

**LANGUAGE ANXIETY**  
**IN 14 – 16 YEAR OLD FL LEARNERS**

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**BARBARA THORNTON**

**Thesis Submitted for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
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**To my parents, Wanda and Bazyli Lesowiec**

## **ABSTRACT**

Language anxiety is a type of situational anxiety closely linked to communication apprehension. This thesis examines the phenomenon of language anxiety in 14 – 16 year old learners in the UK and proposes a contextually-based model to account for the variables involved. The research consists of two main parts: a survey of 607 learners using a modified version of the FLCAS (Foreign Language Communication Anxiety Scale) and a case study of 53 learners of different ability levels from the same school. Results from the survey showed that language anxiety existed in significant numbers, and that it was linked with gender and perceived difficulty of the language. Investigations during the period of the case study further demonstrated a negative correlation between achievement (as measured by self-report) and anxiety levels.

While anxiety about the act of communicating was felt to have a generally negative effect on learning, in contrast to a number of other studies, test anxiety was found to have a generally facilitating effect providing the test was pitched at an appropriate level of difficulty.

The findings of the case study uncovered a range of sources of language anxiety. These included negative experiences in the past, usually involving a teacher. A number of classroom practices such as error correction and certain types of group work were also found to be further causes of anxiety, as were feelings of conspicuousness and the reaction of peers.

The implications of the research for the classroom teacher are discussed and ways in which anxiety can be minimised are outlined. Areas for further investigation are suggested in order to further both theory and practice.



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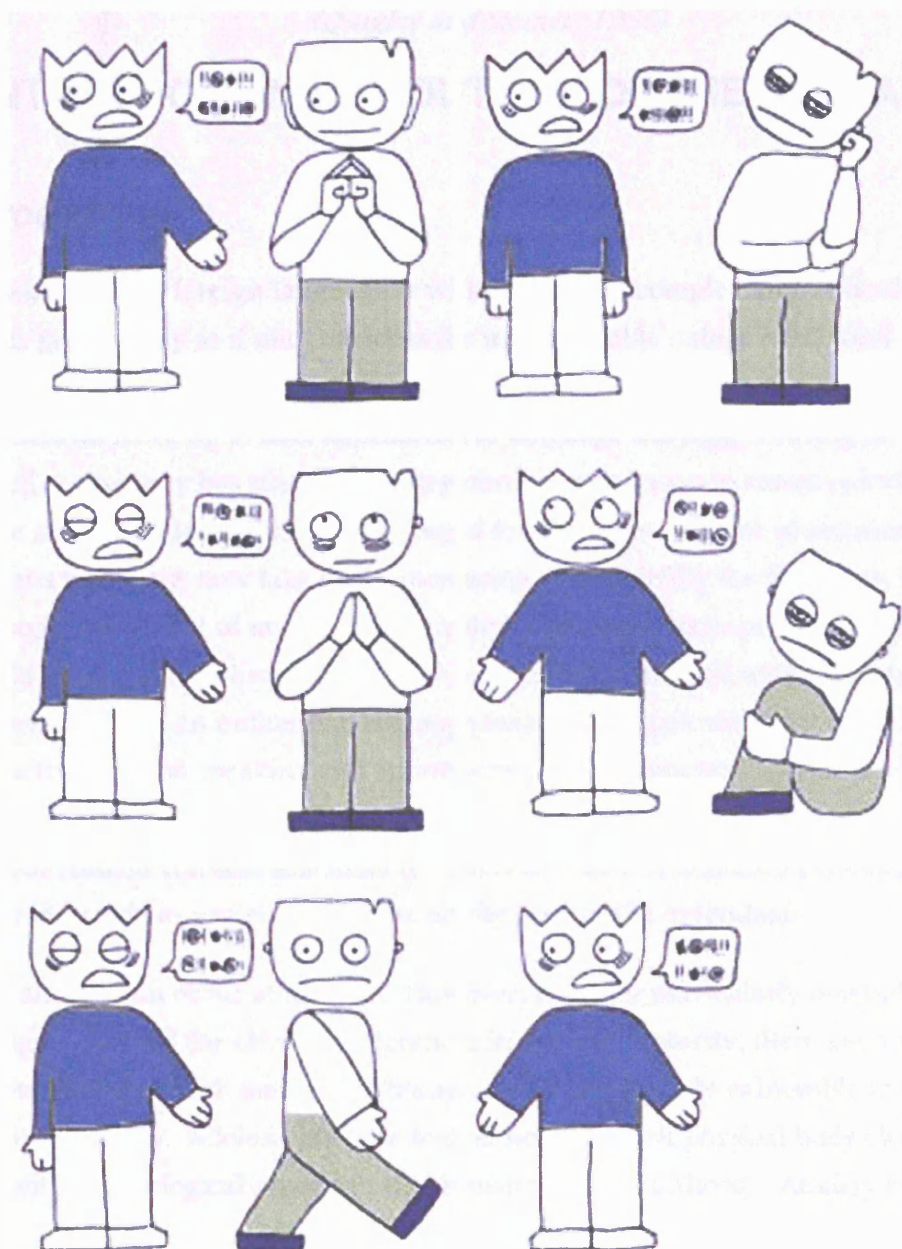


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from Dewaele, M. (2001) Tongue Tied in a Foreign Language *Linguist Online*

# **CHAPTER 1**

**“For teenagers, adolescence is an intense time of change as they face developmental tasks on their journey toward adulthood.”**  
*(Quigley and Steiner, 1996)*

## **INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH**

### ***Introduction***

The learning of a foreign language is without doubt a complex and difficult task. This is particularly so if one considers the unpredictable nature of the oral interaction that learners have to engage in. Within our schools, the present emphasis on more up to date approaches to language teaching focusing on fluency as well as accuracy has placed a greater burden on learners to communicate orally. At the same time, teachers are encouraged to surrender a degree of autonomy to the students who must now take on an increasing responsibility for their own learning. Although the advent of more communicative approaches is to be welcomed, it should perhaps be realised that greater responsibility coupled with the pressure to perform orally in an unfamiliar language may add to more stress for some learners. While the focus on speaking and taking active part in lessons may suit the more extrovert, confident students, such requirements may cause the more timid and nervous student considerable anxiety. This can result in impaired performance which does not accurately reflect the ability level of the individual.

Such anxiety can occur at any age. However, it can be particularly marked in teenagers. Beyond the obvious differences in age and maturity, there are a number of other factors which may make this age group particularly vulnerable to the effects of anxiety. Adolescents have to deal not only with physical body changes but also with psychological aspects of the transition into adulthood. Anxiety and worry over school work and relationships in class and outside are common in many teenagers. While many such worries suffered by teenagers may be unrealistic, they are largely uncontrollable and can be extremely distressing (UCLA, 2003). Children suffering from anxiety may have difficulty concentrating and suffer diminished performance in school.

The increasing tensions of peer groups and an emerging sense of self are also characteristic of the adolescent period and are particularly relevant in relation to language learning. Such peer group tension may emerge during the group work which is frequently advocated within current language learning approaches while the problems for adolescents of having to project themselves in a language over which they do not have full mastery may cause additional anxiety, tension and worries.

The emergence of social phobias is also common during the teenage years and can lead to young people avoiding situations which may lead to embarrassment or possible ridicule. Many adolescents with this tendency will also be anxious about being judged by others (Anxiety Disorders Association of America, 2003). Clearly given the assessment-based nature of current educational systems, judgement by teacher and peers is an integral part of the language learning process. The fear of appearing silly when forced to adopt a strange sounding accent is obviously highly relevant to the foreign language classroom.

Given the above, it is surprising to find few investigations of anxiety specific to teenagers learning a foreign language. Although there is a great deal of existing literature devoted to the subject of language anxiety with adults, there have been far fewer studies of adolescents. The few investigations that there have been were carried out in North America or the Pacific Rim countries (see Appendix 1). Furthermore in common with much of the research into second language acquisition which fails to filter through to foreign language teaching in the UK (Macaro, 1977), the greatest number of studies conducted outside the United States have focused on the learning of English as a Foreign Language. Indeed, over the last ten years, *Language Learning*, one of the major UK publications in the field has not published a single article in the field of language anxiety. The study which follows is the first of its kind in that it involves an investigation into language anxiety in 14 – 15 year old foreign language learners in England.

## ***Statement of Area of Interest***

Research into the individual variables which affect language learning has been an important area within the literature on second language acquisition for some time. Initially the focus was on cognitive as opposed to affective variables and few studies concerned themselves with language anxiety and when they did, tended to view it as peripheral. Over the last few years, however, language anxiety in learners of any age, has been increasingly viewed as an important variable which can affect success in language learning.

Very recent research points to the crucial importance of language anxiety as one of the main blocking factors to effective language learning (Nascente, 2001) and can have not only academic but also social and personal consequences (Young, 1999). Studies report that students feel more anxious in language classes than in any other subjects (Price, 1991) while Campbell and Orwitz (1991) state that levels of language anxiety are “alarming”. According to Krashen (1982 p.21) “there appears to be a consistent relationship between various forms of anxiety and language proficiency in all situations, formal and informal.”

Given the above, it is not surprising that in the last fifteen years there have been more than 50 studies in the area of language anxiety (see Appendix 1). However, up until now most of these studies have focused on adults and North American high school students rather than adolescents. Furthermore, studies have tended to be carried out in North America or Pacific Rim countries with only a couple of smaller scale studies focusing on the phenomenon in Europe (Turula, 2000).

The present thesis is therefore the first of its kind in that it constitutes a larger scale study to examine the phenomenon of language anxiety within 14 – 16 year old learners in UK to find out whether in fact language anxiety does exist in the “alarming” proportions identified by North American researchers and if so how it can be recognized, what effects it has and what its relationship is to other variables.

The decision to concentrate on the area of language anxiety is taken in the knowledge that both theories of language anxiety and second /foreign language theory are in a state of flux (Dörnyei, 2001b; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). Anxiety has been defined and redefined leading to a lack of consensus in the field to this day. The study which follows looks at this other research before building on one of the

more common models to provide further insights into the phenomenon of language anxiety.

## **Background**

This investigation into language anxiety in children in England has its roots in a larger scale investigation into the attitudes of children towards language learning which was funded through an EU LINGUA project. Teachers from Spain, Italy and UK taking part in the LINGUA project had expressed concern about the effect of new curricula on the attitudes of child language learning. In order to develop a fuller understanding of language anxiety in this age group and its implications for language education and the language curriculum, a wide ranging survey was conducted into language anxiety as well as other affective variables, strategy use and knowledge of the target country and peoples. The design, development and results of this investigation form the first part of the work reported here with particular emphasis given to the findings relating to language anxiety.

The results themselves added additional insights into the phenomenon of language anxiety and thus gave rise to further questions. These questions were unsuitable for investigation using survey questionnaires and the latter part of this work is concerned with the design, conduct and analysis of a case study into language anxiety using a smaller number of subjects.

The approach to this study is therefore iterative in nature. It uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative data in the first part of the study are used to obtain an overall picture of the existence of language anxiety. The aim of this first part of the research was to discover whether language anxiety existed within teenage learners in UK and if so, what its relationship might be to other individual variables. The qualitative data which form phase II of the research are then used to illuminate and supplement major findings from part I. However, the results of the first survey also enabled the researcher to capture additional insights and reformulate the research questions. This meant that flexibility was needed on her part in the direction taken by the research and the choice of research tools particularly during the latter part of the project.

## **Research Questions**

In the first part of the research, the main focus was on the existence of language anxiety and its relationship with other variables. After a review of the literature, the following questions were identified:

- Do children in fact feel anxious in their language classrooms?  
If so, what is the nature of that anxiety?
- Do the anxieties identified have a facilitating or debilitating effect on language learning?
- How does anxiety relate to other variables, in particular:
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Language studied
  - First language
  - Attitudes
  - Enjoyment of language learning
  - Motivation to learn the foreign language
  - Language learning strategy use

As a result of the findings from the first phase and a reprise of the literature, the focus of the next phase shifted to a more situationally-based investigation of the area. The second part of the study examined the phenomenon of language anxiety from a more contextual viewpoint and sought answers to the following questions:

- How is language anxiety manifested in the foreign language classroom?
- What effect does it have on learning?
- What are the sources of anxiety?
- What is the effect of the curriculum and the role of the teacher in exacerbating or diminishing language anxiety?

## **Research Design**

There has long been a schism between quantitative and qualitative research in educational research in general, and in second language acquisition research in particular.

The study described below adopted a mixed method approach to the research beginning with more quantitative techniques and progressing towards a more

qualitative in-depth investigation of language anxiety in context. The research design was chosen to provide an optimal combination of methods to investigate the concerns in question. It closely mirrors what Creswell (2003) describes as an exploratory use of mixed methods rather than the more traditional explanatory approach where one begins with a qualitative phase followed up by a quantitative study in an attempt to generalise from a smaller sample to a larger population.

During the first part of the study, a large scale survey was the most appropriate means to find answers to questions which looked at the existence of language anxiety within the target population. The emphasis here was not on the individual. Rather the primary aim was to find out whether anxiety existed and to what degree in a population of over 600 learners. The first part of the research was therefore purely descriptive in nature and quantitative methods of data analysis were felt to be most appropriate to examine the relationships between anxiety and a range of other variables. The quantified results of this phase of the research led to the fine-tuning of existing questions and the formulation of further questions which looked at explanations for the existence of the phenomenon of anxiety. Here the focus was on how anxious learners behave, how the curriculum might relieve or exacerbate anxiety, the role of the teacher and others in the development of anxiety as well as what might cause an individual to be anxious in the first place.

However, such questions can not be addressed with only quantitative methods. During the second phase, the emphasis was much more on the individual and on the investigation of language anxiety in context. In order to provide a thicker, more holistic picture of language anxiety in a classroom context, more qualitative methods were appropriate. The second part of this study adopted a case study approach since this provided a more flexible alternative, allowing findings to constantly feed into ongoing research. It included the use, not only of questionnaires and interviews with students, but also observations and reflections on the part of the teacher. The case study which lasted for an academic year was a period of continually re-evaluating findings and formulating questions for the next sets of interviews or observations.

This study therefore only partially follows the traditional way in which case studies are used in research. Traditionally "case studies are appropriate for the exploratory phase of an investigation while surveys are appropriate for the descriptive phase" (Yin, 1994 p.3). Here the survey used in the first part of our research provides a description of the phenomenon of language anxiety while the case study goes



beyond mere exploration to provide explanatory as well as further descriptive information.

## ***Organisation of Study: An Overview***

The thesis is divided into nine chapters with the divisions themselves reflecting divisions in the theoretical framework of the study.

Following the current chapter which has provided an introduction to the context of the study, Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature into affective variables which impact the foreign language learning process with particular reference to anxiety. Studies which show a relationship between language anxiety and other variables are focused on in this chapter. Models which account for the existence of anxiety within a broader framework of individual variables in second language acquisition are also discussed. Particular emphasis is given to the few other studies which have taken place of learners of this age group.

In Chapter 3, the research design employed in the first part of the study is described and discussed, together with the rationale for the approach taken. The development of the questionnaire survey is outlined and the outcomes of the first small scale pilot are investigated.

Chapter 4 reports and analyzes the data collected during the first large scale survey of over 600 adolescent learners. Results show that language anxiety does indeed exist within this age group although its effects are not necessarily always negative. Also it becomes apparent, that anxiety does have a significant relationship with a number of other variables.

In Chapter 5, areas for further in-depth investigation are identified based on the findings of Chapter 4 and interviews with learners identified as anxious.

In Chapter 6, the literature is reappraised and new areas reviewed particularly in areas focusing on the context of the classroom. The aim here was to see what light the literature could shed on the results of the earlier findings as well as to open up new avenues for investigation. As a result of the findings from Chapters 5 and 6, the questions for investigation were re-evaluated and eventually reformulated.

The design of the case study to investigate language anxiety in its classroom context is described in Chapter 7. A rationale for the approach taken is laid out and the

various methods of data collection and analysis are discussed. In Chapter 8 the findings of the case study are reported and analyzed in relation to the research questions. Certain common classroom procedures do exacerbate anxiety, anxious learners do exhibit similar identifiable behaviours and use similar strategies in attempts to alleviate their anxieties. Finally Chapter 9 contains a discussion of the overall study together with conclusions and implications for teaching and further research.

This study adds an important component to the existing literature on language anxiety. It is the largest study of its kind; it focuses on an age group identified as being highly vulnerable to language anxiety and it is the only study to focus on the area within the United Kingdom. It is hoped that the results will be of use to educators in recognizing and dealing with anxiety and providing the most appropriate instruction to individual learners.

**Figure 1.1** Diagrammatic representation of structure of the thesis**FIRST LITERATURE REVIEW (Chapter 2)****KEY QUESTIONS**

Does the study of foreign languages indeed make students of this age anxious?  
If so, how does that anxiety relate to other variables?

**PHASE 1 PART 1: Questionnaire development (Chapter 3)**

Interviews with teachers Focus groups Discussions	Teacher questionnaire
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Pilot questionnaire with 68 learners of German

**PHASE 1 PART 2 (Chapter 4)**

Questionnaire survey of 607 learners in UK
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**FINE-TUNING OF QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION (Chapter 5)**

What is it about foreign language learning that makes learners anxious?  
What might have caused this anxiety to develop?

Observation of classes Interviews with six "anxious" learners
--

**BACK TO THE LITERATURE (Chapter 6)**

What light can the literature throw on the findings so far?  
What does the literature tell us about the causes and effects of anxiety?

**PHASE 2: THE CASE STUDY (Chapters 7 and 8)****KEY QUESTIONS**

Is test anxiety indeed facilitating?  
How do tests which facilitate learning differ from those tests which cause debilitating anxiety?  
How well able is the teacher to identify anxious learners?  
What effect does anxiety have on student behaviour?  
What makes students anxious?  
a) types of activities  
b) classroom organisation

Interviews with teacher / Personal construct elicitation from teacher Questionnaires / Follow- up class discussion / follow – up interviews (55 learners from 3 sets)
Observation

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH (Chapter 9)**

## **CHAPTER 2**

“(despite) widespread language awareness courses, students (of modern foreign languages) frequently possess a fresh and naive view of the language acquisition process, as untainted by knowledge of second language acquisition research findings as is that of their teachers”.

*(Coleman, 1999)*

### **FIRST REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### ***Introduction***

Research into the individual variables which affect language learning has long formed part of the research tradition of Second Language Acquisition. Such individual factors have been variously defined and labeled as “affective, cognitive and social factors” (Hawkey cited in Ellis, 1985 p.100); “cognitive, affective and other” (Gardner and MacIntyre 1992 p.211), “cognitive, affective, personality and demographic variables” (Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley, 2000) and as “beliefs, learner states and affective factors” (Ellis, 2001 p.1). The exact focus of this research has tended to vary over the years with cognitive features and, in particular, aptitude attracting most attention in the 1960s and 70s. Since the mid-70s, motivation and learning strategies have also attracted a continuous stream of research, gradually bringing with it an interest in the affective domain and its effects on language learning.

Although not viewed as particularly important in the overall picture, starting in the 1960s, anxiety in foreign language learning was recognized as one individual affective factor influencing the learner. Within the last fifteen years, foreign language anxiety has been examined even more closely. This chapter will review the literature in the area from 1960 - 2004, beginning with definitions of anxiety in general, and foreign language anxiety in particular. This will be followed by an examination of the relationship between anxiety and variables in language learning. Finally, we will look at the methods which have been used to investigate these aspects of foreign language

anxiety. The literature on the characteristics of anxious learners, as well as manifestations and causes of anxiety will be reviewed later in this document in Chapter 6 prior to a discussion of phase 2 of the research. Studies which give practical advice to the teacher on ways of minimizing anxiety will also be surveyed later in this work.

## ***The Nature of Anxiety***

The term anxiety is one which seems to defy adequate definition because it is a synthesis of overt behavioural characteristics, psycho-physiological responses and internal feelings. Whereas the former lends itself to scientific investigation, the latter can only be probed by questionnaire and interview responses. Strictly speaking, anxiety can be a feeling, a mood, an emotional response, a syndrome or an illness (Beck and Emery, 1985). What is accepted unequivocally is its general unpleasantness, its similarity to fear and apprehension, that it is an emotional state and can be generated through the arousal of negative thought. Research continues on the causes, manifestations and treatment of anxiety in the fields of counseling and psychotherapy. Specialist fields include library anxiety (Jiaou and Onwuegbuzie, 1999), teacher anxiety (Randall with Thornton, 2001), a whole range of specific social phobias (Goodwin, 1986), general communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1984) and public speaking anxiety (Brydon and Scott, 2000).

