale et al. (2016).

1.1.1.1. Teachers' quantitative data analysis

Despite the modest sample size consisting of only 8 Belgian foreign language teachers (teaching English and/or Spanish), this secondary quantitative and descriptive analysis offers insights into the beliefs held by educators and enables the gathering of their opinion regarding our two research questions, namely :“Does gender impact FLCA in Belgian French-speaking classroom?” and “Is there an impact of the origin of the FL on the level of anxiety among FLL?”. While the primary objective was to examine potential variations in perceptions of FLCA between learners and teachers, this analysis also aims to determine whether a disparity exist in viewpoints. To accomplish this, teachers were requested to complete Google Form made up of 11 questions tailored to elicit responses that delve into their perspectives on FLCA.

The question “As a teacher, are you familiar with the notion of FLCA?” served the purpose of assessing the degree to which the concept was known. An examination of the outcomes reveals that a significant majority of teachers who participated in the Google Form survey lack familiarity with the phenomenon of FLCA. Specifically, a mere 13% of respondents possess knowledge of the concept, while a substantial 87% remain unaware of its meaning. This implies that despite the widespread occurrence of the phenomenon within their classrooms (see section 3.2.3.1.2.2.), many educators remain oblivious to its existence and the challenges it poses.

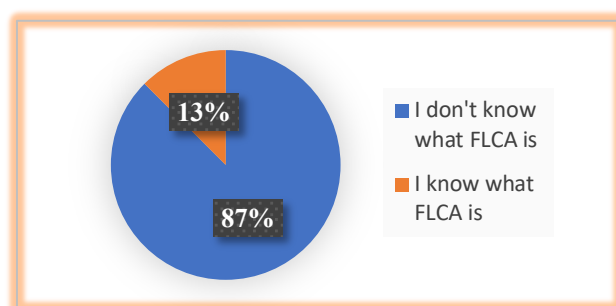


Figure 16: Belgian teachers' knowledge of FLCA

The subsequent question query aimed to gauge whether teachers recognized the significance of addressing anxiety in the Foreign Language Classroom (FLC). Despite their lack of awareness in the previous question regarding the concept of FLCA, teachers demonstrated an understanding of anxiety's hindering impact. Notably, the entire sample acknowledge that anxiety hampers the language learning process.

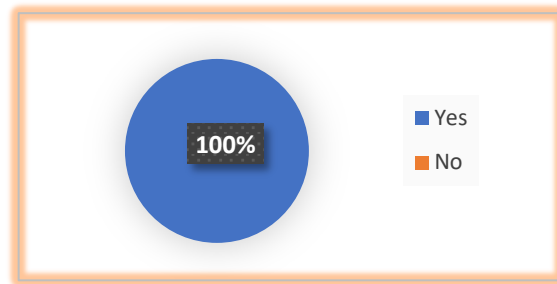


Figure 17: Percentage of awareness among Belgian teachers in terms of anxiety on language learning

Teachers were queried about their observations regarding the existence of variations in anxiety levels within their Foreign Language Classrooms (FLC) based on gender (research question 1). Interestingly, their perceptions on this subject seem to diverge from the conclusions drawn in our research (see section 3.2.3.1.2.2.) and from those of other relevant studies (Pappamihel, 2001; Cheng, 2002; Elkhafafi, 2003; Aydin, 2009; French and Park, 2013; Gerencheal, 2016). Contrary to our established conclusions, teachers on the field generally assert that there is no discernable variance in terms of anxiety levels influenced by gender. Indeed, a mere 25% of teachers discern a gender-oriented discrepancy, indicating that female learners might encounter higher anxiety levels than their male counterparts, while the predominant majority of 75% maintain that they do not perceive any substantial anxiety differentiation between genders within the FLC.

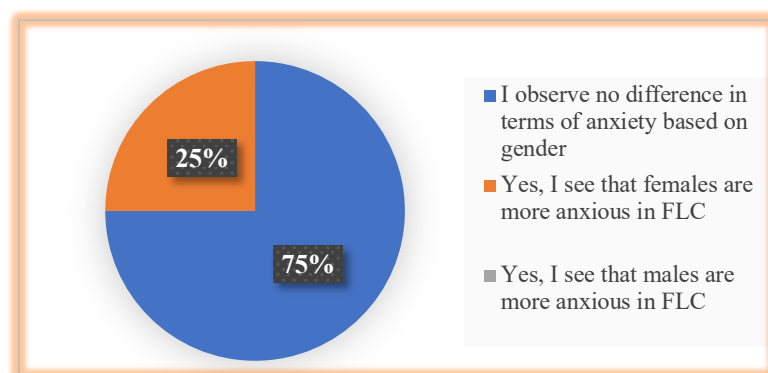


Figure 18: Teachers' perception of varying anxiety levels in FLC based on gender

Upon comparing the outcomes from learners with teachers' point of view regarding our second research question, a notable discrepancy emerges, indicating that teachers who participated in the survey possess a somewhat unclear perception of the actual situation. As demonstrated by the findings presented in section 3.2.3.1.1.3., learners, particularly females, exhibit discernible variations in their anxiety levels based on the specific Foreign Language Class (FLC) they are in. For instance, learners reported experiencing higher levels of anxiety in English classes compared to Spanish classes. The outcomes of teachers' questionnaire analysis indicate that the majority (75%) of the participants do not believe that one language induce more anxiety than another. In contrast, only 25% of participating teachers appear to acknowledge that English is an anxiety-inducing FL among students. A broader recognition of this fact could prompt English teachers to adopt appropriate measures accordingly in class.