Anxiety in learning situations and its negative effects on performance has also long been an area of concern to educationalists. Spielberger (1966) reported that academic failure was four times as great among high-anxious intelligent individuals as for low-anxious students of comparable ability. Anxiety has been shown to impair performance in a wide range of cognitive functions necessary for successful learning including attention, memory, concept formation and problem solving (Sieber et al. 1977). Students experiencing anxiety in such learning situations may become forgetful, be unable to concentrate, sweat, and suffer headaches and palpitations. They may try to avoid class, sit in places where they think they won't be noticed and try to avoid answering questions. Research in the area of maths anxiety; the emotional and cognitive dread of mathematics has been ongoing for the last 25 years as evidenced by the long history of literature in the area such as that by Tobias and Weissbrod (1980, in Johnson, 2003 p.403) who define maths anxiety as "the panic,

helplessness, paralysis, and mental disorganization that arises among some people when they are required to solve a mathematical problem". Research is ongoing in fields such as computer anxiety, science anxiety and writing anxiety.

Language anxiety is one such topic to arise out of studies of this nature. Over the last fifteen years, it has assumed increasing importance in the literature on affective variables in language learning and now constitutes a distinct area of research in its own right.

### ***What is Language Anxiety?***

Research in the field of the good language learner has long found that some people are better at learning languages than others. Many teachers are also familiar with those learners who claim to be "no good at learning languages"; who have a mental block against it. Such learners, according to Horwitz et al. (1986), may be suffering from language anxiety.

Language anxiety has been defined as "the apprehension experienced when a situation requires the use of a second language with which the individual is not fully proficient." (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.5). It can affect all skills (there have been some studies of writing anxiety), but is most apparent in speaking.

However, while there may be agreement with Gardner and MacIntyre's somewhat general definition of language anxiety, what exactly it consists of is still far from clear. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991) identify three types of performance anxieties which they have found have great relevance to the studies on language anxiety. These are 1) communication apprehension 2) test anxiety and 3) fear of negative evaluation.

a) **Communication apprehension** is defined as anxiety about the real or anticipated act of speaking. A more apt definition might be anxiety about the real or anticipated act of engaging in communication since Horwitz et al. include receiver anxiety in this category, citing the case of a male adult student who claimed to hear only a loud buzz when his teacher spoke in the foreign language. Communication apprehension has been very thoroughly researched, particularly in relation to areas such as public speaking, and obviously has a great deal of relevance to language anxiety.

b) **Test anxiety** is related to the anxiety experienced in language learning situations of an academic nature which tend to be characterised by tests, quizzes and exams. Test anxiety is closely linked to fear of failure and is clearly of relevance to formal learning environments.

c) **Fear of negative evaluation** also called social evaluation apprehension in other contexts (McCroskey, 1984), is concerned with anxiety over how one's actions will be viewed in the larger social setting – in this case the social setting of the classroom. Although social evaluation apprehension has been thoroughly documented in other non-language learning contexts, where communication in an L2 involves self-presentation in a language in which the individual does not possess complete mastery, uncertainty and therefore anxiety is likely to be correspondingly greater.

However, Horwitz et al (1986) feel that language anxiety is much more than the sum of the above. They describe language anxiety as “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning” (p.128).

Further support for the claim of the unique nature of language anxiety comes from more recent work by Horwitz (Horwitz, 2001) as well as from various other research including MacIntyre and Gardner (1991b), who in a study employing 22 anxiety measures identified language anxiety as a separate factor, which rather than being made up of the distinct performance anxieties identified as relevant by Horwitz et al. found it emerged as totally distinct from communication apprehension, social evaluation and test anxiety, showing that language anxiety is a “specific relatively unique type of apprehension” (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p. 5).

Nevertheless, Horwitz et al.'s definition of language anxiety together with its relationship with communication apprehension, social evaluation apprehension and test anxiety remains the most usual in our field with the overwhelming majority of recent studies using both her definition as well as her research instrument (Cheng, 2001; Casado, 2001).

## ***Importance of Research into Language Anxiety***

In order to understand the importance of language anxiety, we need to view language learning not just as an academic pursuit of learning rules and practicing language, but as a process where learners are constantly having to put themselves in a vulnerable position where their own self-confidence can be undermined, and where they are subjecting themselves to negative evaluations (Tsui, 1996). Guiora in Tsui (1996 p.8) views language learning as a “profoundly unsettling psychological proposition.” It is different from learning other subjects in that the likelihood of making mistakes is greater in the language classroom since students have to rely on getting not only content right but also the form and pronunciation.

Attention to the importance of language anxiety has its roots, on the one hand in educational theories such as the humanist approach to teaching and learning (Stevick, 1976; 1980) which stress the importance of anxiety-free learning, and on the other in the increased interest in individual variables as predictors of success in second language acquisition.

Empirical studies confirm the importance of the area. Anxiety was found to be second only to aptitude as a correlate of achievement in the foreign language (Ehrman and Oxford, 1995). In a recent study which sought to discover which variables best predict achievement in a foreign language, Onwuegbuzie et al (2000) found that two factors – academic achievement and low levels of foreign language anxiety - together combined to account for 22% of the variance in foreign language achievement. Indeed the relationship between anxiety and achievement is so strong, that “even in optimum conditions, students can experience destructive forms of anxiety” (Reid, 1999 p.297).

## ***The Nature of Research into Language Anxiety***

Much of the research into language anxiety has unsurprisingly concerned itself with this relationship between anxiety and achievement in the foreign language. For Krashen (1982), anxiety was an important part of the Affective Filter Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that input alone is not sufficient to successfully acquire a foreign language. Language learners also need to be receptive to that input.



According to Krashen, language input “can have its effect on acquisition only when affective conditions are optimal: 1) the acquirer is motivated 2) he (sic) has good self-confidence and a good self-image and 3) his anxiety level is low (Krashen, 1982 p.51)

Other early research found a negative correlation between language anxiety and scores on a standardized test (Tucker et al. 1976). These results were later replicated by Horwitz (1991) and others (Tobias, 1980) using course grades and standardized tests which, of course, may not always be indicative of true proficiency especially since the oral aspect of communication is not frequently given equal weight in tests of this nature. In fact, much early research was conflicting in nature and this is perhaps best epitomized by Backman’s 1976 study where the two worst students in her sample scored the highest and lowest on the anxiety scale she employed (Backman in Aida, 1994).

However, it is impossible to disagree with more recent researchers (Horwitz et al. 1991; Gardner and MacIntyre 1989, 1993) who believe that the uncertain nature of much of this early research is due, at least in part, to the lack of a specific measure of language anxiety and since that time a spate of other studies have found more significant results, for example, the notable study by Bailey et al. (2000) who in a study of 184 college students studying four different languages found that low anxiety along with general academic proficiency was the highest predictor of success in foreign language learning.

Further weight to the importance of anxiety’s negative influence on language achievement comes from Gardner and MacIntyre’s comprehensive state of the art survey reviewing research in the field of language anxiety up to 1993 which concludes that:

“anxious students will have lower levels of verbal production, will have difficulty in basic learning and production, will be less likely to volunteer answers in class, and will be reluctant to express personally relevant information in a second language conversation.” (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.6)

The effects are described as pervasive yet subtle since anxiety is associated with performance in the foreign but not in the native language (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994) and is also associated with deficits in listening comprehension, poor vocabulary learning, reduced communication in terms of word production, “low scores on

standardized tests, low grades in language courses or a combination of these factors” (Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret 1997, p.345).

### ***Anxiety and Other Variables***

Given these results which appeared to show that anxiety has an enormous effect on language learning, it is not surprising that during the 1990's research into the area proliferated, although a great deal of this research was conducted with young adults in university settings in the United States (see Appendix 1). Apart from a few studies (reviewed in Chapter 6) which looked at the causes and effects of anxiety, in the tradition of much second language acquisition research at the time, research attempts concentrated on the relationship between anxiety and other variables.

Unfortunately, a great deal of the work is inconclusive. To take the example of gender, Aida (1994) asserts that there is no significant gender difference as far as anxiety is concerned while Coleman in an impressively large study which involved self-report of nearly twenty thousand university students found that women were significantly more anxious than men (Coleman, 1996; 1997). Campbell, on the other hand (1998) found that male post-secondary students are considerably more anxiety ridden than their female counterparts. Most recently of all and perhaps most interestingly given the age in question, MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan (2003) found that in the case of year 7 – 9 pupils in an immersion program, girls were more anxious than boys in years 7 and 8, whereas boys were more anxious than girls in year 9. The researchers speculate that boys would only just be embarking on puberty in Year 9 (they quote the average age of onset of puberty for boys as between 13.5 and 14 years). This would give further weight to the choice of 14 – 16 year olds as the focus of the current research so as to avoid to a large extent, the possible effects of the onset of puberty.

### ***Personality Variables***

Other findings, while not contradictory, are hardly surprising. For example, it would make intuitive sense to suppose that self-confidence and anxiety are in a sense opposed and that if language anxiety is negatively related to achievement, then self-confidence would be positively related. Indeed studies such as Foss and Reitzel (1988) found that anxious language learners typically have low levels of self-esteem, perceive their

competence as less effective than that of their peers and appear to have very few expectations of success. Other studies also found a relationship between introversion and anxiety levels. Introverts tend to have higher levels of anxiety than extroverts and they take longer to retrieve information. However, they are more accurate and show greater cognitive control (Dewaele & Furnham 1999). While extrovert students worry less about accuracy and have a tendency to take risks with their language, both of which are assets when it comes to communicative oral competence, the ability of introverts to be autonomous in their learning through their capacity to self-regulate may be a distinct advantage in independent contexts without the presence of a teacher.

A further personality trait which has been linked to anxiety is perfectionism. In a recent study, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) found that anxious students had greater fear of evaluation, were more concerned over errors in that they wished to have everything absolutely correct and set higher standards for themselves than their non-anxious peers.

While the finding that anxiety is related to such personality characteristics as low-self esteem is fairly predictable, the exact nature of the relationship is unclear. Horwitz and Sadow (quoted in Finch, 2000) indicate that high language anxiety is related to students' "negative concepts of themselves as language learners and negative explanations for language learning" which raises the interesting questions of whether language anxiety is a cause of low achievement, a result of it, or a combination of the two.

This may be linked with self-efficacy, in other words, "people's judgments of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (Bandura, 1986, p. 391). Self-efficacy thus refers to the individual's feelings of being able to cope and complete a task. Self-efficacy and self-confidence are therefore not synonymous. Dörnyei (2001b) explained, "self-efficacy is always specific to a concrete task whereas self-confidence is usually used to refer to a generalized perception of one's coping potentials, relevant to a range of tasks and subject domains." (p. 56). It would therefore appear that self-efficacy: the feeling that one can succeed in language learning tasks is more relevant to our research than self-confidence.

## Strategy Use

A further variable which has been linked to anxiety is that of strategy use. For example, studies reported by Horwitz et al. (1986) indicate that language anxiety will affect strategy use in the language classroom where “the more anxious student tends to avoid attempting difficult or personal message in the target language.” (p.126). MacIntyre and Noels (1996) found that highly anxious students tended not to use strategies to aid them in their learning. In this instance a possible reason for lack of strategy use may come from the literature on the relationship between anxiety and cognition.

It was Eysenck who first suggested that anxiety can cause cognitive interference in performing specific tasks (Eysenck, 1979 in Dewaele and Furnahm, 1999a). The reason for this is that task irrelevant information will compete with task relevant information for processing space (Schwaarzer, 1986), thus distracting the student. The space available to process information relevant to the language teaching task is therefore that much less.

“Language learning is a cognitive activity that relies on encoding, storage and retrieval processes, and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided attention scenario for anxious students.”  
(MacIntyre and Noels, 1996 p.376)

Thus, anxious students are unable to give their full attention to the task at hand, as they are distracted by worrying thoughts which interfere with the information processing resources needed for learning and performance.

It may also therefore be that cognitive overload prevents learners from using overt strategies.

## Language Anxiety and Age

One variable which has not been examined in relation to language anxiety is the relationship between language anxiety and age. MacIntyre does provide some evidence to support the intuitive view that language learning anxiety is weakest for children and strongest for adolescents and adults (MacIntyre, 1995b; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) but groups teenagers, young adults and adults together in his discussion. Indeed, although according to Dörnyei (2001a p.40), “language learning is one of the most face-threatening school subjects”, the overwhelming majority of studies have

concentrated on snapshot accounts of language anxiety in college students. Such an emphasis on adult language learning perhaps reflects the fact that most of the research in the area has taken place in the United States with researchers already working in universities where they have easy access to adult foreign language classrooms. However certain characteristics of the adolescent mean that he or she may be particularly prone to language anxiety.

As well as the physical and cognitive affects of the onset of puberty, the teenage years also bring emotional changes. According to Mason (2003), during this period, there is a distancing from parents and a greater attachment to the peer group, and in particular concern to conform to norms of peer group behaviour. There is also evidence that the adolescent years are characterised by psychological stress. According to Rosen, Bahn and Kramer in Mason (2003) referrals to psychiatric clinics peak at the ages of 14 – 15.

Developmental psychology can give us an understanding of some of these aspects of adolescence where the teenager is passing through a stage of physical and mental change without parallel.

Erikson (1974, 1975) in his influential work on child development identifies adolescence as a time of turmoil: It is at this stage that doubts about identity surface. Although here, Erikson focuses principally on doubts about sexual as well as occupational identity, it may be that the pressure to present oneself in a foreign language will, at best lead to confusions with regard to identity. Such identity confusion may then be expressed by adolescents' overidentification with the peer group (Steinberg, 1993).

Given the above, it is surprising that so few studies have been carried out on teenagers especially in view of the importance of the teenage years in terms of attitude formation towards language learning (Baker, 1992). Studies in other areas such as maths anxiety have not been as neglectful. Indeed, a number of studies have found sex and age as the two most powerful predictors of maths anxiety (Felson and Trudeau, 1991).

This is not surprising since identity confusion during the adolescent years can lead to overidentification with the peer group (Steinberg, 1993) and the overwhelming concern about how one is viewed by peers – being someone who speaks the foreign

language with an authentic accent may not be seen as the best strategy to blend in with peers.

In turning to the literature on maths anxiety, we see that there is some evidence that maths anxiety is a learned emotional response which has its social and educational roots in the school age years (Maingault, 1997) although the anxiety and its effects can persist well into adulthood. This again highlights the crucial importance of the school years in the roots of anxiety.

However, in a wide-ranging survey of studies investigating language anxiety (See Appendix 1), out of 45 empirical studies, only five looked at school age children. The study by MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan (2002) is notable in that it focuses on anxiety in Years 7 – 9 (12 – 14 year olds). However, for the purposes of the research, age was treated as synonymous with grade level and the authors themselves concede that the results might have been affected by the fact that the boys in the sample had not reached puberty and that therefore choice of a slightly older age group might have given different results. Of the other studies surveyed in Appendix 1, two were relatively small case studies of high school students in Pacific Rim countries (Walker, 1996; Tsui, 1996). Indeed Horwitz (personal written communication) says she knows of no study such as this one focusing on adolescents.

Given the paucity of research in this area, it is therefore surprising to find that MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) agree (without citing any empirical research to back up the assertion) that anxiety plays little part in a learner's first experiences with the language and that language aptitude instead, is one of the dominant factors in language learning at this time.

Such comments would point to the importance of investigating whether language anxiety does indeed exist within a population of school age children who are in the early years of learning a foreign language. Given the experience of MacIntyre et al

## ***Reductionist View of Variables in Language Learning***

Much of the discussion above has centered on the relationship between anxiety and single variables. However, Skehan (1989) in his book concerned entirely with individual differences in language learning identifies over 20 factors which have been the subject of inquiry in L2 Acquisition Research. By adopting a reductionist perspective and focusing on the relationship between two variables only, we are in danger of oversimplifying the issue. Rather, there would appear to be a number of factors at play in the language learning process. For example, Bailey et al. (2000) found that

“students with the lowest levels of foreign-language achievement tended to have at least one of these characteristics: male, low-academic achievers, high levels of foreign-language anxiety, low expectations of their overall average for the current language course, and valued cooperative learning” (Bailey et. al. 2000, p.9).

More fully developed research studies have attempted to explain the complex interactions between the variables by proposing a model of how these variables are related in an individual learning the foreign language. Until recently the best known of these was probably Gardner’s socio-educational model.

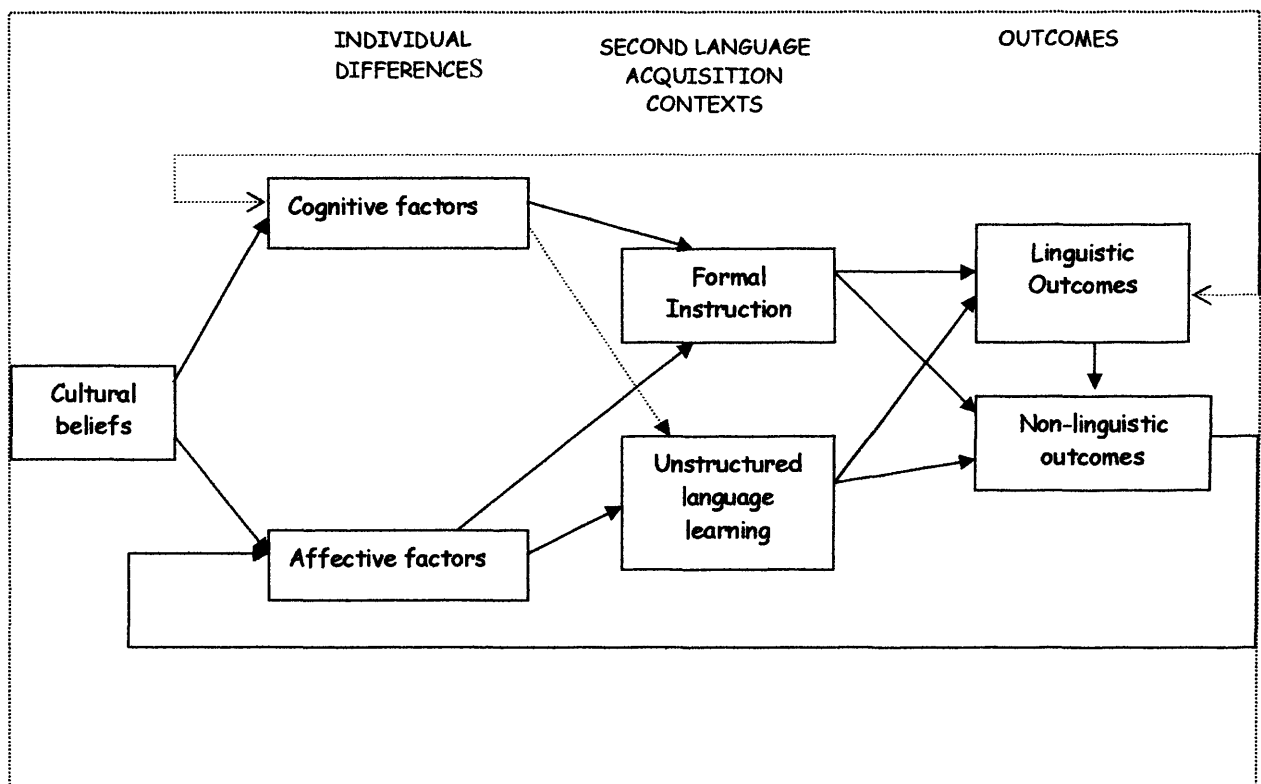
## ***Gardner’s Socio-Educational Model***

This model has its origins in the early work of Gardner and Lambert who as early as 1959 investigated the relationship between different types of motivation and aptitude for learning a foreign language (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). A series of intermediate studies led to the development of the Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (Gardner and Smythe, 1981) which sought to assess students’ attitudes and motivation in five areas: motivation, integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation, language anxiety and other attributes such as instrumental orientation, parental encouragement etc. The article by Gardner and Smythe describing the early version of the test provides a detailed breakdown of the five areas but what concerns us here is the fact that language anxiety, unlike instrumental orientation was felt to be important enough to constitute an area in its own right and that anxiety was subdivided into classroom anxiety and anxiety while using the language outside the class. The article is further

of interest because it introduces the concept of a spiral link between attitudes, motivation and achievements where positive reinforcement leads to greater achievement while negative factors will lead to failure.