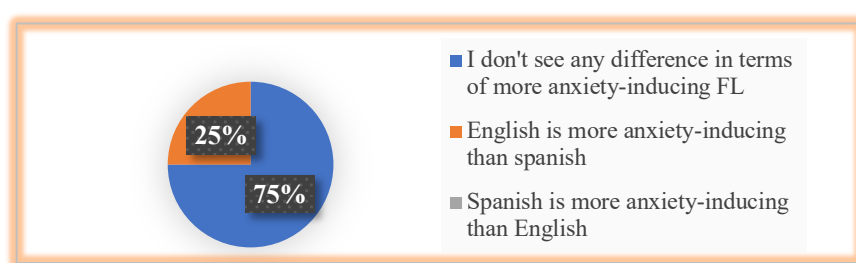


Figure 19: Teachers' perception of varying anxiety levels based on the Foreign Language (FL)

3.3. Open-ended questions analysis

As previously indicated, a qualitative approach was employed by including open-ended question at the end of the Google Form. The main goal was to collect learners and teachers' perception and point of view but also to extract from learners some interesting strategies that teachers may implement in their classroom to alleviate anxiety. To increase the number of ideas, the data coming from the three questionnaires (N=80) were analyzed.

3.3.1. Learners open-ended questions analysis

Within learners' questionnaire, three questions were designed to gather their perspectives. The first question aimed to delve into learners' opinions regarding variables that influence their language anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The second question inquired about observable anxiety indicators when they experience anxiety in the FLC. Lastly, the third question encouraged them to propose ideas alleviating FLCA. Although not mandatory, the majority of respondents chose to provide insights for the final question.

3.3.1.1. Variables influencing learners' FLCA

At the end of learners' questionnaire, participants were asked to share their perspective on what factors they believed could have the most significant impact on their anxiety in the context of a foreign language classroom. Among the responses gathered, the following anxiety-inducing variables were identified: individual oral activities in front of the class (55 occurrences), the fear of being judged by peers when speaking aloud (36 occurrences), teachers' teaching methodologies and pedagogical approaches (31 occurrences), teacher's characteristics (severity, personality, way of interacting with students, lack of respect...) (29 occurrences), learners' personal traits (perfectionism, introversion...) (26 occurrences), incapacity to understand the teacher's instructions (23 occurrences), being required to respond to the teacher without prior preparation (18 occurrences) and finally, the presence of native speakers of the foreign language (6 occurrences) (see Figure 18). Communication apprehension and the fear of negative evaluation emerge as the predominant factors contributing to FLCA among learners.

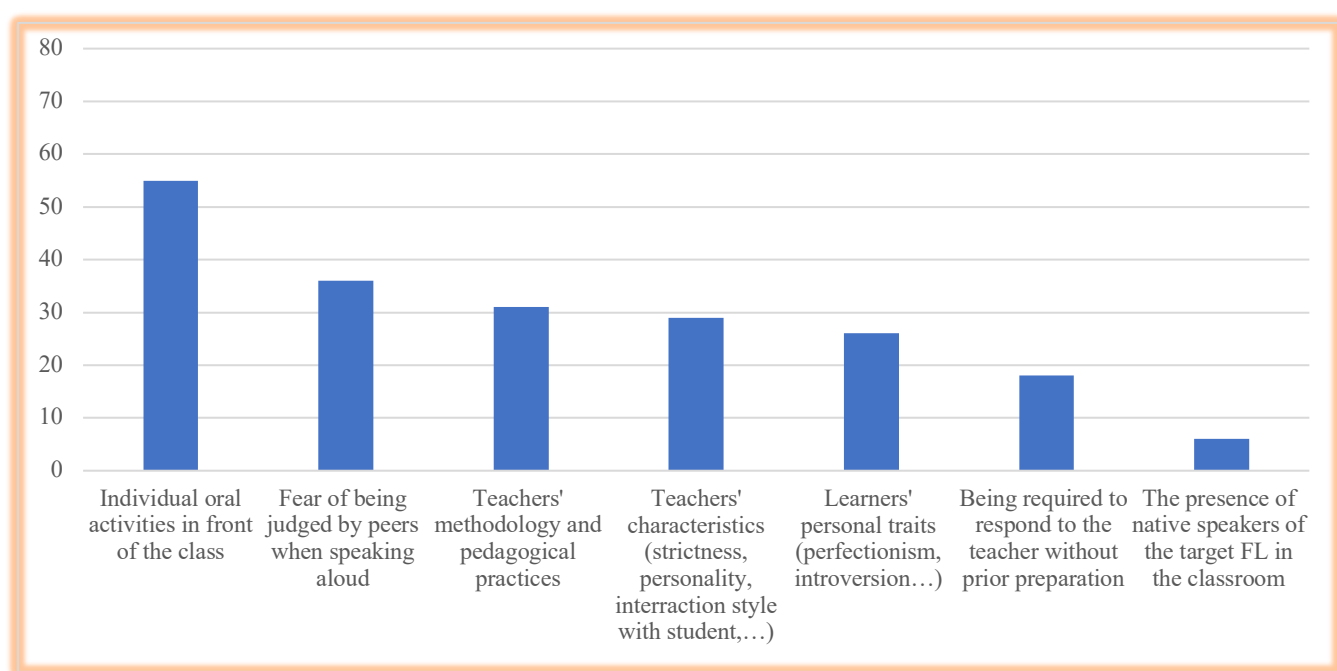


Figure 20: Anxiety-inducing variables based on learners' opinion

The responses provided by learners align significantly with the variables that are known to influence FLCA identified in the theoretical framework (see section 2.2.4.), which underlines the effectiveness of the literature in highlighting and elucidating the factors that induce anxiety in language learning contexts.

3.3.1.2. *Impact on learners mental and physical behavior*

As outlined in section 2.2.5., anxiety manifests itself in diverse manners depending on each individual. An analysis of the open-ended responses provided by learners was undertaken to identify the predominant ways in which anxiety is manifested among the participants of our sample. The findings indicate that a substantial number of learners described an elevated heart rate as a common symptom when experiencing anxiety in the foreign language classroom. The subsequent frequently mentioned physical response to anxiety is the sensation of a lump in the stomach (55 occurrences), followed by instances where participants reported experiencing blushing (55 occurrences) during anxious situations. Additionally, other manifestations of anxiety were also widely reported, including sweaty palms (36 occurrences), memory lapses (32 occurrences), excessive sweating (28 occurrences), shaking (28 occurrences), and stamping (19 occurrences).