A recent and widely quoted version of Gardner's model takes into account how language learning is affected by individual differences in intelligence, language aptitude, motivation, and situational variability / anxiety. It also takes place in a cultural context of community values about the importance and meaningfulness of learning the language and in yet more recent versions, it is the socio-cultural milieu which is seen as the overarching element affecting all other factors (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993).

Figure 2.1 Representation of Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (simplified from Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992)



In yet more recent versions, it is the socio-cultural milieu which is seen as the overarching element affecting all other factors (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993).



This refers to the environment in which an individual learner is situated. This includes a number of features. Of particular relevance to us is what Gardner terms antecedent factors. Examples of such factors are sex, age, prior language learning experience. Gardner and Macintyre recommend that such factors should be taken into account by an investigator at the research design stage of any investigation into since the socio-cultural milieu and social beliefs play a part in influencing both cognitive and affective variables in individuals.

In a more developed version of this model, it is interesting to note that the cognitive variables: intelligence, language aptitude and strategies are separate, not linked by arrows, whereas the affective variables, which include attitudes and motivation as well as anxiety and self-confidence, are more closely linked. For instance, motivation is causally influenced by language attitudes that is, language attitudes have a direct influence on motivation. However language anxiety is both causally influenced and has a causal influence on motivation, that is the relationship is two-way.. These two variables according to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) are negatively correlated:

“it seems meaningful to argue, given our current state of knowledge, that not only might high levels of motivation tend to depress language anxiety but also that high levels of anxiety might decrease motivation.”  
(Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.9)

A further feature of interest is the relationship between language anxiety and learning strategies, specified in Gardner and MacIntyre’s model, partly related to Oxford’s (1990) typology in which anxiety reduction techniques are classified as indirect learning strategies.

While it is generally agreed that language anxiety has a negative effect on second language learning, the relationship between anxiety and other motivational characteristics is far from clear cut and as Gardner and MacIntyre (1993 p.7) posit such a connection may be mediated by the ever important sociocultural factors.

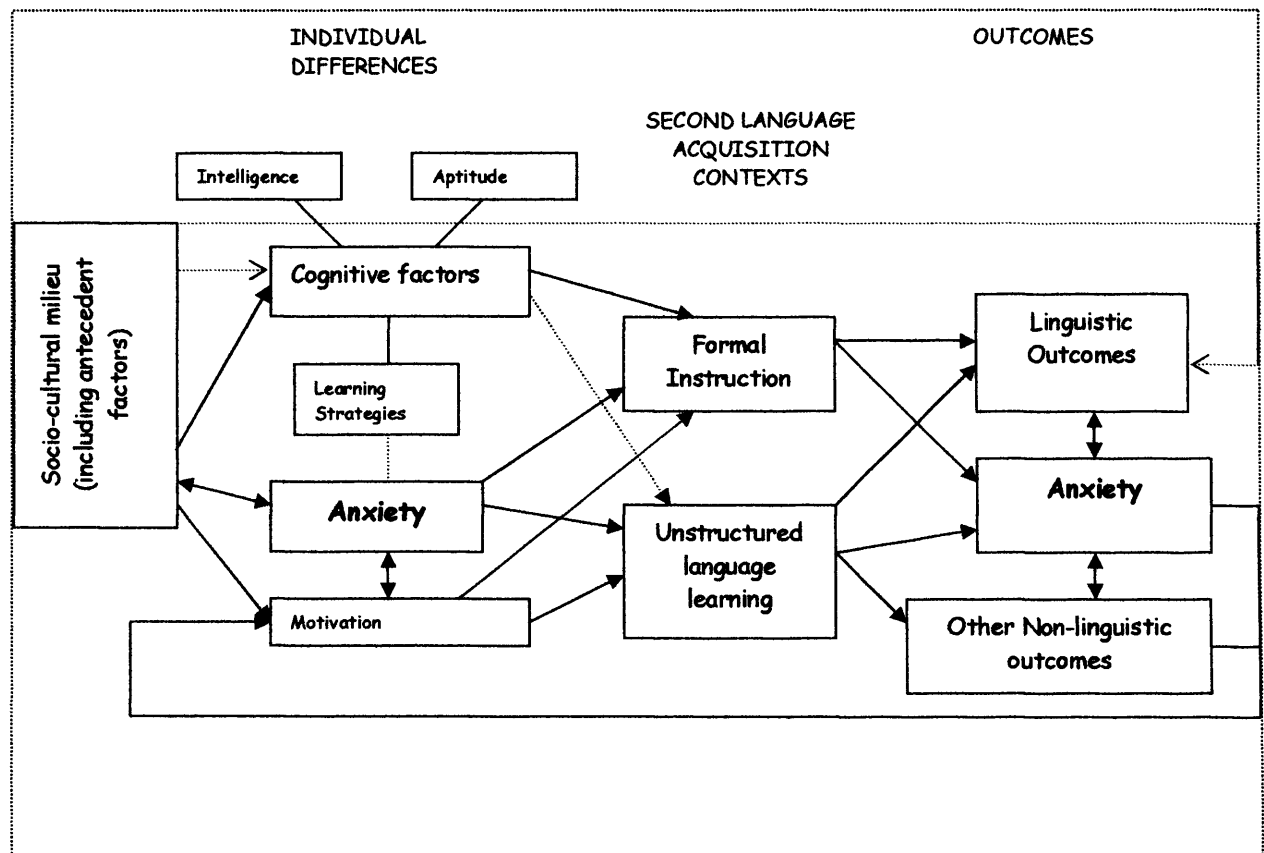
“Intuitively, it seems reasonable to propose that high levels of anxiety might serve to lessen one’s motivation to learn the language, because the experience is found to be painful, and that high levels of motivation result in low levels of anxiety because the student perceives the experience positively and tends to be successful - both of which decrease anxiety.”

Closely interrelated with the cognitive and affective variables is the next part of the model, referred to as the setting or context in which language learning takes place. Two such contexts are identified: formal instruction which takes place within the classroom and unstructured language acquisition outside of classrooms in a natural setting.

Depending upon the context, the impact of the individual difference variables will alter. For example, in a formal setting, aptitude and intelligence will play a major role in learning, while exerting a weaker influence in an informal setting. However, the variables of situational anxiety and motivation are thought to influence both settings equally.

The final phase of the model identifies linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes of the learning experience. Linguistic outcomes refers to actual language knowledge and language skills which can be measured through tests or course grades. Non-linguistic outcomes reflect an individual's attitudes concerning cultural values and beliefs usually towards the language community. However it is possible that changes in anxiety may be classed as a non-linguistic outcome.

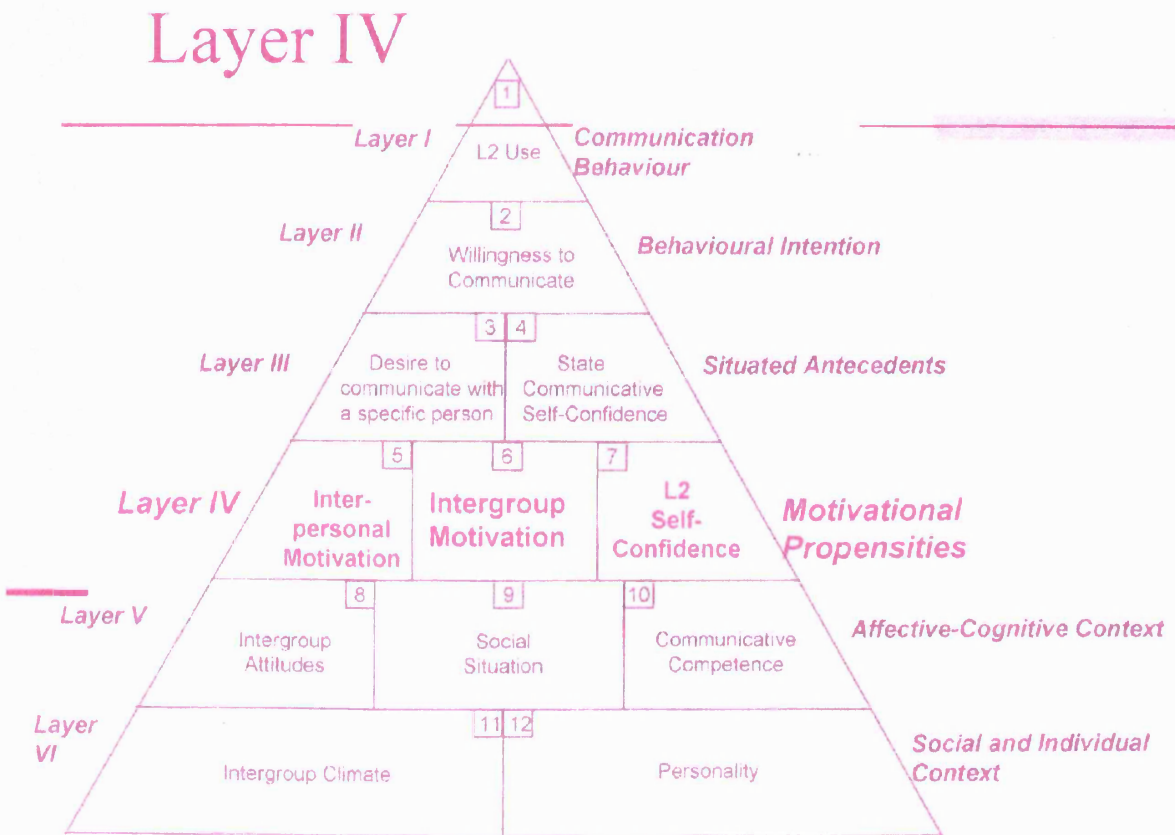
Figure 2.2 The Place of Anxiety in Gardner's Socio-Educational Model



### More Recent Models

Given the main focus of Gardner and MacIntyre's research, it is somewhat surprising that they state that there are "probably as many factors that might account for individual differences in achievement in a second language as there are individuals." (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1992 p. 212). Partly because of this, there has been a partial move away from models such as the one above where the main focus remains on individual variables and it is probably true to say that in the last few years, Gardner's model has been eclipsed by newer theories on the effect of motivation on language learning such as "The Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing Willingness to Communicate" (MacIntyre et al. 1998). Here willingness to communicate refers to the individual's willingness to talk in the L2 when given the opportunity to do so. Anxiety (or rather lack of anxiety) is here seen as part of self-confidence, one of the "motivational propensities" in Level 4 of the model.

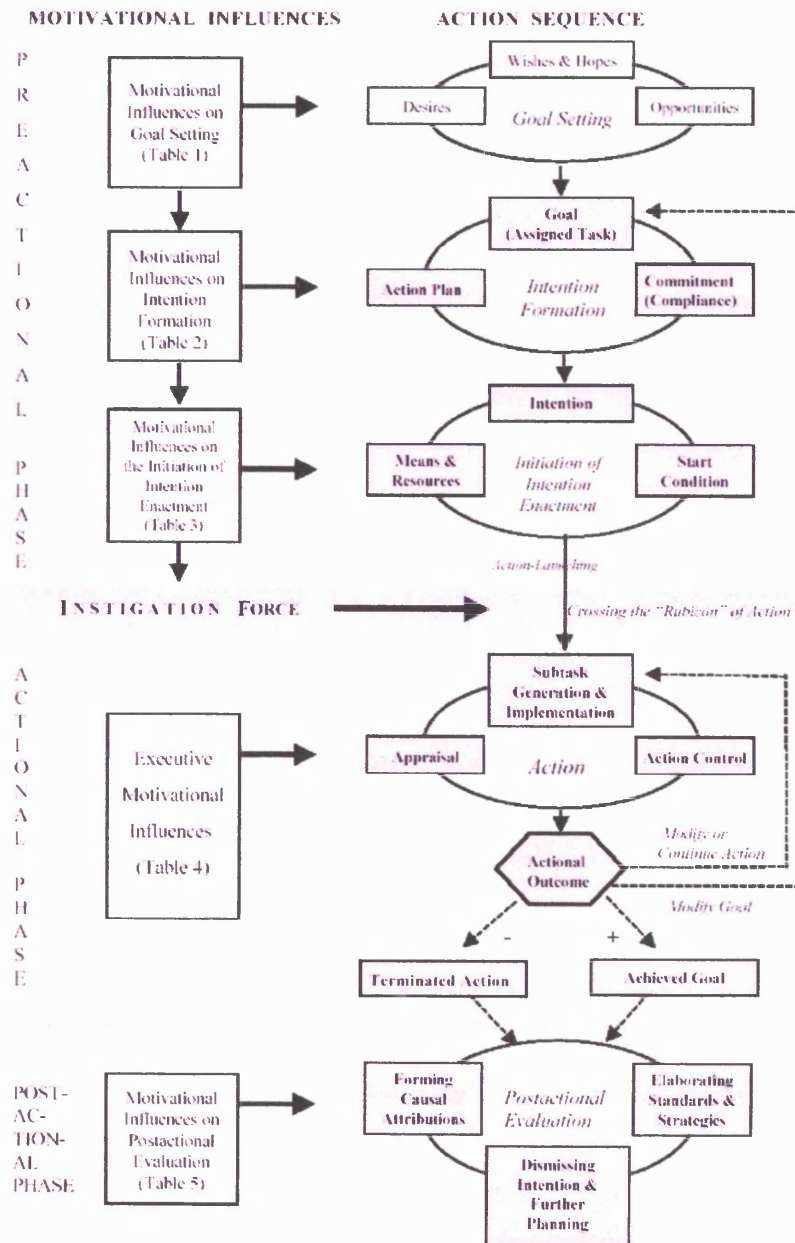
Figure 2.3 The Heuristic Model of Variables Influencing Willingness to Communicate (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1998 p.48)



A series of studies since that time has found that willingness to communicate correlated with low anxiety, a finding we will revisit in the later chapters.

Anxiety is also playing a part in other models of instructed second language acquisition. Arguing for a constructivist as opposed to previous reductionist approaches to research into motivation, Dornyei and Otto (1998) propose a very detailed and somewhat eclectic model where anxiety constitutes one individual variable within the category of motivational influences on intention formation where intention is defined both as the goal and the commitment to reaching the goal. In order to be motivated to speak, a number of conditions need to exist at the goal setting stage, including the fact the goal should be felt to be attainable. For the next stage, Phase 2, language anxiety has a part to play in that it interacts with other variables such as self-efficacy / self-confidence, perceived competence, expected support, the quality and quantity of previous L2 contact to create an evaluation of the individual's coping potential. At the actionable phase of the model, although language anxiety is not mentioned as a mediating factor, other variables, such as coping potential and social and self-image, which are clearly related to language anxiety do form a part. It is also not impossible to consider anxiety as having a part to play in the postactional phase, where the individual learner's self-appraisal may depend on past and present feelings related to anxiety.

Figure 2.4 The Process Model of L2 Motivation (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998 p.48)



While the above model is impressively elegant and comprehensive it has been criticized as being ultimately unprovable because of the sheer number and complexity of relationships in it. Nevertheless, with its inclusion of social and individual contexts and its very thorough approach to perspectives on motivation, it provides some useful insights which are of relevance to the second part of this study and will be reviewed in the later chapter.

In discussing all of these models, however, it should be remembered, that the focus has not been anxiety but broader issues of attitude and motivation. Indeed MacIntyre and Gardner (1991 p.6) speaking of Gardner's socio-educational model and the theoretical framework on which it is based admit that "The role of anxiety in this theoretical framework has yet to be clarified because the role of anxiety has changed somewhat from study to study."

Models where anxiety is viewed as an important variable in itself rather than a peripheral by-product have yet to be developed.

### ***Sparks and Ganschow's Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis: The causal nature of anxiety revisited***

Any discussion of more recent ways of viewing language anxiety would not be complete without mention of Sparks and Ganschow's Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (Sparks and Ganschow, 1991; 1993a and b). Sparks and Ganschow propose that anxiety is a consequence, not a cause of a particular learning experience. Their studies appear to show that, in fact proficiency in the native language is closely tied into successful language learning ability and furthermore that it is lack of success in learning that causes the anxiety (Sparks, Ganschow, Artzer, Siebenhar and Plageman (1997); Ganschow and Sparks, (1996, 2001); Sparks and Ganschow, 1998). According to Sparks and Ganschow, language aptitude is the main individual variable in language achievement, and language anxiety is merely an unfortunate product of unsuccessful learning, a view which relegates language anxiety "to the status of an unfortunate side effect". (MacIntyre, 1995 p.90). A more principled approach is provided by Dewaele (2002) who also points to similarities between proficiency in the

L1 and L2. However, while according to Dewaele inter-individual differences which appear in the L1 will also tend to appear in the L2, Dewaele points out that stress affects L2 production more than L1 production (Dawaele and Furnham, 1999, 2000 in Dawaele 2002), thus recognizing the existence and importance of anxiety specific to language learning contexts.

It is perhaps beyond the scope of Sparks and Ganschow's work to look at the multitude of interacting factors that affect aptitude in the L1. However, it may well be that "inter and intra-individual variation in fluency that exists when a speaker produces his or her L1, linked to variables like age, sex, social status, extraversion, communicative anxiety, tiredness, situation, audience etc. also appears in that person's L2" (Dewaele, 2002 p.221).

Research from other contexts provides further support for Dewaele's rather than Sparks and Ganschow's interpretation. For example, a 1985 study by McCroskey, Fayer and Richmond reported in Aida (1994) looked at the relationship between communication apprehension and self-perceived competence in a group of Puerto Ricans in both the second language i.e. English and Spanish, the L1. She found a correlation between low self-reported levels of competence and high anxiety in English, whereas no such relationship between self-perceived competence and communication apprehension existed in the case of their mother tongue, Spanish, indicating that foreign language anxiety was unrelated to proficiency in the L1 at least as far as the perceptions of the individuals themselves were concerned.

In a somewhat conciliatory fashion, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991a) agree that anxiety plays little part in a learner's first experiences with the language when language aptitude is indeed, one of the dominant factors in language learning. However, MacIntyre explains that the effects of language anxiety are far more complex than Sparks and Ganschow imply. Language learning, he says, being a cognitive process "relies on encoding, storage and retrieval processes and anxiety can interfere with each of these by creating a divided scenario for anxious students". MacIntyre (1995 p.96). Furthermore, the broader social context of learning is largely ignored in Sparks and Ganschow's model.



However, the work of Sparks and Ganschow has gone some way towards redressing the balance between the importance of cognitive as opposed to affective variables. It has indeed perhaps gone a little too far in largely ignoring the affective domain. It is more likely that both types have an effect, (in combination with a number of other external variables) on success in learning a foreign language.

### ***Situation Related Investigations of Anxiety***

While much of the research into language anxiety has been firmly rooted in the field of second language acquisition and has focused on the relationship between anxiety and other cognitive and affective variables, a few writers have attempted to explain why it should be that language learners are especially susceptible to experiencing language anxiety (Nunan and Lamb, 1996). Although much of the evidence is anecdotal, Allwright and Bailey (1991) suggest that banishing the use of the first language in the classroom results in depriving learners of the possibility of expressing themselves and that this is bound to make them more anxious. It therefore seems possible that while the emphasis on communicative methodologies is to be welcomed, it will inevitably put more of a strain on learners to express themselves in the L1. The situationally based causes and effects of language anxiety will be explored further in Chapter 6.

### ***Problems of Measurement***

So far, in our discussion we have taken for granted that the measures used to identify anxiety are valid and reliable. However, Oller (1979 quoted in Finch, 2000) tells us that measurement of affective variables is “necessarily inferential and indirect.” Anxiety is clearly by its very nature internal and this has led to the use of self-reports in the form of attitude scales in much of the research in the area.

In the early research mentioned above, items focusing on anxiety were relatively few in number. For example, Gardner, Clement, Smythe and Smythe (1979) reported in Horwitz et al. (1986) included only five items on anxiety in their test battery on attitudes and motivation, and these were restricted to French class anxiety. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) was developed by Elaine Horwitz in order to capture more fully the various aspects of language learning anxiety within a

classroom setting. Horwitz took the five items mentioned above and reworded them to make them more generic in nature. She also incorporated measures of communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation within their instrument. A number of studies looked at the reliability of her instrument (Aida, 1994; Horwitz, 1991) and found that using FLCAS, foreign language anxiety could be reliably and validly measured.