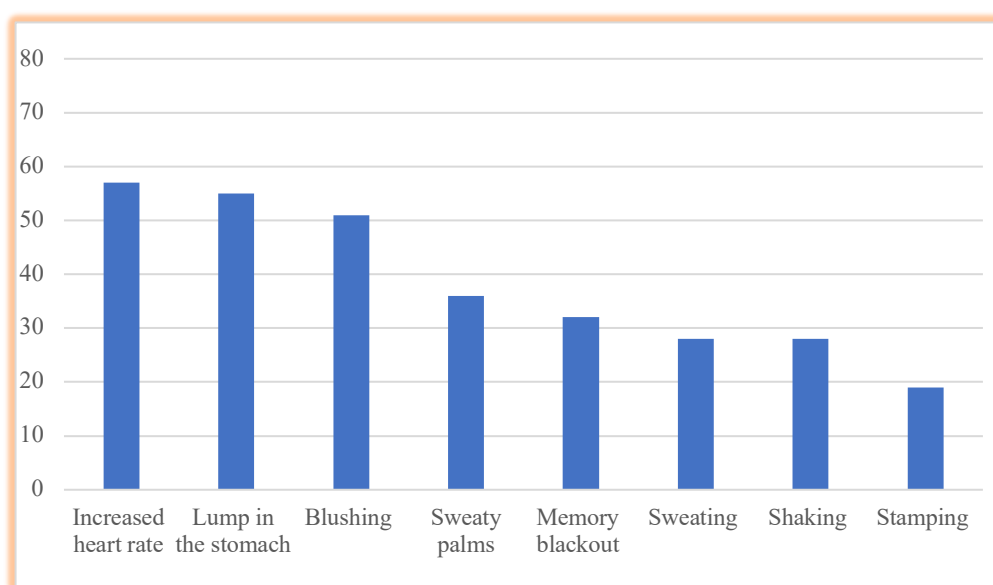


Figure 21: Prevalent effects of anxiety on learners of the survey

It is evident that a substantial proportion of the manifestations of anxiety reported by learners closely correspond to the content elucidated in section 2.2.5 of the theoretical framework. These findings suggest the diverse ways in which anxiety can manifest itself among learners experiencing FLCA. The alignment between learners' experiences and the theoretical framework could provide teachers with valuable cues to identify signs of FLCA and address these manifestations effectively.

3.3.1.3. *Learners' ideas to alleviate FLCA*

The very last question of the Google Form sought students' insights on mitigating FLCA. Although the answer to that question was not mandatory, an array of valuable ideas for addressing this phenomenon were yielded. Participants' suggestions to alleviate anxiety can be categorized into two primary domains: teachers' methodology and pedagogical approaches, as well as teachers' characteristics.

3.3.1.3.1. Teachers' methodology and pedagogical practices

The most noteworthy statements from the Google Form responses were extracted and translated into English, as presented below. These statements have been consolidated within this section due to their shared sentiment that teachers' methodologies and pedagogical approaches have a substantial influence on their anxiety levels (as previously illustrated in Figure 20). Within these statements, learners propose that teachers should frequently verify if all students are understanding and keeping pace. Subsequently, students highlighted the idea of incorporating games into the classroom as a strategy to alleviate anxiety in foreign language learning, citing the same reasons outlined in section 2.2.6.2.3.3. Learners also claimed that they would experience reduced anxiety if teachers were more motivating and reassuring. Another learner suggested that reducing the frequency of individual oral presentations in front of the classroom would notably decrease learners' anxiety in the FLC.

« Les profs devraient demander régulièrement si tout le monde suit bien le cours » → « Teachers should ask regularly if everyone is following the course well.”

« Je pense que pour diminuer l'anxiété il serait bien de faire des petits jeux dans la langue apprises afin d'apprendre à connaître les personnes de la classe et aider à se sentir moins seul et pas juger. »
→ « I think that to reduce anxiety, it would be good to play small games in the language being learned to get to know the people in the class and help students feeling less alone and not judged.”

« Les profs pourraient être plus motivants et nous rassurer plus (surtout avant les examens). Certains profs manquent de pédagogie, de structure et d'humour. » → « Teachers could be more motivating and reassure us more (especially before exams). Some teachers lack pedagogy, structure, and humor.”

« On ne devrait pas être obligé de faire des présentations orales devant le tableau tout le temps car c'est une grande source de stress » → « We should not be forced to do oral presentations in front of the class all the time because it is a major source of stress.”

« Afin de rassurer un maximum les potentiels élèves angoissés, les professeurs devraient bien rappeler aux élèves qu'il n'y a pas de honte à se tromper ou à avoir des difficultés et qu'il faut juste essayer. Je pense que se pencher sur certains élèves pour les rassurer individuellement pourrait être une bonne idée (malgré la difficulté de celle-ci à être mise en place, étant donné le nombre de classes et d'élèves). » → « In order to reassure potentially anxious students as much as possible, teachers should remind the students that there is no shame in making mistakes or facing difficulties, and that they just need to give it a try. I believe that taking the time to individually reassure certain students could be a good idea (despite the challenge of implementing it, given the number of classes and students that a teacher must have). »

3.3.1.3.2. Teachers' characteristics

The subsequent category in which insightful statements can be classified is that of teachers' characteristics (2.2.4.2.1.). Similar to the previous section, participants' statements have been translated into English and are reported below:

« La façon dont le prof s'occupe des élèves peut vraiment impacter leur anxiété. Si iel est désagréable, trop exigeant.e, met la pression,... Alors le stress monte rapidement même si c'est une matière facile. Au contraire si je vois quelque chose de difficile en grammaire par exemple, et que le.a prof à une bonne façon d'apprendre et est bienveillant.e alors je suis beaucoup moins stressée. » → « The way the teacher interacts with students can truly impact their level of anxiety. If they are unpleasant, overly demanding, putting pressure on students ... then stress quickly increases even if it's an easy subject. Conversely, if I encounter something challenging in grammar, for example, and the teacher has an effective teaching approach and is supportive, then I feel much less stressed. »

« Avoir un professeur avec qui on se sent bien diminue forcément le stress. En général, peu importe la matière, si je me sens à l'aise avec le professeur (souriant, calme, drôle, à l'écoute, encourageant etc.) je me sens moins jugée et stressée et je produis par conséquent de meilleurs résultats. » → « Having a teacher with whom one feels comfortable definitely reduces stress. In general, regardless of the subject, I feel at ease with the teacher (smiling, calm, funny, encouraging...) I feel less judged and stressed, and I achieve better results. »

« Personnellement j'ai été élevée dans la culture canadienne et dans l'anglais donc je maîtrise vraiment bien la langue, mon seul souci actuellement avec la langue c'est la professeure. Elle me très anxieux, elle est très sévère et vraiment pas patiente du tout. Du coup dans ma situation, le seul moyen de diminuer mon anxiété est que ma professeure change sa façon d'être. » → « I was raised in Canadian culture and in the English language, so I speak English very well. My only current concern with the foreign language is the teacher. She makes me very anxious, as she is extremely strict and not patient at all. In my situation, the only way to reduce my anxiety is if my teacher changes her approach. »

The first learner highlights the crucial role that teachers play in shaping students' emotional experiences related to learning. Their behavior can either exacerbate or alleviate student anxiety, regardless of the other factors. While changing teaching strategies and methods might require adjustments, changing one's personality trait is generally a more complex and challenging process. However, teachers can still work on developing approaches that can positively affect their interactions with students. The subsequent statements emphasize the importance of the teacher-student relationship and behavior. Both testimony stress the necessity for teachers to be attentive to their interactions with their students and to establish an environment that fosters students' emotional well-being and academic achievement. For instance, teachers should be pleasant, not too demanding, be encouraging, calm, smiling, and not overly strict. However, sometimes teachers cannot do anything to alleviate FLCA. Certain students have an inherent problem with languages that renders them incapable of understanding the material and their attempts to engage in studying are met with a paralyzing sense of anxiety. The following testimony serves as a poignant illustration of this incapacitating struggle to learn a foreign language:

«Je pense que certaines sources de stress ne peuvent pas être diminuées par le prof car ce qui me stresse personnellement c'est mon incapacité à comprendre la langue. Je pense que c'est cette incapacité qui me pétrifie et donc me fait encore plus stresser. C'est comme un cercle vicieux. »
(English version : « I believe that certain sources of stress cannot be reduced by the teacher because what personally stresses me out is my inability to understand the language. I think it's this incapacity that paralyzes me and therefore makes me even more stressed. It's like a vicious circle. »

3.3.2. Teachers open-ended data analysis

3.3.2.1. *Teachers' viewpoint on potential causes of FLCA*

Teachers were also solicited for their perspectives on factors that might contribute to Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Many of their responses reveal a keen understanding of the potential triggers for anxiety in a foreign language context (see section 2.2.4.). Specifically, they highlighted concerns like the apprehension of being evaluated by peers and the worry of struggling to express oneself clearly. Additionally, they pointed out learners' personal traits such as lacking self-assurance, heightened sensitivity, and shyness among students. Moreover, a subset of teachers identified factors linked to the learners' foreign

language proficiency. Notably, they mentioned sources of anxiety such as the fear of making mistakes, the unease of communicating in a language that is not their mother tongue, the dread of incorrect pronunciation, and the anxiety of not measuring up to their peers' abilities. These perspectives shared by teachers are consistent with a variety of anxiety-inducing factors that students may come across within a foreign language learning setting, as outlined in the theoretical framework presented in section 2.2.4.

3.3.2.2. Teachers' observation regarding the prevalent indicators of anxiety among learners

Symptoms such as clammy hands, hiding, blushing, memory lapses for familiar information, and even tears have been identified as common manifestations of anxiety commonly observed among students in foreign language classrooms. These behaviors reflect the diverse ways in which anxiety can manifest among learners in FLCs. The ability of teachers to recognize these manifestations is crucial, as it allows them to play a significant role in helping students to manage and alleviate their anxiety.

3.3.2.3. Teachers' viewpoint on potential methods to alleviate FLCA

Teachers provided strategies aimed at mitigating anxiety and fostering a positive learning environment. Within these strategies, one can identify fostering student connections, encouraging small group discussions instead of whole-class presentations, normalizing discussions about anxiety, cultivating an environment of kindness and trust, providing regular reassurance, and incorporating interactive games to facilitate relationship-building. These ideas collectively contribute to alleviate FLCA.

3.4. Conclusion of the practical analysis

The primary objective of this practical analysis was to address our two research questions. The first research question explored the potential impact of gender on Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) within Belgian French-speaking classrooms (RQ1), while the second question aimed to examine whether differences in anxiety levels among students existed based on the chosen foreign language (in this case, either French or Spanish) (RQ2). Employing Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCA scale with a reversed scoring approach, it was possible to categorize survey participants into various FLCA levels. Subsequently, conclusions were drawn based on the outcomes obtained.

Firstly, students were asked to indicate their overall anxiety level. The aim was to ascertain whether our participants exhibited a general sense of anxiety or if this sentiment was solely specific to their experiences within foreign language classrooms. The findings indicated that the sample consisted of 52% of individuals who described themselves as frequently anxious and of 48% of participants who are usually relaxed. Even from this initial question, it became apparent that a majority of females experienced anxiety (72%), providing insight into the response to our first research question (RQ1).

Subsequently, participants were asked to rate their attitudes towards Foreign Language Classes (FLCs). The results demonstrated that 82% of the sample held positive sentiments (either loving or liking FLCs). The focus then shifted towards identifying the foreign language that induced the most anxiety among participants (RQ2). This analysis was based on the responses from the third questionnaire, as these participants were enrolled in both English and Spanish classes. The outcomes revealed that, between the two languages, English was the most anxiety-provoking one (47%). These findings were then revisited to explore potential gender differences. It became evident that the participants who reported higher anxiety levels in English were predominantly females.

Moving forward, a descriptive analysis of the first questionnaire encompassing only English learners was carried out. The analysis unveiled that female learners experience higher levels of anxiety ($M = 88.22$) compared to their male counterparts ($M = 119.66$).⁵

⁵ It should be noted that the lower the score, the higher the anxiety since Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS scoring system was reversed.