Although an increasing number of studies particularly those undertaken since 1996 are making use of more qualitative, ethnographic approaches in investigating language anxiety (Tsui, 1996; Walker, 1996), the FLCAS remains the most commonly used instrument to measure language anxiety to the present day (Aida, 1994; Brown, Robson and Roskenjar, 2001; Casado and Dereshiwsky, 2001; Ganschow and Sparks, 1996; Kiziltepe 2002; Matsuda and Gobel, 2004; Park, 2002, Rodriguez and Abreu, 2003; Sellers, 2000). Furthermore, a number of other studies have reflected the three factors identified by Horwitz (Aida, 1994). The theoretical concerns which have been raised regarding the FLCAS relate to the fact that the scale is more biased towards speaking and listening. In an attempt to rectify this, a separate instrument the Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale has been developed (Saito, Horwitz and Garza, 1999). It would therefore seem sensible to follow the counsel of Brown (2001) who in his book "Using Surveys in Language Programs" suggest that existing information and existing surveys should first of all be considered "in order to avoid reinventing a wheel that already exists" (p.4).

It should also be remembered that we must not expect too much of research where the main instrument used is an "attitude scale". Such scales are not designed to yield subtle insights, rather to divide people into broad categories with respect to particular attitudes and to see how such attitudes relate to other variables in the survey (Oppenheim, 1992). Nevertheless, given that anxiety is, by its very nature, internal and therefore not easily subject to other measures such as observation, a self-report survey seems to be the most effective way to test for the existence of language anxiety as well as for the relationship between anxiety and other variables.

## ***Laboratory Experiments***

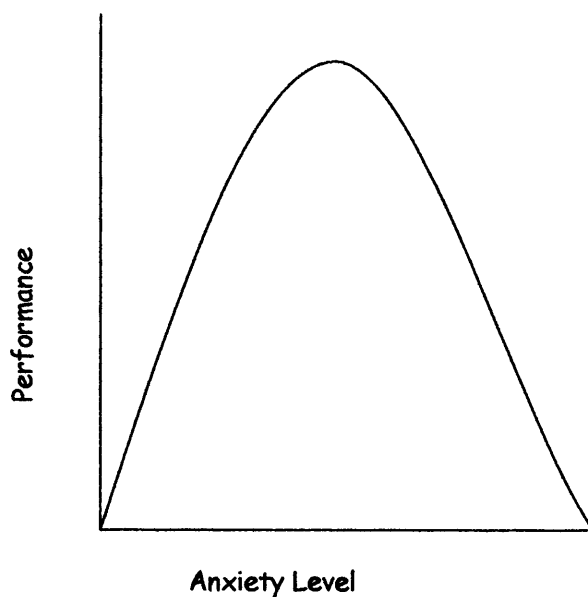
Although most of the research into the field of language anxiety relies on data from questionnaires, a further significant number of studies which we have not so far, examined, have been carried out in laboratory settings. (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991; 1994). Video cameras have been also used to arouse anxiety, with anxiety said to result from the increased focus on self arising from the mere presence of the cameras (Gardner, Day and MacIntyre 1991; Tremblay and Gardner 1995; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1994). Findings generally showed that this type of induced anxiety does have an effect on learning. While such findings are of interest, we cannot share MacIntyre and Gardner's conclusion that such induced anxiety is analogous to the anxiety of the classroom. There is a strong argument for saying that this type of induced anxiety in experimental settings, particularly in learners who are otherwise not learning a language, might be completely different to the less, transient, situation-specific anxiety experienced by individuals in a foreign language class. The classroom is such a complex place with so many potential causes of anxiety that to suggest that the presence of a video camera can possibly replicate that anxiety may be a little oversimplistic. Furthermore, one cannot help wondering, in light of the literature which tells us that previous negative experiences with language learning contribute to the development of language anxiety (Young, 1991; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989) whether it is entirely ethical to induce anxiety in students for the purposes of research.

## ***The Importance of Language Anxiety Revisited.***

In considering the studies mentioned above, one would be forgiven for thinking that the extent of language anxiety in our classroom is indeed "alarming." (Campbell & Orwitz, 1991). However, it is even more alarming to find that many studies make assumptions about the nature of this anxiety. Horwitz (1991) presupposes that all anxiety is necessarily bad, while according to Gardner, Day and MacIntyre (1992 p.212) "anxiety has been shown to have consistent deleterious effects on behaviour in the second language classroom." They further suggest that anxiety and motivation may be opposite ends of the same dimension "there being motivated, confident students and anxious, unmotivated students" (p.212). Such research seems to ignore the important distinction between debilitating and facilitating anxiety.

While it is true that debilitating anxiety has a generally negative effect on performance, we should not ignore the presence of facilitating anxiety or positive energy (Aida, 1994) where a certain level of anxiety may motivate learners, providing a useful stimulus to learning and therefore resulting in a generally positive effect on performance. The Yerkes-Dodson law (first observed by Robert M. Yerkes and John D. Dodson in 1907) describes a curvilinear relationship between anxiety and performance on a task. This relation is represented by an inverted “U” with anxiety on the horizontal axis and performance on the vertical axis. The two extremes represent too much or too little anxiety, with the peak representing optimum performance with some level of anxiety present.

Figure 2.5 Relationship between anxiety and performance



This view of anxiety is dependent on the concept of arousal, that is when arousal is low, performance is low. Then for a period of time, as arousal increases, so does performance up to a certain optimal point. Beyond this, as arousal increases further, performance will drop. (Williams, 1991). A more appealing description of this model is provided by Kriegel and Kriegel (1985) who describe a Drone Zone of understimulation, followed by the C-zone where optimal achievement takes place,

followed by the Panic Zone of Overstimulation. However, while Kriegel and Kriegel's model and the inverted U-model make intuitive sense, they are not well supported by empirical research which, as stated above, generally tends to make assumptions about the negative consequences of anxiety in the classroom. Gardner, Day and MacIntyre (1992 p.198) for instance, are rather dismissive of facilitating anxiety, saying somewhat unscientifically that "facilitating anxiety is not the usual meaning of the term" (p.212). After briefly surveying the literature, they conclude that "whereas positive language attitudes and motivation facilitate second language learning, language anxiety has been shown to impair the language learning process" (ibid.)

Many of the studies which did focus on facilitating and debilitating anxiety were conducted some 30 years ago. While some of these did appear to show a correlation between "facilitating anxiety" and attempts to use more complex language, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) are unimpressed, concluding that:

"this hypothesis has not been well supported. In almost all studies that employ a measure specifically related to language anxiety (rather than a more general anxiety measure) negative correlations with achievement have been obtained." (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.6)

Furthermore, much of this early research was somewhat vague in the way findings were reported. For example Chastain (1975) concluded that too much anxiety can provide negative results, while some is a plus, which clearly begs the question of how one quantifies too much and some. It would appear that the distinction between facilitating and debilitating anxiety is highly subjective and the individual's ability to cope with the anxiety-producing situation will depend partly on other variables such as self-esteem and self-confidence. More recent studies focus on the negative effects of anxiety with Campbell and Ortiz (1991 p.159) estimating that up to half of all language students experience debilitating effects of language anxiety and Reid (1999 p.297) pointing out that "even in optimum conditions, students can experience destructive forms of anxiety."

However, this need not necessarily be the case. Roberge and Phillion (1997) in a small scale investigation identify two instances of anxiety: one where the individual was motivated to try harder and the other with a more detrimental effect on the learning process. Dohnalova (1996) also describes how test anxiety can be used as a motivator within the context of Czech secondary schools. Further support for the existence of

both types of anxiety comes from Ehrman and Oxford (1995) whose results showed a clear split between elements of anxiety that were positively and negatively correlated with success.

More recently a different way of viewing the whole area has remerged with alternative definitions of **worry** - the cognitive component of anxiety which has been shown to have a negative impact on performance, and **emotionality** - the second component of anxiety – which does not necessarily have negative effects. (Dewaele, 2002). In fact, anxiety can have a stimulating effect, and may facilitate verbal performance in cases where the increased effort more than compensates for the reduced efficiency of the cognitive processing. Other studies talk of the **euphoric** or **dysphoric** effects of tension, pointing out the potential influence both can have on learning (Spielman and Radnofsky, 2001). They further see that a phenomenon generated by any situation can have either (or indeed both) a euphoric or dysphoric effect depending on how it is perceived by the individual.

Such a balanced approach to facilitating and debilitating anxiety has, however, not been widely reflected in the instruments commonly used to measure such anxieties.

While Horwitz's FLCAS does have some negatively worded items e.g. *I don't worry about making mistakes in my language class*, she largely ignores the facilitating effects of anxiety. This is in contrast to much earlier work such as Kleinman's (1977) study based on Alpert and Haber's 1960 Achievement Anxiety Test which was specifically designed to measure the facilitating and debilitating effects of anxiety on performance by phrasing items in two ways: *Nervousness while using English helps me to do better* and *Nervousness while using English prevents me from doing well*. Although Horwitz's instrument remains the most commonly used, it would seem that modification will be needed if the facilitating effects of anxiety are to be investigated.

## Conclusion

Studies involving commonly used measures of language achievement such as course grades and standardized proficiency tests consistently show correlations between anxiety and language performance (Clement et al. 1980; Gardner and MacIntyre 1993b, Horwitz, 1986; Phillips, 1992). Other studies mentioned in this chapter have

attempted to show the relationship between other variables and language anxiety. It should, however, be noted that many of these studies took place in a very different context to that of teenagers learning foreign languages in Britain. Indeed the research carried out by MacIntyre et al. took place in Canada, a bilingual country with some of the subjects enrolled in immersion programs.

Furthermore, few studies have looked at the nature of anxiety in the formative adolescent years, only one other study has looked at language anxiety in the European context (Mihjalevic Dijgunovic, 2000) and no quantitative study approaching the numbers involved in the present research has thus far been carried out.

The literature review bears out the importance of language anxiety. In a plenary address given in June 2003, MacIntyre states that “it is well known that both anxiety and perceived competence are predictive of language learning and that they can be considered important outcomes of language learning as well.”

In our own survey, we will therefore examine the phenomenon of language anxiety and its relationship with a number of variables identified in the literature as important, concentrating on a previously ignored population: adolescent learners of foreign languages in Britain.

## **CHAPTER 3**

*“Fact-collecting is no substitute for thought”  
(Moser and Kalton)*

### **BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY**

In this chapter, we will examine the focus of the research in the light of findings from the literature review. The development of this survey instrument which was used in the first part of this research will also be discussed. This first version of the survey was piloted with a small group of learners of German. As a result of lessons learned during the piloting phase, modifications were made to the questionnaire which was later administered to 607 foreign language learners.

#### ***Focus of the Research***

The literature review of the previous chapter confirmed the importance of the field of language anxiety and the paucity of research of language anxiety in European adolescents. The first question for investigation is therefore to see whether language anxiety does in fact exist within this age group and if so, what the nature of that anxiety is, in particular, whether it might indeed have a facilitating effect on learning. The relationship of language anxiety to a number of other variables previously identified as important in studies from other contexts will also be examined. Based on the review of the literature, the following questions will be addressed in the first part of this thesis.

#### **Research Question 1**

Do children in fact feel anxious in their language classrooms?

If so, what is the nature of that anxiety?

Do the anxieties identified have a facilitating or debilitating effect on language learning?



## Research Question 2

How does anxiety relate to other variables in particular:

- Age
- Gender
- Attitudes
- Enjoyment of language learning
- Motivation to learn the foreign language
- Use of learning strategies

Although a number of studies surveyed in chapter 2 had looked at the relationship between personality factors and language learning, it was decided to delay investigation of this area until the second part of the study which includes a broader, context-specific investigation of the area rather than rely on self-report of personality variables from the respondents.

In addition, anxiety will be investigated in relation to a number of other variables, not previously investigated. Some languages are commonly seen as more difficult than others, for example German is seen as harder than Italian. The research will look at whether anxiety is related to the language studied and whether levels of anxiety are higher for German than for French, Spanish and Italian. Given the large number of bilingual learners in Leicestershire where the research is carried out, we will also look at whether knowledge of other languages leads to lowered levels of anxiety.

A further variable which will be taken into account is whether anxiety is related to previous visits to the target country. Such visits are encouraged within the National Curriculum but it remains to be seen whether they affect levels of anxiety.

Given the experience of MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan (2003) in conducting research with 12 – 15 year olds discussed in the previous chapter, it was decided to use pupils between 14 and 16 for the present study to avoid the difficulties associated with the variable age of onset of puberty in younger children mentioned by MacIntyre et al.

However, although the researcher had full control over the content and focus of the research as regards language anxiety, the survey itself was part of a broader based research project funded through the European Union LINGUA program.

## ***Background to the LINGUA Project***

EU-funded LINGUA projects are concerned with promoting co-operation between professionals in the member states of the European Union, in this case, Spain, Italy and UK. The LINGUA project that this research was funded through, therefore had its own overarching goals and objectives. The fusion of these goals with the research based goals of the present project inevitably led to some compromise.

## **The Context of the Study**

The original investigation, developed as part of a LINGUA Action Research Project was designed to enable teachers from three member states (Italy, Spain and UK) to reflect on existing classroom practice and existing student attitudes as a prelude to identifying areas of personal interest and focus, the rationale being that teachers need information about beliefs which already exist in the classroom before any decisions can be made about what, if anything, needs changing. It was decided that a survey was the most effective way to investigate the areas in question for a number of reasons (see page 47). Questionnaires were therefore developed to explore issues of concern to teachers: student attitudes towards the language and culture as well as to the learning process itself. Language anxiety fell within feelings about the learning process.

The main purpose of the LINGUA project, however, was for teachers to have an opportunity to investigate their own areas of concern. Any research element is specifically excluded under the terms of the LINGUA agreement and a statistical analysis was not required for the purposes of the LINGUA project. In this sense, the current research did not overlap with the LINGUA investigations.

## ***Identifying the Focus of the Present Investigation***

The choice of final focus for investigation emerged from the concerns of teachers involved in the project as well as the personal interest of the researcher. The main focus was on attitudes towards language and language learning.

### **Focus Groups**

Once funding had been secured for the LINGUA project, a number of focus groups were organised to identify issues of concern to teachers in a structured way. Focus groups are a simple yet powerful discussion technique to elicit participant views (Merriam, 2001). A facilitator guides participants through areas of interest ensuring all are involved. This technique provides a richness of information and it is often possible to get beneath the surface issues to areas which are of real interest to those participating. A regular theme in the present round of focus groups was the difficulty of ensuring full participation by all students in the language class. *“How do we get them talking?”* was a recurrent question although difficulties within the area were frequently ascribed to issues of large classes rather than shyness or anxiety on the part of pupils. Other areas of concern which arose were the negative effect of tests on language learners. Described as a *“necessary evil”* by one teacher, such tests were common place in classrooms of the teachers surveyed. The overwhelming view was that such tests could be detrimental to learning, echoing many of the research findings mentioned in Chapter 2, and confirmed the researcher’s view that this was an area worthy of investigation.

A review of the literature had confirmed the importance of language anxiety and the paucity of studies in this area conducted with schools as opposed to adult learners, despite the fact that the teenage years are frequently characterised by anxieties of different types (see Chapter 2). At the same time investigations with teachers indicated that there was worry over the demanding nature of courses which stressed the primacy of speaking. Reports of preliminary teacher interviews conducted in Italy and Spain as part of an exploratory phase prior to the LINGUA co-operation programme indicated that a substantial number of teachers (15 out of 46) felt

pessimistic or worried about newer interactive styles of teaching and learning (Cajkler, 1993) which placed a burden on learners. However, it was necessary to investigate whether teachers in UK had similar concerns.

## **Teacher Involvement**

Teacher questionnaires were therefore developed by a colleague to further investigate areas of concern to teachers as well as to find out their own perceptions of their classroom practice. The findings from these questionnaires gave support to the fact that newer task-based methodologies with their pressure on pupils to perform orally were a source of difficulty specific to the modern language classroom (Cajkler, 1996).

While the fact that the present research built on an externally-funded teacher-centered project is not without its disadvantages, it also has a number of positive aspects. Some research in the field of Second Language Acquisition has been criticised as too theoretical, too remote from the classroom and of little interest to practicing teachers in the field (Larsen-Freeman, 1995; Leverett, 1997). In contrast, the present research has its roots in the concerns of practicing classroom teachers; the instruments themselves are shown to teachers for comment and the findings shared and discussed. As such, the potential for findings to feed directly back into classroom practice are considerable.

## **Constraints**

### **Constraints Imposed by the Project**

As previously stated, the primary aim of the first questionnaire which was funded under the auspices of LINGUA was to address issues which were of interest to teachers rather than investigate those areas which were of interest to the researcher. Although the researcher had responsibility for choice of instrument, the choice of content was dictated by those the project was intended to benefit. This meant that the section on language anxiety was just one of a number of areas of interest. In an ideal situation, it may have been wiser to limit the length of the questionnaire and to

front the section on anxiety. The constraints imposed by the project meant that this was not possible.

### **Time Constraints**

The overall LINGUA project timetable necessitated working to a tight deadline with little time available for piloting. The time between administration of the pilot questionnaire and administration of final version was six weeks. A longer time period to allow for more detailed analysis of the pilot questionnaire would have been desirable.

### **Constraints on Overall Length of the Questionnaire**

Although language anxiety was the main focus of interest to the researcher, this had to be included in a questionnaire which focused on a number of attitudinal issues. Such a breadth of focus was felt to be important not only because of issues concerning the project but also because of the importance of looking at anxiety within a larger framework of other variables. As such the questionnaire was in danger of becoming overlong and desire to include the maximum number of items related to language anxiety had to be balanced against the risk of fatigue by learners.

### **Constraints Imposed by the Multinational Nature of the Project**

The same questionnaire had to be used in three countries: UK, Italy and Spain with the three project groups working in lockstep through the various stages of the project. This made issues of timing even more difficult and meant that a questionnaire ready for use in three languages needed to be ready shortly after funding was secured.

## **Questionnaire Content**

The questionnaire was developed in UK under the direction of Wasyl Cajkler, the overall project co-ordinator. The author worked as a research assistant to this project. It was decided to construct a questionnaire in five sections focusing on:

Part A

Basic biodata

Part B

Attitudes and motivation

Part C

Attitudes to the target culture and peoples

Part D

Learner strategies and knowledge of the country

Part E

Language anxiety

A preliminary specification was drawn up to guide the development of the questionnaire (see Appendix 3.1).

Section E, focusing on language anxiety, was of primary interest to the researcher. The main aim was merely to see whether language anxiety did in fact exist among the target age group (14 – 16 year old learners) and if so whether it was related to the other variables included in the questionnaire. In order to see if this is the case, we need to examine what those variables were and how they were measured.

## **Variables within the Questionnaire**

The draft questionnaire used in the pilot is contained in Appendix 3.2 and is made up of five sections. Each of these five sections of the questionnaire had a specific focus. Sections A, B and D were made use of in the analysis when looking at which variables might be related to language anxiety. Section C focusing on the extent of pupils' knowledge of the target culture was not used for the present analysis and has been reported elsewhere (Thornton and Cajkler, 1996).

## **Biodata Part A**

Basic biodata elicited in this section included:

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Home language
4. Languages learnt at school and length of study
5. Visits to the target country including length and purpose of visits

## **General Measures of Attitude and Motivation (Part B)**

This section of the questionnaire was based on an already validated measure of attitude and motivation developed by Caroline Filmer-Sankey as part of her M.Litt. thesis (Filmer-Sankey, 1991b) and used as the basis for the investigation of attitudes in the Oxford Project on Diversification of First Foreign Language Teaching – OXPROD (Filmer-Sankey, 1991a, 1993; Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993). OXPROD was a six year project looking specifically at the progress in terms of attitude and attainment of children studying languages other than French. Of the 32 statements in Filmer-Sankey's questionnaire, 26 questions were taken and used in our questionnaire. Statements referring to choice of learning a foreign language and the place of the foreign language relative to the rest of the curriculum were excluded as not relevant. One statement relating to enjoyment of the foreign language *"I enjoy x language because it seems easy"* was changed to *"I enjoy learning x language"* as the question in the original appeared to have a dual focus (Foddy, 1993, Oppenheim, 1992).

## **Attitudes to the Target Language and Peoples (Part C)**

This section consisted of open-response questions targeted to examine students' view of the countries and peoples of the languages they were studying. A question relating to schools in these countries was also included. Factual questions relating to the capital of the country, the leader of the country and the languages spoken in the target country were also included in the questionnaire.