Subsequently, an analysis of the third questionnaire (including English and Spanish learners) was conducted. This section (3.2.3.1.2.2.) was aimed to address the first research question (RQ1). The results showcased a significant contrast between male and female learners regarding their FLCA levels. Notably, female participants were largely categorized within the “high anxiety” group, while male learners were predominantly placed in the “low anxiety” category. Furthermore, a correlation emerged between participants’ general anxiety and FLCA levels. Then, another correlation was identified between negative sentiments towards FLCs and high FLCA levels. From teachers’ responses, it was evident that while they might not have been acquainted with the English concept of “Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety”, they recognized the detrimental impact of anxiety on their students’ learning process. However, in contrast to the findings drawn from learners’ questionnaire, which indicated that females exhibited higher levels of anxiety than males in Foreign Language Classrooms (FLCs), teachers (75%) appeared to be unaware of any gender-related differences.

The open-ended questions revealed insights from both learners and teachers regarding various aspects of FLCA. Learners initially shared the factors that most contributed to increasing their anxiety. The top three factors were: individual oral activities in front of the class, the fear of being judged by peers when speaking and finally, teachers’ methodology and pedagogical practices. In terms of the manifestations of anxiety, the three most commonly mentioned effects were: an increased heart rate, a lump in the stomach, and blushing. Learners also gave suggestions on how to alleviate FLCA, falling into two main categories: teachers’ methodology and pedagogical practices (1) and teachers’ characteristics (2). Within the first category, learners recommended that teachers maintain check up on students frequently, incorporate educational games, provide motivating and reassuring instructions, and decrease the frequency of oral presentations in front of the entire class. In the second category, learners emphasized that teachers should not be overly demanding or strict, exhibit positive behavior, avoid excessive demand, offer encouragement, and maintain a calm and approachable attitude.

Turning to the open-ended responses from teachers, their perspectives on potential causes of FLCA aligned with students’ statements of anxiety-inducing situations as well as the signs of anxiety among learners. Moreover, teachers’ ideas for alleviating FLCA correlated with strategies outlined in the theoretical framework of this Master’s thesis (section 2.2.6.), highlighting the alignment between teachers’ insight and the established theoretical framework.

4. Discussion of the findings

4.1. Discussion and conclusion of the study

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety has garnered significant attention in academic discourse over recent decades; however, investigations within the context of Belgian upper-secondary schools remain limited. The present study has pointed towards the impact of gender on FLCA in Belgian French-speaking classrooms, as well as the potential differences in anxiety levels among students based on their chosen foreign language.

Addressing the first research question (RQ1), the relationship between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and gender appears to be consistent with most of the previous studies (Pappamihel, 2001; Cheng, 2002; Elkhafafi, 2003; Aydin, 2009; French and Park, 2013; Gerencheal, 2016). Indeed, the results of the present study revealed that female learners tend to experience higher levels of anxiety compared to their male counterparts, who are predominantly categorized within the “low anxiety level” group within the FLCA spectrum. Specifically, the outcomes indicate an average FLCA score of $M=87.26$ among female participants ($N=19$), contrasting with the corresponding $M=132.47$ calculated for their male counterparts.⁶

With respect to the second research question (RQ2), which delves into the correlation between FLCA and the acquisition of specific foreign language, the study computed and compared the variance in self-reported anxiety levels between English and Spanish. The results indicated a trend suggesting that the English foreign language elicits higher anxiety levels among learners in comparison to Spanish (as detailed in section 2.2.4.2.5.), with a more pronounced impact on female learners. This finding is consistent with the existing literature. It is noteworthy; however, that a larger participant pool would have increased the confidence in confirming this trend. While acknowledging the restricted sample size, this study has successfully cast a light in the intricacies of FLCA within the specific landscape of Belgian upper secondary schools.

The collected findings also underline that Foreign Languages Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is a wide and common concern. Evidently, a notable proportion of language learners

⁶ It should be noted that the lower the score, the higher the anxiety since Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS scoring system was reversed.

participating in the survey exhibit elevated levels of anxiety. As noted by Horwitz et al. (1986), the prevalence of anxious students within foreign language classrooms is a recurrent occurrence.

The comparison between learners' outcomes and teachers' perspectives, pertinent to both research questions, showed differences in viewpoints. When female learners predominantly demonstrated heightened anxiety in the context of foreign language learning, teachers asserted that gender did not influence anxiety levels in foreign language classrooms (FLCs). Similarly, as learners exhibited heightened anxiety levels particularly in English, teachers maintained that no specific language was more anxiety-inducing than others. This underlines the importance of acknowledging the perspectives of both participants in the FLC. Given the role these perspectives play in foreign language anxiety, it is imperative for teachers to recognize the impact of gender and adjust their pedagogical methods accordingly. Additionally, it emphasizes the significance of lending an attentive ear to students' viewpoints, as perceptions can differ greatly among individuals. Familiarity with the FLCAS instrument proposed by Horwitz et al. (1986) could be advantageous for teachers, enabling early identification of learners struggling with anxiety, ultimately contributing to potential improvement in students' proficiency by the end of the academic year. These findings not only emphasize the importance of acknowledging students' point of view, but also highlight the value of teachers adopting a proactive approach in addressing FLCA.

The motivation behind this subject stems distinctly from my personal experiences. Indeed, I have often found myself grappling with a knot in my stomach, clammy hands, and even the inclination to withdraw when faced with the prospect of speaking aloud in my foreign language classrooms. Over the course of my academic journey, discernible variations in anxiety levels became apparent, depending on an array of factors. Notably, the classroom atmosphere, the teacher's pedagogical approach and personality traits exerted a substantial influence on my interactions within the foreign language classroom. Consequently, this impelled me to explore this subject matter within the framework of my MA thesis. When I was a student struggling with FLCA, I would have liked to be reassured by knowing that others shared a similar experience. This underlines the significance of raising awareness and fostering open conversations about this phenomenon. Furthermore, as I embark on a career in teaching, I am determined in my commitment to creating an environment where students in my classroom are protected from such distress. This MA thesis serves as a conduit for me to extensively research

the subject, allowing me to gain valuable knowledge regarding both the identification of students struggling with FLCA and the implementation of effective measures to alleviate its impact.

4.2. Limitations

While the present study achieved some success in partially confirming the results of the prior research, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations within this study. First of all, the survey had a relatively small number of participants. Indeed, it was only made up of 80 learners. However, the study is still interesting since students are not coming solely from one school but from several schools situated in French-speaking part of Belgium. Secondly, achieving a more uniform gender distribution within the sample would have been advantageous. Regrettably, achieving parity between male and female participants necessitated the exclusion of some male participants. This decisions, while necessary for balancing the genders, could potentially have enhanced the qualitative depth of the analysis, given that the inclusion of the entire dataset would have been feasible. The primary constraint of this study was the absence of a comprehensive grounding in statistical analysis. To truly elevate the qualitative nature of the research, pursuing a dedicated course in statistics would have been indispensable. Despite my attempts to employ SPSS for the practical part of the study, the complexities of the program presented considerable challenges due to my limited understanding of statistics. However, the garnered findings remain valuable and contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge. Given the inherent limitations of a master's thesis in fully addressing every facet of the topic, there arises an opportunity to explore additional dimensions. For instance, delving into other aspects like investigating anxiety levels in correlation with diverse levels of proficiency and distinct age groups could offer valuable insights to future research.

5. Sources

- Al-Saraj, T. M. (2014). Revisiting the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS): The Anxiety of Female English Language Learners in Saudi Arabia. *L2 Journal*, 6(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/L26121650>
- Arnold, J., Brown H.D. (1999). A map of the terrain, [dans:] Affect in language learning, éd. J. Arnold, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1999, p. 8.
- Aydin, S. (2009). Test Anxiety among Foreign Language Learners: A Review of Literature. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 5 (1), 127-137.
- Aydin, S., Akkaş, F. D., Türnük, T., Beydilli, A. B., & Saydam, İ. (2020). Test Anxiety among Foreign Language Learners: A Qualitative Study. *Qualitative Report*, 25(12).
- Bakhla, A. K., Sinha, P., Sharan, R., Binay, Y., Verma, V., & Chaudhury, S. (2013). Anxiety in school students: Role of parenting and gender. *Industrial psychiatry journal*, 22(2), 131–137. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0972-6748.132927>
- Berg-Beckhoff, G., Nielsen, G., & Ladekjær Larsen, E. (2017). Use of information communication technology and stress, burnout, and mental health in older, middle-aged, and younger workers—results from a systematic review. *International journal of occupational and environmental health*, 23(2), 160-171.
- Botes, E., Van der Westhuizen L., Dewaele J. M., MacIntyre P., and Greiff S. (2022). Validating the Short-form Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. *Applied Linguistics* 2022: 43/5: 1006–1033. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applij/amac018>
- Brewer, S. (2010). Un regard agentique sur l'anxiété langagière. Dans J. Aden, T. Grimshaw & H. Penz (dir.), Enseigner les langues-cultures à l'ère de la complexité : approches interdisciplinaires pour un monde en reliance (p. 75-88). Bruxelles : Peter Lang.
- Campbell, C.M., & Ortiz, J. (1991). Helping students overcome foreign language anxiety: A foreign language anxiety workshop. In E.K. Horwitz & D.J. Young (Eds.), *Language*

anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications (pp.141-150). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

- Campbell, C.M., Shaw, V.M. (1994). Language anxiety and gender differences in adult second language learners: Exploring the relationship. The American Association of University Supervisors, Coordinators and Directors of Foreign Languages Programs (AAUSC), 223-251. <http://hdl.handle.net/102015/69496>
- Chang, Y. H., Lin, P. R., & Lu, Y. T. (2020). Development of a Kinect-based English learning system based on integrating the ARCS model with situated learning. *Sustainability*, 12(5), 2037.
- Cheng, Y., Horwitz, E., and Schallert, D. (1999). Language anxiety: differentiating writing and speaking components. *Lang. Learn.* 49, 417–446. doi: 10.1111/ 0023- 8333.00095
- Chou, M. H. (2014). Assessing English vocabulary and enhancing young English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners' motivation through games, songs, and stories. *Education 3-13*, 42(3), 284-297.
- Cohen, B. E., Edmondson, D., & Kronish, I. M. (2015). State of the art review: depression, stress, anxiety, and cardiovascular disease. *American journal of hypertension*, 28(11), 1295-1302.
- Cortés, N. C. (2005). Negative language transfer when learning Spanish as a foreign language. *Interlingüística*, (16), 237-248.
- Davari, H., Karami, H., Nourzadeh, S., and Iranmehr, A. (2020). Examining the validity of the achievement emotions questionnaire for measuring more emotions in the foreign language classroom. *J. Multiling. Multicult. Dev.* 2, 1–14. doi: 10.1080/01434632.2020.1766054
- Deni, D. S. (2020). EFL Students' Strategies in Relieving Anxiety in English Speaking Performances (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh).

Désir, C. (2022). Les indicateurs de l'enseignement 2022. Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles.
From : www.enseignement.be

Dewaele, J. M., MacIntyre, P. D., Boudreau, C., & Dewaele, L. (2016). Do girls have all the fun? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Theory and practice of second language acquisition*, 2(1), 41-63.

Dewaele, J.-M., and MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Stud. Second Lang. Learn. Teach.* 4, 237–274. doi: 10.14746/ssl1t.2014.4.2.5

Dewaele, J.-M., Magdalena, A. F., and Saito, K. (2019b). The effect of perception of teacher characteristics on Spanish EFL learners' anxiety and enjoyment. *Mod. Lang. J.* 103, 412–427. doi: 10.1111/modl.12555

Dewaele, J.-M., Witney, J., Saito, K., and Dewaele, L. (2017). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety in the FL classroom: the effect of teacher and learner variables. *Lang. Teach. Res.* 22, 676–697. doi: 10.1177/1362168817692161

Djafri, F., & Wimbarti, S. (2018). Measuring foreign language anxiety among learners of different foreign languages: In relation to motivation and perception of teacher's behaviors. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 3(1), 1-15.