## **Learning strategies (Part D)**

The section on learning strategies drafted by Cajkler was based entirely on teacher perceptions of the strategies used by their learners. As such, rather than taking an already existing classification of strategies (most of which have been developed for use with university students in US contexts), it focuses on those strategies teachers believe their students use. Furthermore, such an approach allows for a comparison of teacher vs. student perceptions of use. In this section, learners were also asked for their perceptions of useful classroom practice and in particular, whether they thought the teacher should speak the foreign language all the time in class.

## **Language anxiety (Part E)**

Section E, the language anxiety section was of principal interest to the researcher.

The aim of this first pilot study was merely to see whether language anxiety existed among this age group and whether the area was worthy of further research in the larger scale survey.

## ***Problems of Measuring Language Anxiety***

Speaking specifically of language anxiety, Skehan (1989) points out that the transition from hypothesis to measurement technique is a difficult task and that “such scales are extremely fallible in what they measure, and how well they measure it”. (Skehan, 1989 p.11). It was therefore decided to use an already validated language anxiety scale as the starting point in the development of our own.

The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) devised by Elaine Horwitz at the University of Austin in Texas is made up of thirty-three items, each of which is answered on a five-point Likert scale, from Strongly disagree through Uncertain to Strongly Agree. Described by MacIntyre (1995a) as an extremely reliable and valid measurement, the FLCAS has high internal reliability (alpha coefficient of .93). Test-retest reliability over eight weeks achieved a score of  $r=.83$  ( $p<.001$ ).

The original sample for the FLCAS was university language students in the United States aged between 18 and 27 (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986) and since then



most of the studies using this scale have been conducted in that country. More recently, however, FLCAS has been used in other cultures for example, Japan (Matsuda and Gobel, 2001, 2004), Mexico (Pappamihel, 2002) and Venezuela (Rodriguez and Abreu, 2003).

In the original FLCAS student responses were assigned a numerical score with 1 for Strongly Disagree through to 5 for Strongly Agree. When statements were negatively worded, the scoring was reversed.

In deciding how the FLCAS should be modified, the main factor was to ensure that all items were easily understandable by children in the target age group and were relevant to the context of their learning. Certain of the items in the original FLCAS were felt to be inappropriate to the learning situation of secondary school children in Europe. Thus questions such as *"It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes"* did not apply to school systems where students have no choice about which language classes to take. The original 33 items were further reduced to 23 after consultation with colleagues. Some items were rejected as being too exaggerated to be taken seriously by students e.g. *I tremble when I know I'm going to be called on in a language class*. Others were felt to be too American.

Within the questionnaire a further criterion during the development stage was to include what Horwitz terms positively and negatively worded items e.g. *I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my foreign language class* versus *I don't worry about making mistakes in language lessons*.

A further consideration was keeping the balance of items in terms of content. The items in the FLCAS reflect communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom. There was also just one item relating to receiver anxiety, the anxiety involved in listening. In reducing the number of items, it was felt that an appropriate balance should be kept between items focusing on the three related performance anxieties and to retain the one item related to listening. As a result, the number of items was reduced to 18.

However, since Horwitz's items measured only debilitating anxiety two extra items *Tests help me to show what I know* and *Tests make me study* were included to tap into the facilitating aspects of anxiety which the literature review had indicated may exist.

## ***Choice of Methodology***

A survey questionnaire was felt to be the most appropriate way to investigate the areas in question for a number of reasons. As Dörnyei (2003) points out a survey is efficient "in terms of (a), researcher time, (b), researcher effort, and (c), financial resources." (p. 9). Furthermore, the effort required on the part of teachers taking part in the research is less than for other methods of data collection, an important consideration given the numbers of teachers who were giving up their time to take part in the project. The way the results of the research were to be reported to teachers was also an issue here. As Brown (2001 p.15) notes:

"Of all the research methods, survey research may be the most practical and usable in one sense: It relies more on common sense and less on complex statistics. Often, results reported as percentages and averages are sufficient to explain the results of a survey research project."

Since the main audience for the results of the investigation were the teachers whose classes had been investigated, a questionnaire enabled the results to be quickly transmitted to them in a form which was readily understandable. Dörnyei (2003) also highlights the efficiency of questionnaires in terms of time and effort and furthermore points out that processing the data by computer is extremely cost-efficient, a consideration which the current project needed to take into account.

Furthermore, in using a questionnaire, we were able to draw on other research using already validated instruments, thus avoiding the need to operationalise a range of psychological constructs and translate these into a valid and reliable research instrument.

It was also decided to limit the response format both for ease and speed of completion. The number of open-ended questions was restricted to questions of biodata in Section A and to knowledge about the target country in Section C. Sections B, D and E were made up of matrices with Sections B and E in Likert Scale format.

Although the questionnaire was lengthy, key researchers support the view that anxiety should be surveyed in the context of other variables and the questionnaire did indeed provide a rich range of such variables in the affective domain to enable comparisons and correlations to be made.

However, it should be noted the data collection instrument in this part of the research used here relied entirely on self-reporting. In making this decision the researchers were well aware of the issues associated with this choice. A number of writers including Ehrman and Oxford (1995) view self-report as suspect because of the “social desirability response bias” or “halo effect” where students may have a tendency to answer in ways the teacher would like or answer in such a manner as to put the respondent in a good light.

We attempted to mitigate this effect by reassuring students that their answers would be confidential and telling them that the analysis would not be carried out by their teacher.

### ***Piloting of Questionnaire***

Due to the complex nature of the questionnaire, it was important that it be adequately piloted to check for intelligibility and ambiguity as well as to monitor the overall content and length. After internal review of the questionnaire where the questionnaire was given to a number of colleagues within the School of Education at the University of Leicester, a limited piloting was carried out four weeks prior to the administration of the larger survey. This piloting took place with 68 learners of German in three different schools in the Leicester area.

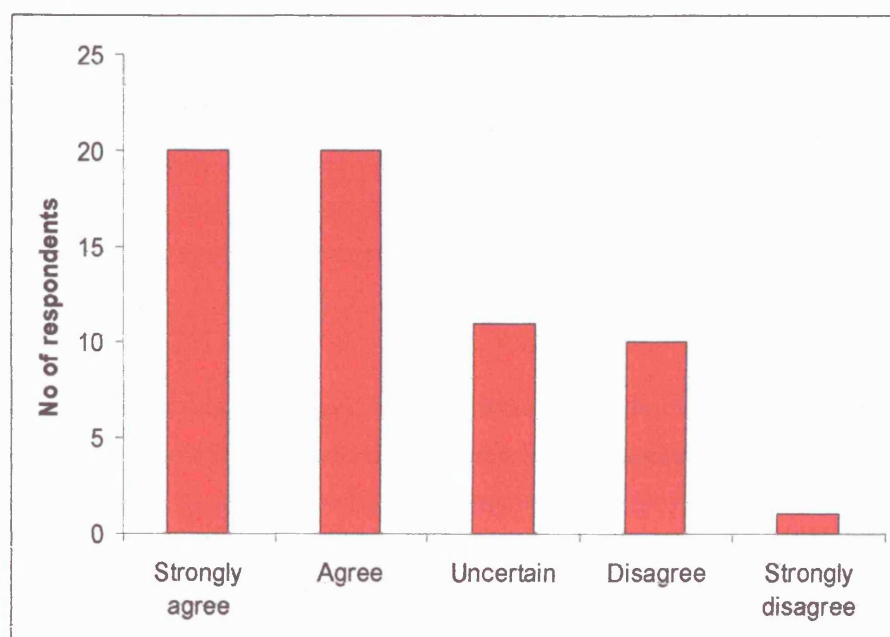
Teachers were told they were taking part in a try out study and in the accompanying letter were instructed to tell pupils to ask about things they did not understand and make notes of any questions asked by pupils. They were also asked to annotate the questionnaire and comment both on wording and content.

### ***Findings from Piloting Phase***

It is perhaps worth noting the biodata before discussing basic findings. Of the 67 pupils surveyed during the pilot, 43% were boys and 57% girls ranging in age from 13 to 16 with an average age of 15.7. While the majority of the sample spoke English at home, 23% spoke Gujarati, 2% spoke another language other than English or Gujarati and 2% did not answer this question.

Once basic frequencies for Section E of the questionnaire had been compiled (see Appendix 3.3), results from this pilot stage showed that indeed language anxiety did exist within the sample with the majority of students (N= 54) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were never sure of themselves when speaking in class. There was similar agreement with other statements. More than a third of those surveyed said they sometimes became so nervous that they forgot what they knew in their German class. There was the greatest degree of consensus on question E8 "*I feel confident when I speak German in class*" with only four respondents agreeing with this statement, while nearly two thirds of respondents claimed to feel self-conscious speaking the language in front of their peers as can be seen from the chart below.

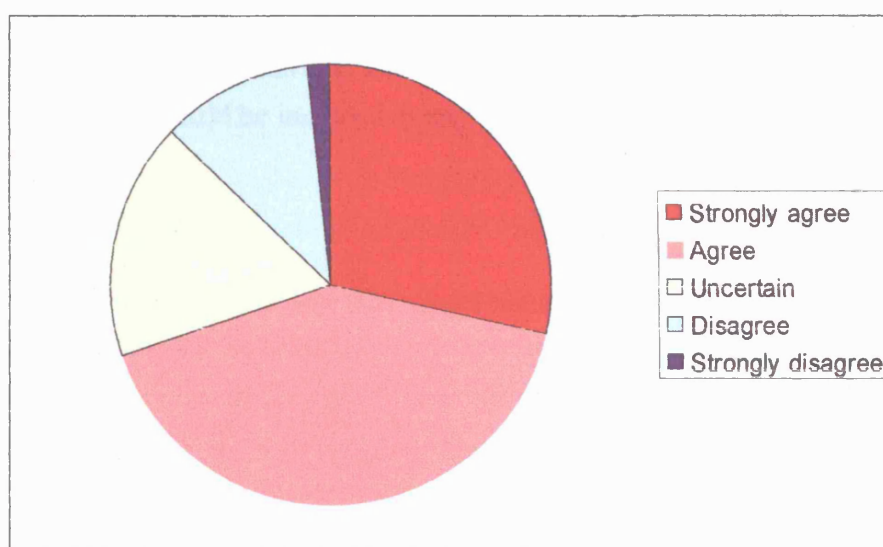
Figure 3.1 Responses to Question E10  
*I feel very self-conscious about speaking German in front of other students*



The results of this basic analysis indicate that the phenomenon of language anxiety does exist and is worthy of further investigation. (See Appendix 3.3 for basic frequencies of Section E)

The results with regard to test anxiety were equally conclusive, although the negative effect of tests on learning identified in the literature review were not apparent. Indeed, surprisingly enough, however, tests appeared to have a facilitating effect on language learning with 48 learners agreeing that tests helped them to study, while more than half of respondents felt that tests helped them to show what they knew (see below).

**Figure 3.2** Responses to Question E14  
*Tests help me to show what I know*



After the preliminary data analysis, findings were circulated to teachers and others involved in the project for discussion and comment. A number of teachers were also invited to a meeting at which results were presented and they were given opportunities to comment on the questionnaire and its findings.

One worrying finding was that the amount of missing data was greatest towards the end of the questionnaire with three individuals having failed to answer this page. However, little could be done about the order of items in the questionnaire. It was felt appropriate to front the concerns of the teachers and the focus on LINGUA issues and leave anxiety until towards the end of the questionnaire. Furthermore, during a meeting when the issue of ordering was discussed, it was felt to be unwise to draw learners' attention to the negative aspects of language learning associated with

anxiety nearer the beginning of the questionnaire as it may have affected their responses to more neutral attitudinal issues.

However, as a result of this finding, the number of items in Section E was reduced to sixteen, the order of items was changed and a more equal balance between positively and negatively worded items was achieved. Minor changes were made to the wording and layout of other sections.

A coding schedule was also finalised during this stage of the project.

A further area of concern was whether the large number of children who did not speak English at home may have skewed the results and it was decided that this important variable would be included in any analysis in the larger survey.

## **Conclusion**

The piloting phase took place only four weeks before administration of the main survey. This meant that logistical arrangements for administration of the larger survey had to be in place at the same time as the pilot was taking place. Little time was therefore available for a thorough analysis of the questionnaire and any modifications to the questionnaire itself as a result of the piloting had to be incorporated into the questionnaire very quickly. Despite these limitations, the piloting was extremely useful. It demonstrated that the phenomenon of language anxiety did exist and enabled the researchers to further clarify aspects of the questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER 4**

**“There is a great need for replication studies in many areas of research....and this need is particularly acute in SLA research.”**

*(Lightbown, 2003)*

### **THE SURVEY**

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter describes the main survey which was carried out to investigate 14 – 16 year old learners’ attitudes towards language learning. It presents the profile of the subjects, the methods of data collection and analysis and contains a preliminary discussion of the results.

#### ***The Sample***

Convenience sampling was used to select the schools which took part in this phase of the research. At the same time as the preliminary questionnaire was being piloted, a letter was sent to all secondary schools in Leicestershire and Northamptonshire inviting them to take part in the project. Letters were addressed to Head Teachers and Heads of Modern Languages and schools were given information about the background to the survey and the fact that it was part of a broader LINGUA-funded Action Research project. Teachers were informed that completion of the survey would take no more than a class period and were told that they would be given an opportunity to see the collated results from their own school. Eleven schools agreed to administer the questionnaire. In addition, in order to widen the sample, one school in Nottinghamshire and one school in Rutland were invited to participate.

Although 11 Leicestershire schools agreed to take part in the survey, one did not return the questionnaires. A further institution returned the questionnaires so late that the analysis had already been completed.

**Table 4.1:** Schools taking part in the study

SCHOOL CODE	TYPE OF SCHOOL	LOCATION	NO OF PUPILS (TO NEAREST HUNDRED)	OTHER OBSERVATIONS
I	14 – 19 Comprehensive	Small town	1300	25% of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds
H	11-14 Comprehensive	Semi-rural	500	Area has high unemployment. Social and economic impoverishment
D	11-14 Comprehensive	City	600	Children come from a range of professional and non-professional home backgrounds
F	11-14 Comprehensive	Village (pop. 7500)	600	Catchment area includes two surrounding villages
C	14 – 19 Comprehensive	Urban	800	
L	11-16 Comprehensive	Semi-urban	1200	2/3rds of children have a home language other than English
B	11-19 Comprehensive	Urban	1400	Children come from a range of backgrounds
A	11-16 Comprehensive	Small town	700	
E / VOC	11 – 16 Comprehensive	City	700	Only 2 children in entire school have English as an additional language
G	11 – 19 Grant Maintained	Small town	800	School closed in year after administration of questionnaire
J	11 – 19 Comprehensive	Suburb of large town	1000	RC School

### Commentary

Despite the fact that the schools were not randomly selected (convenience sampling was used) the table above shows that the sample contained a range of schools in terms of:

- school type (two voluntary aided schools were included in the sample);
- age range of pupils in school
- school size



- school location
- social and ethnic background of pupils

In terms of school size, taking all schools in Leicestershire, the mean number of pupils is 844 compared with a mean of 850 for our own sample. Additionally, there was a good spread of schools across the county with at least one school from each Leicestershire school district and one from the city centre.

These factors together with the size of the sample give confidence for believing that our sample is representative of the wider population of Leicestershire schools. Additionally, the findings may be of relevance and interest to teachers in other parts of the United Kingdom.

### ***Questionnaire Administration***

Questionnaires were either posted or hand delivered to individuals within each school. A number of precontacts had previously been made with both the head teacher and the head of languages at each school (see Appendix 4.1. for an example). The questionnaires were administered by the class teachers who had received an accompanying letter giving them a background to the project, an assurance of confidentiality specifying the range beyond which information would not pass, and instructing them in the methods of administration. Letters were personalized in an attempt to increase the response rate (Green, Boser and Hutchinson, 2003) and anonymity was guaranteed for both the school and individual pupils. A large written notice on the front of the questionnaire further reassured pupils that the survey was in no way a test and that the researchers merely wanted to find out pupils' true views of their language learning experience (see Appendix 4.2). Four different versions of the questionnaire were produced for learners of French, German, Spanish and Italian in different pastel shades. This colour coding made data entry and analysis easier. Furthermore, in a study of response rates for postal questionnaires the use of coloured (as opposed to white) copies had been shown to significantly increase the response rate by a ratio of 1:13 (Green, Boser and Hutchinson, 2003).

A pre-paid envelope was also provided to maximize the return rate of questionnaires.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

There was an initial surge of returned questionnaires and processing began as soon as the first completed questionnaires were received. Clerical help was available to do this work. The coding schedule which had previously been drawn up was used when data was initially entered into EXCEL for calculation of basic frequencies before being transferred into SPSS for further analysis.

A total of 650 completed questionnaires were returned to the School of Education. Two were immediately excluded because the respondents fell well outside the age range (over 60 years). Other respondents had not completed the last page of the questionnaire while a few were excluded simply because they ticked straight down the middle for the last page of this lengthy questionnaire, leaving a total of 607 for the initial analysis. There were a number of missing data items within the remaining questionnaires, where participants appeared to have accidentally missed out questions. These missing items were coded as such and not imputed.

607 subjects (256 boys and 351 girls) were left to participate in this study. The largest number (350) were studying French, followed by 179 learners of German, 56 learners of Spanish and 22 learners of Italian, roughly the same proportion as the number of learners of each language in schools within UK. Although all respondents were attending year 9 and 10 classes, they were between 13 and 16 years old with a mean age of 15.2 years. Worthy of note is the high proportion of bilingual learners (20.6%) with 16.9% of total respondents speaking a language from the Indian sub-continent.

It was interesting to see that 124 respondents had never visited the countries of the languages they were studying although the spread of those who had visited was far from even across schools. In one school in an inner city area, only five had visited France whereas in a school in a more prosperous area, every single child had been on such a visit (Thornton and Cajkler, 1996).

## **Basic Statistics**

Basic statistics (frequencies, means, percentages) were computed for all sections of the questionnaire both in total and by language studied as part of the broader LINGUA project (Cajkler with Thornton, 1998). Of particular interest for this particular study were the frequencies for language anxiety contained in Section E (see Table 4.2).

## **Factor Analysis**

After the basic statistics had been calculated, a factor analysis was carried out. Factor analysis is a technique for extracting a smaller number of underlying dimensions from a larger number of variables. There were two purposes to carrying out this analysis.

### **1. Confirmatory factor analysis**

In performing a factor analysis of Section E, we wished to separate out the factors which make up anxiety and see whether language anxiety could be seen to be made up of the same elements identified by Horwitz. If separate anxieties could be identified, we would also be able to see whether such anxieties had a facilitating or debilitating effect on language learning.

### **2. Data reduction**

Factor analysis is a useful tool in reducing large amounts of data and was particularly useful in a questionnaire of this length to allow for a reduction of the number of variables to be used in further analysis.

A factor analysis was therefore also carried out not only on Section E but also on Sections B and D of the questionnaire. The factors thus identified were used in further analyses.

## **Measuring the Internal Consistency of Scales within Section E**

To examine the internal consistency and reliability of the factors found, Cronbach's Alpha was computed. Cronbach's Alpha measures how well a set of items reflects a single unifying underlying construct. As part of this stage of the analysis, various items were also omitted from the scales in an attempt to increase the reliability of the items.

## **Looking at Correlations between Variables**

The next stage in the analysis was to look at whether the factors identified within Section E were related to a number of other variables within the questionnaire. To do this Pearson correlations were computed. The following variables were selected for analysis.

Age

Language studied

Visits to country

Bilingual learners

Whether learners thought the teacher should speak FL all the time in the classroom.

ANOVAs were used to investigate correlations with factors which had been identified through the factor analysis stage.

### **Investigating sub-groups of respondents**

After examining characteristics of the whole group, a separate series of analyses were carried out on those learners identified as highly anxious (scoring 3.5 and above on the composite WORRY / ANXIETY scale.)

## ***Preliminary Data Treatment***

The preliminary results will be reported in four stages. First, we will look at the basic frequencies in the area of language anxiety, then at the findings of the factor analysis, followed by a brief discussion of the examination of correlations between variables and the characteristics of anxious learners. This section on the data treatment will be followed by a discussion of the key findings as they relate to the main research areas.

### **Stage 1: Preliminary Analysis – Section E: Language Anxiety**

Basic statistics were computed for all parts of the questionnaire (Cajkler with Thornton, 1998). However of specific interest for the purposes of this study, the focus is on Section E – language anxiety. Frequencies, means and percentages were also calculated by language studied and by age.