Dolean, D. D. (2016). The effects of teaching songs during foreign language classes on students' foreign language anxiety. *Language Teaching Research*, 20(5), 638–653. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168815606151>

Dong L, Liu M and Yang F (2022) The Relationship Between Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety, Enjoyment, and Expectancy-Value Motivation and Their Predictive Effects on Chinese High School Students' Self-Rated Foreign Language Proficiency. *Front. Psychol.* 13:860603. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.860603

- Dupoux, E., Sebastián-Gallés, N., Navarrete, E., & Peperkamp, S. (2008). Persistent stress 'deafness': The case of French learners of Spanish. *Cognition*, 106(2), 682-706.
- Dutra, R. L., & Finger, I. (2019). Age and proficiency in foreign language anxiety. *Caderno de letras (Pelotas)*. *Pelotas, RS. N. 35 (set./dez. 2019), p. 209-220.*
- Elkhafaifi, H. (2005). Listening Comprehension and Anxiety in the Arabic Language Classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), 206–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00275.x>
- Eysenck, W. (1988) Anxiety and attention, *Anxiety Research*, 1:1, 9-15, DOI: [10.1080/10615808808248216](https://doi.org/10.1080/10615808808248216)
- French, B.F., Park G-P. (2013). Gender differences in the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale. *System*. Volume 41, Issue 2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.04.001>
- Gardner, R. C. (2010). Motivation and second language acquisition: The socio-educational model (Vol. 10). Peter Lang.
- Gerencheal, B. (2016). Gender Differences in Foreign Language Anxiety at an Ethiopian University: Mizan-Tepi University Third Year English Major Students in Focus. *Online Submission*, 1(1), 1-16.
- Hardiansyah, M. Z. (2022). Grammar Similarity: A Study of Comparative Linguistic in French and Spanish Bilingual Song. *Metahumaniora*, 12(1), 33-46.
- He, X., Zhou, D., and Zhang, X. (2021). An Empirical Study On Chinese University Students' English Language Classroom Anxiety With The Idiodynamic Approach. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Open. doi: 10.1177/21582440211037676
- Herrington, J., Reeves, T. C., & Oliver, R. (2014). Authentic learning environments (pp. 401-412). Springer New York.

- Horgues, C. (2013). French learners of L2 English: Intonation boundaries and the marking of lexical stress. *Research in Language*, 11(1), 41-56.
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/327317>
- Horwitz, E. K. (2016). Reflections on Horwitz (1986), “Preliminary Evidence for the Validity and Reliability of a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale.” *TESOL Quarterly*, 50(4), 932–935. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44984723>
- Hu, L., Wang, N. (2014). Anxiety in Foreign Language Learning. International Conference on Global Economy, Commerce and Service Science. Yan Shan University. doi:[10.2991/gecss-14.2014.31](https://doi.org/10.2991/gecss-14.2014.31)
- Huron, D. (2006). *Sweet anticipation: Music and the psychology of expectation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ilyosovna, N. A. (2020). The importance of English language. *International Journal on Orange Technologies*, 2(1), 22-24.
- Jin, Y., Dewaele, J. M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2021). Reducing anxiety in the foreign language classroom: A positive psychology approach. *System*, 101, 102604.
- Krashen, S. (1980). *The Input Hypothesis, Current Issues in Bilingual Education*, Washington, D. C. *Georgetown University Press*.
- Krystalli, P., Arvanitis, P., & Panagiotidis, P. (2014). Evaluating serious games for foreign language learning: An online grading and visualization tool. *International Journal for Cross-Disciplinary Subjects in Education (IJCDSE)*, 5(1), 1564-1570.
- Levitt, E. E. (2015). *The psychology of anxiety*. Second edition. Retrieved from https://books.google.be/books?hl=fr&lr=&id=0kIiEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=levitt+1980+the+psychology+of+anxiety&ots=fKfaUoX-Xr&sig=WYaKnZe1ngwq7YQLPYo9HW_pdhc#v=onepage&q=levitt%201980%20the%20psychology%20of%20anxiety&f=false

- Lewinsohn, P. M., Gotlib, I. H., Lewinsohn, M., Seeley, J. R., & Allen, N. B. (1998). Gender differences in anxiety disorders and anxiety symptoms in adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 107*(1), 109–117. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.107.1.109>
- Lorente, P. (2012). El juego en la enseñanza del español como lengua extranjera. *Nuevas perspectivas*. <http://hdl.handle.net/2078.1/137897>
- Lin, H.-C. K., Chao, C.-J., & Huang, T.-C. (2015). From a perspective on foreign language learning anxiety to develop an affective tutoring system. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 63*(5), 727–747. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24546647>
- Luszczyńska, S. (2016). Corrélat de l'anxiété langagière. *Romanica Cracoviensia 2* (2016): 75–96. doi: 10.4467/20843917RC.16.008.5929
- Luszczyńska, S. (2017). Impact de l'anxiété sur l'apprentissage des langues. z.XIII, 129-146. doi : <http://dx.doi.org/10.16926/sn.2017.13.10>
- Macedonia, M. (2005). Games and foreign language teaching. *Support for learning, 20*(3), 135-140.
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1999). Language anxiety: A review of the research for language teachers. *Affect in foreign language and second language learning: A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere, 24*(1).
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991a). Language anxiety: Its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages. *Language Learning, 41*(4), 513–534. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1991.tb00691.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991b). Methods and results in the study of anxiety and language learning: A review of the literature. *Language Learning, 41*(1), 85–117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1991.tb00677.x>