**Table 4.2 Basic Frequencies Section E Language Anxiety**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total of valid cases
The atmosphere in my language lessons is quite relaxed	78 (12.9%)	281 (46.3%)	114 (18.8%)	64 (10.5%)	45 (7.4%)	582
I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in a foreign language	74 (12.2%)	228 (37.6%)	154 (25.4%)	97 (16%)	31 (5.1%)	584
I don't worry about making mistakes in language lessons	47 (7.7%)	185 (30.5%)	137 (22.6%)	164 (27%)	48 (7.9%)	581
It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language	41 (6.8%)	102 (16.8%)	158 (26%)	223 (36.7%)	56 (9.2%)	580
I keep thinking that other students are better at the foreign language than I am	83 (13.7%)	178 (29.3%)	134 (22.1%)	131 (21.6%)	53 (8.7%)	579
In language classes I get so nervous I forget things I know	45 (7.4%)	137 (22.6%)	117 (19.3%)	197 (32.5%)	85 (14%)	581
It embarrasses me to speak in the foreign language in class	41 (6.8%)	107 (17.6%)	130 (21.4%)	209 (34.4%)	92 (15.2%)	579
I feel confident when I speak a foreign language in class	34 (5.6%)	137 (22.6%)	183 (30.1%)	169 (27.8%)	54 (8.9%)	577
The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get	46 (7.6%)	114 (18.8%)	134 (22.1%)	207 (34.1%)	76 (12.5%)	577
I feel very self-conscious about speaking in the foreign language in front of other students	46 (7.6%)	151 (24.9%)	195 (32.1%)	131 (21.6%)	56 (9.2%)	579
I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my foreign language class	36 (5.9%)	125 (20.6%)	148 (24.4%)	211 (34.8%)	59 (9.7%)	579
I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak in the foreign language	39 (6.4%)	98 (16.1%)	120 (19.8%)	229 (37.7%)	94 (15.5%)	580
Tests help me to show what I know	105 (17.3%)	281 (46.3%)	97 (16%)	64 (10.5%)	27 (4.4%)	574
Test help me learn how to spell	64 (10.5%)	212 (34.9%)	136 (22.4%)	120 (19.8%)	47 (7.7%)	579
I sometimes get nervous and confused when we have a written test	48 (7.9%)	177 (29.2%)	156 (25.7%)	144 (23.7%)	56 (9.2%)	581
Tests make me study	99 (16.3%)	204 (33.6%)	138 (22.7%)	85 (14%)	55 (9.1%)	581

At this stage, it was also decided to test for internal consistency of an overall anxiety scale. Inter-item correlations yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .78.

## Stage 2: Factor Analysis

### *Section E Language Anxiety*

As the items in Section E showed a relatively high internal consistency, it was felt that proceeding with a factor analysis was appropriate not only to reduce data, but in order to test the multidimensionality of the scale previously identified by Horwitz.

An oblique factor analysis of the sixteen items produced a two factor solution accounting for 47% of the total variance of all scores. All items except E1 (*The atmosphere in my language lessons is relaxed*) and E3 (*I don't worry about making mistakes in my language lessons*) could be allocated to one of the two sub scales of:

- a) WORRY / ANXIETY: a very strong anxiety factor comprising E2, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8 (reversed), E9, E10, E11, E12 and E15 accounting for 33.5% of the total variance with an eigen value of 5.36.

**Table 4.3: Component 1 WORRY / ANXIETY with loadings**

VARIABLE	LOADING
E11 I get nervous and confused speaking the language in class	0.85
E7 It embarrasses me to speak the language in class	0.77
E12 I'm afraid other students will laugh at me when I speak the language	0.75
E6 I can get so nervous I forget things I know	0.75
E2 I don't feel sure of myself when speaking in my language lesson	0.66
E5 Other students are better at the foreign language than I am	0.66
E10 I am self conscious about speaking the language in front of other students	0.65
E4 I feel frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying	0.64
E8 I feel confident when I speak the language in class	-0.56
E15 Sometimes I get nervous and confused when we have a written test	0.56
E9 The more I study for a test the more confused I get	0.47

Factor 2 consisted of three variables which together accounted for 13.6% of the total variance with an eigenvalue of 2.2. For ease of identification, it has been called TESTS

**Table 4.4** Component 2 TESTS with loading

<b>VARIABLE</b>	<b>LOADING</b>
E13 Tests help me to learn how to spell	0.78
E14 Tests help me to show what I know	0.77
E16 Tests make me study	0.70

A factor correlation matrix showed a slight negative correlation (-0.6) between the two factors, showing that they were largely distinct.

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was computed to test for reliability of the two scales.

**Table 4.5** Cronbach's Alpha reliabilities for scales in Section E

<b>SUB-SCALE</b>	<b>NO. OF ITEMS ON SCALE</b>	<b>NO FOR CALCULATION</b>	<b>RELIABILITY</b>
WORRY	11	579	0.88
TESTS	3	579	0.71

When attempts were made to add E1 and E3 into the scales, the reliabilities were significantly reduced and therefore these two items have been omitted from further analysis.

The reliabilities of the two scales as shown above means that both sub-scales are suitable for further multi-variate analyses.



### ***Section B - Language Attitudes***

In an attempt to reduce the number of items for analysis within section B focusing on language attitudes, the thirty two items were also factor analysed. Six factors, accounting for 59% of the total variance in the item scores had eigen values greater than one. However, of these only four had recognizable psychological unifying features. These were:

- a) Dislike of the language (called DISLIKE) accounting for 32 % of the total variance which comprised items:

**Table 4.6** Component DISLIKE with loadings

ITEM	LOADING
B7 I don't like learning FL	.62
B10 FL is usually boring	.67
B12 There are more useful languages to learn than FL	.76
B20 I enjoy other subjects more than FL	.64
B22 (reversed) I enjoy learning FL	.80

- b) Perceived difficulty of the language (termed DIFF) accounting for 9% of the variance comprising items:

**Table 4.7** Component DIFFICULTY with loadings

ITEM	LOADING
B6 I find FL too hard	.79
B11 I find FL more difficult than other subjects	.74
B13 I don't like FL because I'm no good at it	.73
B14 (reversed) I am better at FL than other subjects	.67
B17 (reversed) I'm quite good at FL	.54
B31 (reversed) I understand most things in FL lessons	.74
B26 (reversed) I'm quite good at FL	.82

- c) The perceived usefulness of the language (USEFUL) comprising aspects of integrative motivation and parental attitude accounting for 40% of the total variance and comprising items:

**Table 4.8** Component USEFUL with loadings

ITEM	LOADING
B4 I think my parents are pleased I'm learning FL	.39
B9 FL will be useful to me after I leave school	.75
B15 Learning a European language will help me become a European citizen	.58
B18 (reversed) I don't need FL for what I want to do	.72
B19 I think there are many jobs where FL would be useful	.67
B25 (reversed) Learning a FL is a waste of time	.58
B27 FL will be useful to me when I go on holiday	.43
B28 (reversed) My parents think that learning FL is a waste of time	.47
B29 We should learn another European language because we are part of Europe	.52
B32 Knowing FL will help me get a job I like	.83

- d) Integrative motivation – the wish for personal contact with the native country and people (labeled PEOPLE) and accounting for 32% of the total variance comprising items:

**Table 4.9** Component PEOPLE with loadings

ITEM	LOADING
B3 (reversed) I am not interested in meeting people from country X	.71
B5 I would like to visit country X	.73
B8 I would like to stay with FL family	.78
B16 (reversed) I am not interested in going to country X	.80
B24 I would like to have a boy or girl from country X to stay	.75

Four corresponding composite scales were constructed by summing the individual item scores. Reliabilities were calculated by Cronbach Alpha and appear in Table 4.10 over.

**Table 4:10** Cronbach's Alpha reliabilities for scales in Section B

SUB-SCALE	NO. OF ITEMS ON SCALE	NO FOR CALCULATION	RELIABILITY
DISLIKE	7	579	0.88
DIFFICULT	7	579	0.88
USEFUL	10	579	0.84
PEOPLE	5	579	0.83

These reliabilities indicate that all four sub-scales may be used in subsequent multivariate analysis.

The three items which are not allocated (B21 *I have learned a lot about country X from television*; B23 *I have learned FL from pop songs* and B30 *I have learned a lot about life in Germany from television*) could be summed to give a weak composite MEDIA scale. However with a reliability of 0.56, it was felt that the MEDIA scale should not be used in multivariate analysis.

The four scales we are left with are almost identical to those found by Filmer-Sankey (1991) on whose research the present questionnaire was based.

It is also interesting to note, here that despite criticism that the traditional dichotomy between integrative and instrumental motivation originally espoused by Gardner and others (Gardner, 1988; Gardner and MacIntyre, 1991; Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Gardner and Tremblay 1994) was oversimplistic (Hynes, 2002; MacIntyre, 1999), the factors USEFUL representing instrumental motivation and PEOPLE representing integrative which came out of this analysis clearly reflected this division.

### ***Learner Strategies***

The section concerned with strategy use proved to be made up of one strong unifying factor with a Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of .8552 showing that the scale could be used in further analysis.

Individual answers were of interest here. Despite the fact that the place of memorization has been minimized in communicative methodologies, the majority of respondents reported that learning by heart was their preferred strategy (see page 101 for further discussion of this).

This section of the questionnaire yielded further interesting data which proved to be unrelated to language anxiety and has been reported elsewhere (Thornton and Cajkler, 1996; Cajkler and Thornton, 1999).

### **Stage 3: Examining Correlations between Variables**

The next stage in the analysis was to examine the relationship between the anxiety scales and the range of variables described above from sections B, D and E which had been identified at earlier stages of the analysis. Results from this part of the analysis are discussed below.

### **Stage 4: Characteristics of anxious learners**

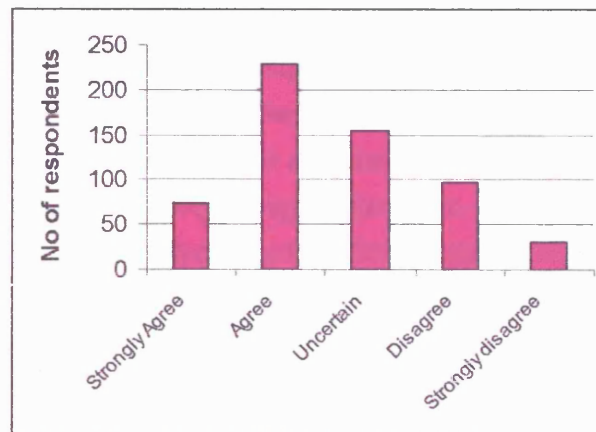
As a final stage in the analysis, those learners who were extremely anxious (defined as scoring over 3.5 on the WORRY/ANXIETY scale) were identified. A total of 126 learners (47 boys and 79 girls) fell into this category. Separate analyses were run on this sub-set of data in order to see whether any unifying characteristics could be identified within this group.

## Key Findings

### Existence of Language Anxiety

The basic descriptive statistics already yielded some interesting findings, showing that language anxiety does indeed exist among this age group. 30% of learners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *In language classes I get so nervous I forget things I know* while as can be seen below, nearly half of those surveyed reported that they did not feel sure of themselves when speaking the FL.

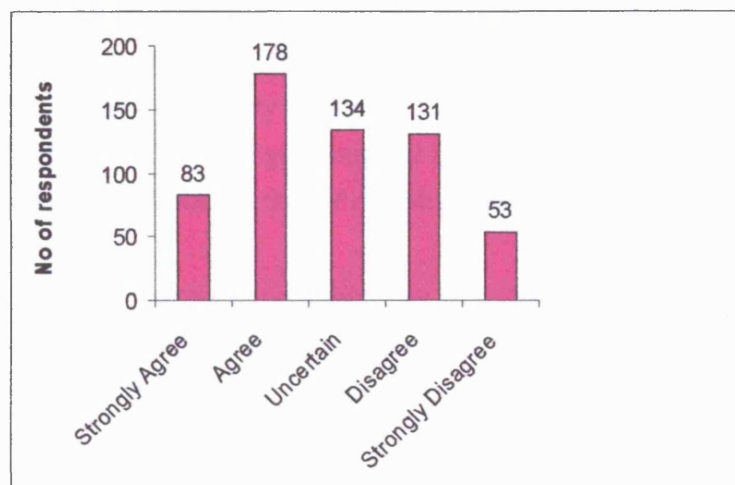
**Figure 4:1** Responses to item  
E2 *I never feel quite sure of myself when speaking in a FL*



24% of students endorsed the statement *It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in FL* giving some credence to Horwitz's assertion that anxious students felt they had to understand absolutely everything in the foreign language class.

Also as in Horwitz's study, students worried that they were less competent in the foreign language than their peers (see Figure 4.2 over)

**Figure 4.2:** Responses to item E3 *I keep thinking that other students are better at the FL than I am*



Of particular interest given the age group in question was the large percentage of students who felt self-conscious or embarrassed to speak the foreign language in front of their peers. 24% reported their agreement with the statement *It embarrasses me to speak the foreign language in class*. This represents one of the greatest diversions in response from the Horwitz survey where only 9% of students reported such embarrassment. Further support for the strength of such feelings can be seen from the fact that 32% of respondents agreed that they felt self-conscious about speaking the language in front of their peers.

Similar responses are to be found across the other items in the questionnaire with at least a quarter of respondents reporting feelings of anxiety. On the composite WORRY scale, 126 learners (over 1 in 5) scored above 3.5 indicating high rates of anxiety. Such a finding was surprising both to researchers and to teachers involved in the project.

### ***Fear of Making Mistakes***

A sizable number of students (35%) were afraid of making mistakes in the language classroom. In a foreign language classroom environment where speech is of utmost importance, such hesitation is bound to affect the language learning experience. Such fear is a little surprising given the stated aims of communicative methodology which are to encourage fluency in speech as well as accuracy.

### ***Receiver Anxiety***

Receiver anxiety refers to the anxiety which is present when learners fear that they are unable to understand what the teacher is saying. Horwitz refers to learners suffering from this type of anxiety who report that they are only able to hear a low buzz when the teacher is speaking. Campbell (1999) discovered that learners were actually more anxious about the skill of listening than speaking.

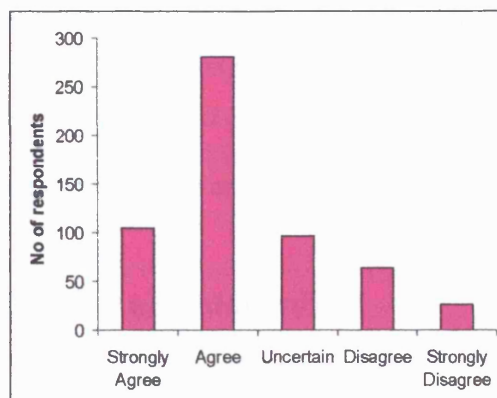
25% of learners in our survey agreed that they were frightened when they didn't understand what the teacher was saying in the foreign language which indicates that anxiety exists with relation to the listening as well as the speaking skill within our sample.

### ***Classroom Atmosphere***

Particular note, however should be taken of the response to item E1 *The atmosphere in my language lessons is quite relaxed*, a statement endorsed by more than half (59%) of all respondents. The overwhelming agreement with this statement raises clear questions about the causes of language anxiety and what aspects of the classroom situation might be responsible for these.

### **Facilitating Nature of Anxiety**

So far, our study has shown that language anxiety exists and is debilitating in nature. The fact that more than a quarter of respondents felt that *The more (they) studied for a test the more confused (they) got* while over a third (36%) *sometimes got nervous and confused when (they) had a written test* clearly points to the existence of language anxiety within this age group. One could therefore be forgiven for assuming along with Horwitz that this was a bad thing. Closer examination of items E13, E14 and E16 shows that this is not the case. In fact within this section of the questionnaire, there was the greatest consensus in terms of agreement to the item *Tests help me to show what I know*, with an overwhelming 63.6% agreeing, 17.3% agreeing strongly that this was indeed the case (see below).

**Figure 4.3:** Chart showing responses to item E13 *Tests help me to show what I know*

The very high percentage of responses to items E14 *Tests help me learn how to spell* (45.4%) and E16 *Tests make me study* (49.9%) further indicate that tests have a positive effect on language learning despite the fears voiced by teachers in an earlier phase of this study reported in Chapter 2 that tests were a necessary evil not always conducive to learning.

Of the 48 pupils who strongly agreed that they got nervous and confused when they had a written test, an overwhelming 68% of this number (N=33) also affirmed that tests made them study. This would indicate that for a majority of those students self-reporting as suffering from test anxiety, the anxiety is in fact facilitating in nature.

### ***Language anxiety and its relationship to other variables***

#### **The Relationship between Anxiety and Gender**

Whereas the popular view has it that girls are more anxious than boys, this was not borne out in the case of the overall sample in the present study. Although girls were slightly more anxious than boys on the WORRY scale, the difference in the means was minimal (2.93 for girls as against 2.88 for boys) in the case of all 607 respondents. However, when examining the sub-sample of respondents rated as very anxious, there was a significant correlation between gender and level of anxiety as 79 of the 130 respondents (61%) were girls ( $r=.183^*$ ).



### **Age and Background and Language Anxiety**

There was no significant difference in anxiety levels within the limited age range of our sample, although DISLIKE of language learning did increase with age, perhaps reflecting the approaching pressures of the GCSE exam.

There was no significant difference in anxiety levels between bilingual and English speaking students.

### **Visits to Foreign Country and Motivation**

The familiarity which comes with visits to the foreign country did not appear to decrease anxiety. In fact, the level of anxiety was lower (mean WORRY / ANXIETY scale 2.3) for those who had never visited the foreign country than those who had (mean 2.9). The two factors relating to motivation (USEFUL and PEOPLE) proved not to be correlated with either of the two anxiety scores, despite the fact that Gardner, Day and MacIntyre (1992) suggest that anxiety and motivation are opposite ends of the same scale.

### **The School and Language Anxiety**

According to many researchers, it is principally the classroom situation that is responsible for the creation of language anxiety. One might therefore expect a degree of variation between schools in the level of anxiety to be found amongst its pupils. This was not the case with all school means very close together. The highest score on the WORRY scale was found in school L where the mean worry score was 3.12 and the lowest in School F with a mean worry score of 2.98.

### **Difficulty of Language and Anxiety Level**

There was, however, a correlation between WORRY and DIFFICULTY ( $r=.398^{**}$ ). The more anxious learners were, the more they perceived the language as difficult although from the present sample, we have no way of knowing the causal nature of this relationship, that is whether learners found the language difficult because they were worried or were anxious because they found the language difficult. German earned its reputation as being a traditionally difficult language (Filmer-Sankey, 1991) as there was a significant correlation between WORRY and GERMAN ( $r =$

.192\*). Learners of German reported themselves as more anxious than learners of other languages. There was no significant relationship between WORRY and the other languages studied.

### ***The Characteristics of Anxious Learners***

129 learners out of the total sample of 607 scored above 3.5 on the composite WORRY scale and were classified as extremely anxious, forming a sizable 22% of the total. Although in the larger sample, there had been no significant correlation between anxiety and gender, in the sub-sample, more girls than boys were anxious (79 out of the total of 130 most anxious learners) were girls. Findings which showed a relationship between anxiety and perceived difficulty of the subject were also present for this sub-sample with a significant correlation between WORRY /ANXIETY and DIFFICULTY ( $r = .413^{**}$ ).

Of the extremely anxious learners as may be expected, the largest numbers were studying French, followed by German, Spanish and Italian. However, when we look at the numbers reporting anxiety reported as a percentage of the total studying that language, we see that whereas only 12% of those studying Spanish were highly anxious, 27% of those studying German reported high levels of anxiety.

**Table 4.11:** Number of total sample reporting anxiety by language studied

LANGUAGE	NO. OF STUDENTS REPORTING HIGH	% OF TOTAL STUDYING THAT LANGUAGE
French	70	20%
German	48	27%
Spanish	7	12%
Italian	5	23%

A further finding of interest is that the facilitating effects of test anxiety were present even in this sample.

**Table 4.12:** Frequencies relating to test anxiety in anxious sub-group

	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total of valid cases
The more I study for a language test the more confused I get	11 (8.5%)	28 (21.2%)	29 (22.5%)	44 (34.1%)	18 (12.4%)	128
I sometimes get nervous and confused when we have a written test	17 (13.2%)	49 (38.0%)	44 (34.1%)	13 (10.1%)	6 (4.7%)	129
Tests help me to show what I know	18 (14.1%)	47 (36.7%)	14 (10.9%)	25 (19.5%)	23 (18%)	127
Test help me learn how to spell	22 (17.1%)	38 (29.5%)	31 (24%)	24 (18.6%)	13 (10.1%)	128
Tests make me study	23 (17.8%)	36 (29.5%)	318 (24%)	27 (20.9%)	12 (9.3%)	129

As can be seen from the table above, over half of the sub-sample of highly anxious learners could get nervous and confused as opposed to 26.5% of the sample overall. There was also greater agreement with the other item dealing with debilitating anxiety *I sometimes get nervous and confused when we have a written test* with again over half of the sub-sample agreeing compared with over a third of the overall sample.

It was therefore perhaps surprising to find that the facilitating effects of anxiety were to be felt in this sub-group of very anxious learners with over half agreeing that tests helped them to show what they know and high percentages of agreement with the other items related to facilitating anxiety.

## Limitations

Although space-economy (Dornyei, 2001) had been taken into account when designing the questionnaire with as many as 32 items on one page, the section on anxiety did, nevertheless, appear as page 5 right at the end of the questionnaire. There were therefore a larger number of missing responses towards the end. A number of other questionnaires where the respondent had ticked the same response throughout this section were excluded. It may be that some learners were fatigued at this stage or filled in the questions with little thought. In fact, some months after the event, one teacher mentioned that some of her students had found the questionnaire *“a little long and boring.”*

Also the fact that space economy was an issue meant that that other criteria of a well-designed questionnaire e.g. leaving enough white space had to be balanced against producing such a long questionnaire that response rates might be affected. (Green, Boser and Hutchinson, 2003).

In terms of the sample, although there was no correlation between home language and language anxiety, the large number of bilingual learners might make the findings non generalisable to the larger population.

## ***Discussion and Suggestions for Further Work***

The survey results clearly show that a significant amount of language anxiety exists in our target population in Leicestershire in numbers approaching the “alarming rates” identified by Campbell (1991). The fact that such anxiety is greatest when students have to speak in the foreign language can be seen from the responses to items concerned with communication apprehension. Communicating in the foreign language has been clearly identified in the literature as potentially the most anxiety-filled situation, a finding which our study bears out. However, the anxiety is not limited to oral communication. Students also find listening stressful, with nearly a quarter claiming that they feel afraid when they don’t understand what the teacher is saying. It may be that the emphasis in communicative methodologies coupled with current recommendations for teachers to maximize use of the L1 in the classroom could be exacerbating such feelings. We will examine this area in the coming chapters.

## **Facilitating Nature of Language Anxiety**

The finding demonstrating the facilitating nature of language anxiety even among learners who are highly anxious is of particular interest particularly in light of other research in the area. Campbell (1999 p.193), for example, reflects the typical viewpoint in noting..... “When discussing, anxiety peculiar to language leaning.....all researchers agree .....that the nature of the anxiety in question is debilitating not facilitating that is, it impedes rather than enhances language learning”.

A closer examination of the results from the survey questionnaire further shows that test anxiety may at times have both a facilitating and debilitating effect. As shown by our calculations (see page 60), we can see that both types of test anxiety must be present in the same learners, although presumably at different times. Just exactly how this occurs and how facilitating anxiety may become debilitating can clearly not be investigated without examining individual learners in greater depth.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether current classroom methodologies which minimise the role of rote learning for tests are being adhered to in current classroom practices and if so, what the effect is on levels of anxiety.

It may also be worth revisiting the inverted U-model of facilitating vs. debilitating anxiety which has, seldom, if ever been empirically researched in the foreign language classroom. It may be that this uni-dimensional construct does not fully capture the effects of anxiety.

### **Gender and Language Anxiety**

Other results from our survey which examine the relationship between anxiety and gender are as inconclusive as much of the literature suggests. In our overall sample there was little difference between anxiety levels of boys and girls. It has been speculated that anxiety level of girls are generally higher but that this may not be apparent in classroom situations since girls tend to have closer interpersonal relationships with teachers which tends to minimize levels of anxiety (Bracken and Crain, 1994 in Pappamihel, 2002). However, in the sub-sample there was significant difference between boys and girls. Here more girls suffered from greater anxiety. However, the reasons this should be and whether it does have any connection with teacher / pupil relations is not clear.

### **Difficulty Level of Language**

A further area of interest brought to the surface by the questionnaire is the relationship between perceived difficulty of the language and language anxiety. Our survey showed there was a clear relationship between the two, a correlation which proved even stronger among those learners who were highly anxious. However, the causal nature of the anxiety is unclear or indeed whether the more difficult they find the language the more anxious they become. Further in-depth research is necessary to find the answer to these questions.

## **The Views of Teachers**

When the findings from this phase of the research were shared with teachers, one expressed surprise that their learners might be anxious, having attributed lack of participation in class to lack of ability, unwillingness to volunteer answers or sheer laziness. Her relative lack of awareness of language anxiety has its parallel in areas such as maths where non-anxious individuals who are gifted in the subject find it difficult to believe that others might suffer the deleterious effects of anxiety that they do. It would be interesting to find out whether other teachers recognize the presence of language anxiety in their classrooms and if so, whether they adapt their teaching to take it into account.

## **Reasons for Anxiety**

A clear direction for further research is the reasons for anxiety. Some possible motives can be seen from the questionnaire. When analyzing the results of her own FLCAS study, Horwitz (1991) found significant numbers agreeing with the following items: *I keep thinking that other students are better at languages than I am*

This leads her to conclude that fear of negative evaluation by peers is a source of anxiety. While our own sample also indicates that this is the case, it would be useful to go back to individuals who responded positively to these items to investigate the issue further.

Other causes of anxiety have not been examined in our questionnaire. Horwitz states that “as long as language learning takes place in a formal school setting... anxiety is likely to flourish” (1991 p.35). Yet in the present study, despite the definite existence of language anxiety, 59% of learners endorsed the statement *“The atmosphere in my language lessons is quite relaxed”*. This raises the question of whether Horwitz is right in placing the blame firmly on the setting or if so, what particular aspects of the setting might exacerbate such anxiety. In order to investigate this further, we need to look at anxiety in its classroom context.

## **Next Steps**

The findings of this study appear to corroborate other studies in suggesting that anxiety exists in significant numbers among students studying a foreign language. However, neither the causes nor the effects of anxiety could properly be investigated using survey methodology. In order to delve deeper into the phenomenon, it is

necessary to examine anxious individuals in the setting in which they experience language anxiety i.e. in their language learning classrooms.

## **CHAPTER 5**

“For a shy child, speaking in front of the class or even answering the teacher’s questions when called upon may seem like bold and daring feats of will”

*The Parent Center*

### **EXPLORING FURTHER**

#### ***Introduction***

The survey described in the last chapter provided a useful description of the situation with regard to language anxiety. We know that language anxiety does, indeed, exist among 14 – 16 year old learners, we know that if we look at the more anxious learners, the majority are girls, that anxiety is associated with perceived difficulty of the language and that in contrast to other studies, test anxiety can have a facilitating effect on language learning. All the findings represent a descriptive account of the current situation – however, they fail to offer any explanations for the causes of anxiety, its manifestations or what can be done to alleviate it. Indeed, they provide little which is of use to the practicing teacher and thus could be said to merit criticisms made of some second language acquisition research that it is too theoretical and removed from day to day classroom practice (Long, 1998).

It was therefore decided to investigate the matter more deeply by looking at language anxiety in the social context of the classroom. The drawing up of the research questions for this next phase of the study involved a reappraisal of the literature, this time focusing on manifestations of anxiety in the classroom as well as possible causes. It also involved observation of classes and discussion with a teacher and six of her learners (five girls and one boy) identified as anxious in order to decide on specific research areas for the next phase of the project. This chapter describes the results of the observation and these exploratory interviews. The aim here was to look at those areas of classroom practice our survey had suggested might



be of relevance and examine whether other avenues should be explored during the final phase of this project. Since this intermediate phase of the study was limited, definitive conclusions regarding the nature of anxiety in the classroom were not drawn. The primary aim was to generate questions which might be worthy of further exploration

## **Method**

A number of teachers who had taken part in the first study were approached and asked if they wished to take part in further investigations of their classrooms as part of the LINGUA project. This next phase of the LINGUA project involved individual teachers in the three participating countries carrying out their own Action Research Projects.

The primary aim of the stage of the LINGUA project described in this chapter was to collect information on current practice, the rationale being that teachers could not reflect on foci for Action Research unless they were aware of what was actually happening in classrooms. As part of this phase of the project, teachers were video recorded and structured observation sheets were kept on aspects of their classroom performance. A member of School of Education staff made these observations available to the teachers in question and offered the teachers opportunities for discussion. The author took part in this phase of the LINGUA project by video recording a number of classes and assisting with data collection. For the purposes of the current research, however, two teachers were approached and asked if the data collected could be used by the author as part of her Ph.D. thesis. Two French lessons from Teacher J and one German lesson from Teacher H were used for this purpose. These two teachers were also asked if they could identify anxious learners in their classes. Five learners were identified by the teachers and interviewed as part of this exploratory phase of the research. A further student who had exhibited anxious behaviour during an observation was also selected for semi-structured interview. Notes were taken during these interviews but they were not recorded as it was felt that this might further exacerbate anxiety.

It is worth emphasizing that the interviews, however, did have a dual focus. Four questions focusing on learning strategies that students used to help them learn were

identified, questions focusing on whether pupils were anxious, whether they were more anxious in French lessons than in other lessons, how they felt and what they did if they were anxious and why they were anxious were included (See Appendix 5 for interview schedule). The questions were based in part on Section E of the previous survey. With two of the respondents, reference was also made to examples of classroom incidents that the researcher had noticed. Their perspective on these incidents was sought.

The lessons themselves were video recorded and later transcribed. However, for the purposes of the research only ethnographic notes, filled out by supplementary notes made after the lesson were used.

## ***Findings from Observations***

Teacher J was observed simultaneously by a colleague who was focusing on participation in the lesson as well as by the researcher whose principal aim was to identify anxious students and gain insights into possible classroom practices which might make learners anxious.

### **Teacher J**

There was a clear split in teacher J's classroom between a group of boys at the front who participated fully in the lesson and a group of girls sitting at the back who did not speak at all. On two occasions, when called on to answer, the girls at the back would confer with their neighbours before hazarding an answer. When the imbalance in participation was pointed out to the teacher, she decided to reseal the class and moved the boys who she had previously paid attention to, to the back of the class and moved the girls to the front. The experiment was not a success. The teacher spoke to the groups about how they felt in their new seating positions and both groups claimed to dislike them intensely. Furthermore, the teacher was observed to move her position in the class. Whereas before she had been at the front for nearly the whole of the lesson, she moved around the class far more during the reseating experiment on occasions having her back to the girls.

The teacher was aware of the focus of the research and therefore admitted that she called on the quieter pupils to answer perhaps more than she would otherwise have done. However, the time she allotted them to answer was frequently very short and

she would tend to move to one of the pupils who had his hand up when there was no response from the first nominee. There was little overt correction of anything other than pronunciation although on one occasion, she persisted in her attempt to correct the pronunciation of *vélo*, exaggerating the girl's pronunciation and making her repeat three times, which clearly caused the girl in question some discomfort.

The teacher did not speak French at length during the first lesson. She used French for encouragement "*Oui, c'est ça*", for giving instructions (although here she tended to code switch or rephrase in English when pupils didn't understand), for classroom management / disciplinary purposes "*Ne touche pas*" and for brief explanations of language, again often followed by an English translation. The second lesson which was based round buying things was somewhat derailed with perhaps more English than was normal when pupils had difficulty with the maths of buying 3 sandwiches for 1 franc 20 each. However, in general J's lessons were well balanced with both oral and written work and were also varied with a range of activities from the overhead as well as from the course book.

Worthy of note is the fact that some pupils were extremely good at hiding in J's class. The girls who had been reseated never put their hands up. On one occasion one of the girls disappeared under her desk supposedly looking for a pencil. This passed unnoticed by the teacher.

#### Teacher H

Teacher H's preferred pattern of interaction was whole class solicit which was followed up by asking individuals if nobody volunteered. There were few attempts to nominate individuals without first asking the whole class for a response. One behaviour which was frequently noted was that of students putting up their hand at the last minute just as the teacher had nominated someone else.

This teacher consistently used German for instructions to do with the text book "*Seite hundert drei und zwanzig*". When other instructions were given in German, she would check understanding by asking students to restate "*auf Englisch*". As before short phrases of praise were used in German, "*Ja, sehr gut!*" Wrong answers were generally rewarded with a questioning "*Nein?*" before the teacher moved onto someone else. The teacher appeared very sensitive to the fact that pupils may not understand German to the extent that almost everything said in German apart from

stock phrases would either be translated by the teacher or by a member of the class. The German spoken by the children other than in response to direct referential questions was "*Nein*" and "*Ja*".

It was again the girls who appeared quieter in this class and who seated themselves on the periphery although no anxious behaviours as such were observed in this class.

## ***Findings from Interviews***

Students interviewed felt that they were more anxious in the foreign language classroom which was different to other subjects in a number of ways. In other subjects there wasn't as much on the spot question and answer. For example, in Maths lessons, students would have more time to prepare answers and talk to their friends to check the correctness of their responses. The fact that they felt silly speaking in a foreign language was mentioned by two of the respondents. One said she tried not to make her accent "*too French*". When asked about their feelings about mistakes, one girl said she didn't speak because she was worried about making mistakes which raises clear questions about teacher attitudes to accuracy as opposed to fluency. For the others, mistakes per se were not felt to be too bad but it was the pronunciation which caused difficulty here. One boy said that if the accent was wrong other people in the class laugh. When probed what the wrong accent might be, an accent which was "*over the top*" was mentioned. However, one of the girls who had been observed whispering to a friend before answering mentioned that others in the class were generally supportive and would help one another out.

When asked what they did when they felt anxious, two of the girls said they would just do nothing. They added that they would not say anything even if the teacher asked them unless they were absolutely 100% sure that they were right. One boy said he was worried about "*getting it wrong*," but would try to practice the response in his head if he could. The girl who had on more than one occasion put her hand up after the teacher had already nominated someone else did not mention this as a strategy. When it was pointed out to her that she had done this, she claimed not to have realized. All respondents said they liked to sit out of the way where they weren't in the spotlight. They were fairly adept at working out where the spotlight was despite the configuration of the class.

One girl mentioned how a previous German teacher had made fun of her when she had been speaking and how the rest of the class had then laughed. This event occurred some time in the past but had clearly not been forgotten. Two of the respondents commented that they were no good at languages and hated them. One said she didn't understand "*what was going on half the time*". Speaking French or German was generally disliked although four of the respondents said they did not mind speaking in small groups. Speaking in front of the whole class was also disliked and felt to be particularly anxiety provoking.

The learners claimed not to like tests and disagreed with the survey statements. They felt that tests emphatically did not help them to show what they knew. Tests where the teacher reseated the learners were particularly disliked. One girl said she found herself thinking about the time ticking away during a test. The pattern of tests she described seemed to be an oral prompt by the teacher, then time given to write down the answer. She said she sometimes failed to hear what the teacher said then worried about this so missed the next question.

It is interesting that the prompt question *Do you ever get frightened if you don't understand what the teacher is saying* based on question E4 from the survey *It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in French* received negative responses from all participants. Fear did not appear to express the emotion, with students instead saying they felt flustered and confused. The girl whose pronunciation had been corrected in J's class said that it was the fact that she didn't understand what it was that she was saying wrong that caused her anxiety and that therefore repetition on the part of the teacher didn't help which made her anxious.

It should be noted that one of the respondents in particular was very reticent in interview. This could be because the researcher was unknown to the interviewees. In future phases of research, if interviews are used, it would be better for respondents to already be familiar with the interviewer in order to get more open and honest responses.

## ***Possible Areas for Investigation***

The purpose of this phase of the research was exploratory in nature and few definitive conclusions can be drawn from this short investigation. The interviewees

had seen the researcher on only one previous occasion and may have been reluctant to discuss feelings. One respondent suggested that peers were helpful in alleviating anxiety while others suggested that fear of negative evaluation from peers had a negative influence. Instances of avoidance behaviour that had been observed were not confirmed by the interviewees and the findings relating to the facilitating nature of some aspects of language anxiety were not borne out by the interviews. This short exploratory phase, coupled with the results from the larger survey have, however, generated a number of possible areas for investigation. These are

- The effects of anxiety both in terms of how anxiety is manifested in the language classroom as well as internal effects such as anxious thoughts.
- Self-image of anxious learners as well as image of self in comparison with others.
- Origin of anxiety and in particular whether a previous negative experience such as the one mentioned by the German learner above could be a cause of anxiety
- The effect of peers and whether they have a positive or negative effect on language anxiety
- Effect of task and whether small group work is the ideal way for anxious learners to practice oral communication.
- Effect of teacher and the amount she used the target language in class
- Avoidance strategies, whether seating is an issue and whether the behaviours which had been observed to avoid answering questions were common.

However, it should be noted that it is not possible to guarantee that the responses given are genuinely those which were felt by the respondents and not those which respondents felt were expected of them. Within this context, some of the findings from the interview may not have been accurate. In addition, the experience of interviewing the learners without previously having met them suggests that interviews and observations on their own are insufficient to investigate the subtleties of anxiety in the classroom. In order to decide on an appropriate methodology and to enable us to finetune questions for investigation, it is necessary to return to the literature on anxiety in its classroom context.

## **CHAPTER 6**

**“I dread going to Spanish class. My teacher is kind of nice and it can be fun, but I hate it when the teacher calls on me to speak. I freeze up and can’t think what to say or how to say it. And my pronunciation is terrible. Sometimes I think people don’t even understand what I’m saying.”**  
(Horwitz, 1986)

### **BACK TO THE LITERATURE**

#### ***Introduction***

Results from our survey show that language anxiety does indeed exist among 14 – 16 year old learners studying foreign languages in a classroom setting. We also know that within our sample, the majority of extremely anxious learners are girls and that their anxiety is associated with perceived difficulty of the language. We know that test anxiety has a facilitating effect on language learning. We know that 22.5% of children fear they may be laughed at in class although we do not know whether this fear of being made fun of is a cause of language anxiety or a separate type of social anxiety. We also know that receiver anxiety exists – that is 25% of learners are anxious when they are unable to understand the teacher, although we do not know when and why they are not able to understand the teacher. In fact, although we do know that language anxiety exists, we know little about its causes nor of how teachers can recognize it and minimize its effects.

One reason for this may be that our research so far has tended to focus on intrinsic individual variables while neglecting outside influences. However, as Campbell (1998) notes, the cause of individual differences in language learning is likely to be a result of a combination of the type of internal variables we have studied in chapter 4 in combination with external variables such as learning conditions in the classroom which we began to explore in Chapter 5. Other researchers in the area also point out the importance of looking at individual variables within a broader area. Even Gardner, whose work has tended to be based in the positivist tradition, counsels that the sociocultural context should be taken into account before any investigation of individual variables (see Chapter 2). More recent work such as that by Dornyei and Otto discussed in Chapter 2 attempt to integrate contextual factors into a broader overall model when explaining the effects of motivation and anxiety on learning.

Furthermore, if anxiety is, as much of the literature tells us, a socially determined construct, then it would make sense to examine it within the social setting of the classroom. However before proceeding to this next stage of classroom investigation, in keeping with the iterative nature of this study, it is appropriate to return to the literature to see how others have investigated language anxiety beyond the survey and what we know about its classroom based causes and effects. This time, the focus of the review will not only be on research in laboratory settings or quantitative survey research, but will look at studies focusing on the broader learning environment which might shed light on why language anxiety exists within individuals and how it is manifested.

### ***Qualitative vs. Quantitative Approaches: The Nature of Knowledge***

There has long been a dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches to research in the social sciences, which is also apparent in the field of language education. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991 p.11) speaking of the “schism which exists in the SLA field between those researchers who favour qualitative methodologies and those who prefer quantitative methodologies” make the point that for some researchers, the choice of which methodology to adopt is more than a preference for one methodology over another but rather “a fundamental clash between two paradigms.” The issue centres around the fact that choosing one paradigm over another implies contrasting world views. Positivists using quantitative methods believe that knowledge is objective and real and there is a universal truth subject to investigation and measurement. Within positivism, researchers are likely to focus on collecting large amounts of data in order to be able to generalize to a large number of situations. Introspective data and studies involving only small groups cannot be relied upon. Interpretivists maintain that reality is perceived as construct of the human mind, so that there can be different interpretations of what is real. Interpretivists favour a more qualitative approach believe that knowledge is more subjective and that every situation is unique. Consequently, there are multiple realities which exist and any research is influenced by the values or framework an investigator may use.