- MacIntyre, P. D., and Vincze, L. (2017). Positive and negative emotions underlie motivation for L2 learning. *Stud. Second Lang. Learn. Teach* 7, 61–88. doi: 10.14746/ssllt.2017.7.1.4
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1995). How Does Anxiety Affect Second Language Learning? A Reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 90–99. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329395>
- Mahmud, S., & Suryana, A. (2015). Coping with Language Anxiety of Second Language Users: A Psychological Approach. *The Journal of English Literacy Education: The Teaching and Learning of English as a Foreign Language*, 2(1), 47-54.
- Marx, N. (2019). Age and Gender on Foreign Language Anxiety: A case of Junior High School English Learners in Japan. *Kanazawa Seiryō University Bulletin of the Humanities Vol.3 No.2*, 33-42.
- Matsuda, S., & Gobel, P. (2004). Anxiety and predictors of performance in the foreign language classroom. *System*, 32(1), 21-36.
- McLean, C. P., & Anderson, E. R. (2009). Brave men and timid women? A review of the gender differences in fear and anxiety. *Clinical psychology review*, 29(6), 496-505.
- Mundi Linguae (2021). *L'anglais et l'espagnol : Les langues les plus demandées en entreprise*. From : <https://mundilinguae.fr/langlais-et-lespagnol-les-langues-les-plus-demandees-en-entreprise/#:~:text=Langues%20les%20plus%20utiles%20pour%20les%20affaires%20dans%20le%20monde&text=L%27anglais%20et%20l%27espagnol%20sont%20les%20langues%20plus%20courantes,russe%20et%20de%20l%27allemand>.
- Murray, H. (2006). The globalization of English and the English language classroom.
- O'Donnell, P., & Toebosch, A. (2008). Multilingualism in Brussels: 'I'd Rather Speak English'. *Journal of multilingual and multicultural development*, 29(2), 154-169.

- Phillipson, R. (2009). English in globalisation, a Lingua Franca or a Lingua Frankensteinia?. *Tesol Quarterly*, 43(2), 335-339.
- Piechurska-Kuciel, E. (2012). Gender-dependent language anxiety in Polish communication apprehensives. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 2(2), 227–248. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2012.2.2.6>
- Price, M. L. (1991). The subjective experience of foreign language anxiety: Interviews with highly anxious students. *Language anxiety: From theory and research to classroom implications*, 4(1), 101-108.
- Rao, P. S. (2019). The role of English as a global language. *Research Journal of English*, 4(1), 65-79.
- Robinson, O. J., Vytal, K., Cornwell, B. R., & Grillon, C. (2013). The impact of anxiety upon cognition: perspectives from human threat of shock studies. *Frontiers in human neuroscience*, 7, 203. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2013.00203>
- Rotenberg, A. M. (2002). A Classroom Research Project: The Psychological Effects of Standardized Testing on Young English Language Learners at Different Language Proficiency Levels.
- Schwarzer, R. (Ed.). (2013). *Self-related cognitions in anxiety and motivation*. Psychology Press. 35 – 45.
- Scovel, T. (1978). The effect of affect on foreign language learning: A review of the anxiety research. *Language Learning*, 28, 129 – 42.
- Seidlhofer, B., Breiteneder, A., & Pitzl, M. L. (2006). English as a lingua franca in Europe: Challenges for applied linguistics. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 26, 3-34.
- Shao, K., Pekrun, R., and Nicholson, L. J. (2019). Emotions in classroom language learning: what can we learn from achievement emotion research? *System* 86, 102–121. doi: 10.1016/j.system.2019.102121

- Smith, F. (2014). *To think: In language, learning and education*. Routledge
- Spielberger, C. D. (1983). *Manual for the state-trait anxiety inventory*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Stein, M. B., & Sareen, J. (2015). Generalized anxiety disorder. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 373(21), 2059-2068.xte
- Tobias, S. (1986). Anxiety and cognitive processing of instruction. In R. Schwarzer (Ed.), *Self-related cognition in anxiety and motivation* (pp.35-54). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Tomova, L., von Dawans, B., Heinrichs, M., Silani, G., & Lamm, C. (2014) Is stress affecting our ability to tune into others? Evidence for gender differences in the effects of stress on self-other distinction, *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 43, 95-104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psyneuen.2014.02.006>.
- Toufexis, D. J., Myers, K. M., & Davis, M. (2006). The effect of gonadal hormones and gender on anxiety and emotional learning. *Hormones and behavior*, 50(4), 539-549.
- Von Wörde, R. (2003). Student's Perspective on Foreign Language Anxiety. Volume 8. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ876838.pdf>
- Wang, K. T., Permyakova, T. M., Sheveleva, M. S., & Camp, E. E. (2018). Perfectionism as a predictor of anxiety in foreign language classrooms among Russian college students. *Journal of Educational, Cultural and Psychological Studies*, 18, 127–146.
- Watson, D., & Friend, R. (1969). Measurement of social-evaluative anxiety. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 33(4), 448.
- Yang, J. C., Lin, M. Y. D., & Chen, S. Y. (2018). Effects of anxiety levels on learning performance and gaming performance in digital game-based learning. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 34(3), 324-334.

Yang, Y. F., Hsieh, W. M., Wong, W. K., Hong, Y. C., & Lai, S. C. (2022). Reducing students' foreign language anxiety to improve English vocabulary learning in an online simulation game. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 1-23.

Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a Low-Anxiety Classroom Environment: What Does Language Anxiety Research Suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(4), 426-439.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/329492>

Zheng, Y., Cheng, L. (2018). How does anxiety influence language performance? From the perspectives of foreign language classroom anxiety and cognitive test anxiety. *Lang Test Asia* 8, 13. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-018-0065-4>

Websites accessed:

<https://learninglab.uni-due.de/research-instrument/13363>

<https://mundilinguae.fr/langlais-et-lespagnol-les-langues-les-plus-demandees-en-entreprise/#:~:text=Langues%20les%20plus%20utiles%20pour%20les%20affaires%20dans%20le%20monde&text=L%27anglais%20et%20l%27espagnol%20sont%20les%20langues%20plus%20courantes,russe%20et%20de%20l%27allemand>

6. Annexes

6.1. Annex 1: Horwitz's FLCA scale

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
2. I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
14. I would <i>not</i> be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

22. I *don't* feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
26. I feel more tense and nervous in language class than in my other classes.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.
Strongly Agree Agree Neither Agree nor Disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

UNIVERSITÉ CATHOLIQUE DE LOUVAIN
Faculté de philosophie, arts et lettres

Place Blaise Pascal, 1 bte L3.03.11, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgique | www.uclouvain.be/fial