Guba and Lincoln (1994) have emphasized the differences between the two paradigms stating that one precludes the other and that trying to combine the two approaches is doomed to failure due to different underlying philosophies. Smith (1983 p.12) describes the incompatibility of the two paradigms as follows:



“one approach takes a subject-object position on the relationship to subject matter; the other takes a subject-subject position. One separates facts and values, while the other sees them as inextricably linked. One searches for laws, and the other seeks understanding. These positions do not seem to be compatible.”

Merriam (2001) asserts that studies which adopt both approaches are frequently guilty of loose thinking, since it is not possible to have the dualism of mind set to believe in both approaches simultaneously.

Traditionally, the early studies we reviewed in Chapter 2, and on which our own survey was based favored the quantitative paradigm to investigate individual variables using surveys or quasi-experiments. However, Ratner (1997) points out that much of the discussion regarding quantitative vs. qualitative methods does not apply when seeking to measure psychological phenomena such as attitudes, emotions or personality traits. Ratner states that quantification of an attitude is simply not viable and questions whether simple, fragmented questions which only elicit responses along an agree / disagree scale can provide any meaningful information about the affective domain. Ratner (2003 p.4) firmly believes that “quantification in psychology must be subordinate to qualitative methods”

It may also be that it is oversimplistic to look at quantitative and qualitative approaches in terms of a dichotomy and the reality is that many large scale studies nowadays tend to employ methods from both. According to Newman and Benz (1998) the best that can be said of research nowadays is that it only tends to be quantitative or qualitative and that many research studies lie on a continuum between the two.

More recently, Creswell (2003) discusses the mixed method approach as an approach in its own right. According to Creswell (2003 p.3) “mixed methods research has come of age”. In a book published in the same year, McEwan and McEwan describe good research as “ideally a skilful combination” of both quantitative and qualitative techniques (McEwan and McEwan, 2003 p. 2). Furthermore, if as is the case, all methods have their limitations, then biases in one method can neutralise or cancel out the biases in another (Creswell, 2003). While this reason frequently cited for triangulation is still perhaps the main reason researchers embark on pluralistic methods of gathering data, there are other equally valid reasons for doing so. For example, in the case of the present research, the survey is used as a springboard to the development of the later methodology.

Howe (1998) also proposes a different philosophical approach he terms pragmatism. Howe argues the research questions should drive the choice of methodology rather than the other way round. Qualitative and quantitative methods are not incompatible. Both can be made use of in any research.

The crucial question here seems not to be which methodology is “best” but rather the degree of rigour brought to bear when conducting the research. It is also clear that some things are better described in percentages and numbers and are therefore more suitable to a quantitative approach. The extent of the existence of language anxiety falls into this category. Other phenomena are best described in pictures and words and can be more easily seen from a qualitative viewpoint. Although quantitative and qualitative paradigms are incompatible in ontological and epistemological terms, this research takes a more eclectic view looking at the level of methods rather than paradigms. We need to reflect on which approach is more appropriate to discover the answers to our questions, then select techniques, which are complementary and will furnish valid answers to the questions we pose.

### ***Survey Research: Horwitz Revisited***

The major way of investigating anxiety as reported in the first literature review chapter is through the use of survey data. Despite having followed this approach ourselves, it does have some limitations. All surveys, by their very nature, can only yield a certain amount of descriptive information and are generally limited to examining correlations between variables, which tell us nothing about cause and effect. Inevitably, this type of research also involves some interpretation on the part of the researcher not only of the data but also the survey items themselves. At this point, it is worth returning to the work of Elaine Horwitz, partly in view of the fact that the findings described in Chapter 4 do not altogether replicate hers but also because her questionnaire-based work in the field of language anxiety with a number of recent studies in places as far apart as Japan (Matsuda and Gobel, 2001) and Mexico (Pappamihel, 2001) continuing to make use of her survey instrument, fifteen years after it was first developed.

In the case of Horwitz, closer examination of her work reveals that a number of unsubstantiated assumptions about causality have been made as a result of the items used as part of the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. For example, Horwitz assumes that anxiety is the sole cause of agreement with a number of the statements in her questionnaire. According to her, agreement with the statement *I keep thinking other*

*students are better at FL than I am* is indicative of foreign language anxiety rather than lack of self-confidence or other personality factors. Likewise, agreement with the statement *I worry about the consequences of failing my language class* might be a natural reaction on the part of any student depending on the severity of the consequences but is again seen as an indication of a specific type of language anxiety by Horwitz.

Evidence for the existence of test anxiety is equally vague. In support of the existence of test anxiety, Horwitz tells us that “students commonly report to counselors that they “know” a certain grammar point but “forget” it during a test or an oral exercise” (1991 p.29) ignoring the fact that the reason for this might not necessarily be anxiety but could be due to the common distinction between competence and performance. Knowing a rule does not necessarily mean it can be used and the difficulties reported may be due to having to integrate the grammar rule into other areas of knowledge. Neither do we find much to help us in terms of the effects of anxiety. Although Horwitz admits that “research has not clearly demonstrated the effect of anxiety on language learning” (1991 p.29) she is unable to herself offer anything other than anecdotal evidence based on reports by students, counselors and individual teachers to support her claim that it has overwhelmingly negative consequences. For her the fact that “practitioners have had ample experience with anxious learners” (p. 30) seems to be enough.

However, Horwitz, more than any other researcher has brought discussion of language anxiety to the attention of practitioners, and as Oppenheim (1986) reminds us we should not expect too much from attitude surveys since they are not clinical measures and are not designed to give subtle responses.

It is therefore perhaps inevitable that survey responses are open to ambiguity and that final interpretations are, as in the case of Horwitz, backed up by personal experience or other subjective commentary. However, in order to delve more deeply into the repercussions of language anxiety on the individual, we need to probe in greater depth an individual's reasons for their affective state. This will be one of the aims of the coming phase of the research, and will inevitably take us beyond the survey.

### ***Facilitating vs. Debilitating anxiety***

Before making specific decisions about methodology, it is necessary to specify exactly what it is that we would like to investigate. The findings from chapters 4 and 5 provided potentially useful directions and it is appropriate to return again to the literature to research these areas further.

One interesting finding reported in chapter 4 was that test anxiety clearly existed but appeared to have a facilitating effect.

According to Gardner, Day and MacIntyre (1992 p.212) based on research “anxiety has been shown to have consistent deleterious effects on behaviour in the second language classroom”, the strong implication being that facilitating anxiety does not exist.

This emphasis on the debilitating aspects is reflected in the common instruments used to measure anxiety. Horwitz’s FLCAS largely ignores the facilitating effects of anxiety, as, in large part, do the surveys used by MacIntyre. An exception here is Kleinman’s (1977) instrument which was specifically designed to measure the facilitating and debilitating effects of anxiety on performance by phrasing items in two ways *Nervousness while using English helps me to do better* and *Nervousness while using English prevents me from doing well*. Despite being based on the well validated Alpert and Haber’s achievement and anxiety test (Alpert and Haber, 1960 in Kleinmann), it has rarely if ever been used in the field of language anxiety since Kleinmann’s study.

Since then, only a few researchers have examined the facilitating effects of anxiety. In a small scale qualitative study of language learning experiences, Roberge and Phillion (1999), identify two instances of anxiety one where the individual was motivated to try harder and the other which had a more detrimental effect on the learning process. However, there is no discussion as to why one incident provoked facilitating effects while the other did not.

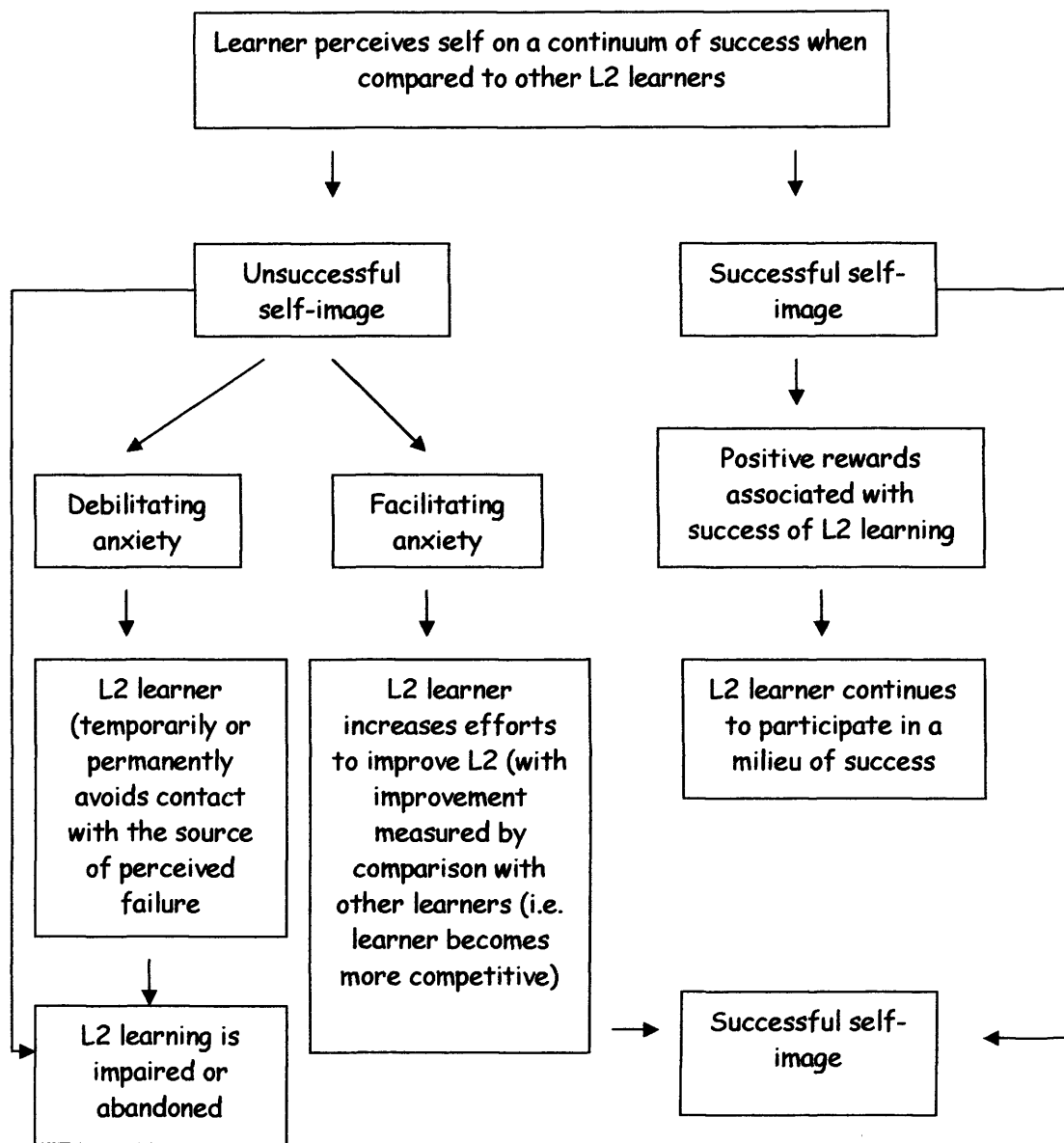
Competitiveness is a further related area which has attracted research and which which can have both positive and negative effects. Shrum and Glisan (1993) speak of the place of games in the language classroom

They note that "competition in language learning may result in feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, hostility, fear of failure, guilt and too strong a desire for approval" (p. 200).

Perhaps the most substantive research of this type was that conducted by Bailey (1983) who kept a diary of her own experiences of learning a foreign language and used this as a basis for her research.

In an analysis of her entries, she found relationship between competitiveness and anxiety seemed to result in either an unsuccessful or successful image of self (Bailey, 1983 p.93). At times, anxiety helped her in her efforts to learn, while at other times anxiety prevented her learning. In this model (Figure 6.1 below) competitiveness was key to image of self. If the learner perceived herself as doing badly in relation to others, this led to a poor image of self which could give rise to either facilitating or debilitating anxiety. If the anxiety was facilitating, this spurred her enough to try harder. If the anxiety was debilitating, it resulted in withdrawal from the learning situation.

FIGURE 6 .1 COMPETITIVENESS AND THE SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNER  
(Bailey, 1983 p.97)



This model which integrates both types of anxiety into a fuller model of second language acquisition is of particular interest to us since it involves the comparison with peers which emerged as significant in our own survey. However, while we (with others using the FLCAS measure) assumed that this type of comparison would always have a negative effect on the learning, Bailey allows for the comparison to lead to a healthy competitiveness which can actually aid language learning: the “stress for success” of Reid (1998) although as Oxford (1998) points out for such

competitiveness to have a positive effect depends both on the individual variables such as learning style preference as well as the overall cultural norms of the setting. This would once again point to the importance of examining this particular aspect of anxiety in context.

A further clue as to why some types of anxiety can be debilitating while other are not, may come from the work of researchers who distinguish between the cognitive (worry) and emotional (affective) aspects of anxiety (Deffenbacher, 1980 and Schwarzer, 1986 in Pappamihel, 2002). According to these writers, cognitive worry, characterized by anxiety and provoking negative thoughts is always debilitating since it takes up cognitive processing space and leads to the divided attention scenario described in Chapter 2. Emotional anxiety as characterized above by a wish to do better than peers, can however, be facilitating. More recently, Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) have also attempted to shift the focus of research from the negative aspects of anxiety to what they term **tension** which regardless of its causes and manifestations can have both euphoric and dysphoric effects.

The fact that “the jury is still out concerning the existence of helpful language anxiety” (Oxford, 1999b p.62) is perhaps illustrated by Young’s interviews with four foreign language specialists (Young, 1992). Of the four interviewed, one expert, Rardin, stated that facilitating anxiety is at work all the time and we only pay special attention to anxiety when it becomes debilitating, two specialists conceded that a certain tension might be helpful but refused to term this tension anxiety while Krashen asserted that there can be no such thing as helpful anxiety since anxiety during successful language learning must necessarily be zero.

### ***Trait vs. State Anxiety***

A further distinction of importance which further research needs to address is that of **trait** versus **state** anxiety. **Trait** anxiety is an enduring characteristic of an individual which causes a general feeling of nervousness across contexts. Here anxiety is a more of a general personality characteristic that appears regardless of the situation individuals find themselves in. By contrast, **state** anxiety is a state of arousal due to environmental factors in existence at one particular time and refers to the here and now experience of anxiety as an emotional state. In terms of trait anxiety, if such anxiety is closely linked to personality factors, then the extent to which the teacher can alleviate it is questionable. In terms of state anxiety, there is a limit to the usefulness of finding out how students feel at a given point in time without relating

this to the wider context of the situation. More recently, therefore, there has been interest in **situation-specific anxiety** which aims to examine the specific forms of anxiety which occur repeatedly over time within a given situation (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991c; 1994). It is clearly this type of anxiety which is useful to us in looking at anxiety within the classroom setting.

## ***What Causes Language Anxiety?***

If language anxiety exists, it would clearly be useful to know why it does. In an attempt to discover things which are of practical use to teachers in the classroom, it is helpful to turn to the literature on causes of language anxiety. Here we find a great many theories but little in the way of empirical research.

### **1. Language anxiety is caused by negative thoughts**

MacIntyre and Noels (1996) found that students with high levels of anxiety underestimate their ability in the foreign language. According to Pappamihel (2002) this is because negative and self-deprecating thoughts typical of those found in our survey *I keep thinking other students are better at the foreign language than I am* are a contributory factor to language anxiety. Such thoughts compete with cognitive processing space, meaning students do not have the capacity to concentrate on the task at hand.

At a more general level, Pappamihel finds that such self-deprecating and self-focused thoughts students engage also in, interfere with those students' self-efficacy. According to her "negative thoughts adversely affect a student's ability to take advantage of learning opportunities, affecting student's ability to see themselves as successful learners" (p. 330) Thus, according to theories of self-efficacy, learners would view the language learning task as a threat to be avoided rather than a challenge to be mastered (Bandura, 1986) and rather than viewing failure as a result of insufficient effort or learning would view it as a result of a personal deficiency, focusing on obstacles encountered and all manner of adverse outcomes.

However, while intuitively it makes sense that negative thinking could have this type of causal effect, in our own investigation it is useful to step back even further to see what may cause this pattern of thinking behaviour.



## 2. Language anxiety arises out of previous negative experiences

According to some writers (Aida, 1994), language anxiety is due to previous bad encounters of language learning, but again we find little in the way of empirical research to back up this statement. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994 p.2), language anxiety “is *presumed* (my italics) to develop out of several negative experiences”.

MacIntyre and Gardner suggest that language anxiety is a “learned emotional response” which develops as a result of these repeated negative experiences.

At the earliest stages, the language learner may experience a form of state anxiety, a transient apprehensive experience. After repeated occurrences of state anxiety, the student will come to reliably associate anxiety with performance in the second language. Once it has developed, language anxiety can have a pervasive impact on the performance of language students.  
“(Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.6)

They posit that early on in the language learning process, measures of language anxiety are not very meaningful because “negative experiences have not produced the negative affect or expectations of failure that typify anxiety.” (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993 p.6) It is only after several negative experiences that a correlation between anxiety and performance is noted. In an attempt to ground this theory in research, they refer to a study carried out with beginner, intermediate and advanced level students before and after an intensive summer course which appear to show that the beginners suffer the least language anxiety and the advanced level the most (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993). Further support for their theory comes from a study by Chapelle and Roberts (1986) who found that the correlation between English class anxiety and TOEFL scores at the beginning of a semester was not significant; however by the end of the semester the correlation had increased to a significant level. However, no mention is made of Gardner’s own early work (Desrochers and Gardner, 1981) which showed that language anxiety diminished over time for students learning French.

Furthermore, the findings of the researchers are based on the view that prior experience is limited to prior experience of only language learning rather than other subjects. Other writers claim that prior experience in other formal learning situations, for example when one has been ridiculed by a teacher in a totally different school context, can contribute to language anxiety in an academic setting. Indeed

some go even further, placing the family firmly at the root of anxiety based difficulties.

After reviewing the literature, Ehrman (1999) quoting Cohler suggests that lasting effects from one's family of origin can bring about anxiety about competitiveness and the feelings of others towards self while Heron (1989) (in Arnold 1999 p.9) talks of *archaic anxiety* which is "repressed distress of the past – the personal hurt, particularly of childhood, that has been denied so that the individual can survive emotionally" In this view unhealed past wounds have an effect on present situations with potentially damaging results.

Whether or not we agree that we need to go back to individual childhoods to look at the roots of anxiety, if, indeed anxiety can arise out of previous negative experiences, one has to question the ethics of inducing anxiety in language learning situations for the purposes of experimentation, by using video cameras (MacIntyre and Gardner 1994), coupled with anxiety provoking messages (Gardner, Day and MacIntyre 1992) and treating the subjects in an unfriendly manner (Steinberg and Horwitz 1986).

However, the comment made by the student of German who mentioned a previous negative encounter reported in the previous chapter does indicate that this area is worthy of study and the prior history of anxious learners will be one of our areas of focus in the chapters which follow.

### **3. Anxiety is heightened when the situation contains an element of evaluation.**

According to McCroskey and Daly (1984) whose work has been in the field of communication apprehension in general, rather than language anxiety in particular, the greater the perceived degree of evaluation, the greater the anxiety. In the language classroom, evaluation is more or less constant. Every time a pupil opens their mouth, their speech in terms of either content or correctness is subject to evaluation by the only person in the classroom who speaks the language fluently i.e. the teacher. If an individual is actually being tested, then we might expect the anxiety to be greater still. However, few studies have focused on this with specific reference to language anxiety, with the exception of Kitano (2001) who found that fear of negative evaluation (FONE) was a cause of language anxiety.

#### 4. Anxiety is greater in novel situations.

According to McCroskey and Daly (1984), in the context of communication apprehension, the less familiar the situation, the greater the anxiety. If such a finding is generalisable to the classroom, there are clear implications for choice of methodology within language learning. In many classrooms observed as part of the LINGUA project, there was a constant quest to entertain, to make learning enjoyable and fun. Variety in terms of materials, task types and activities as advocated by the communicative approach to language teaching was felt to be an important aspect of this.

However, it may be that the variety of techniques actually serve to heighten language anxiety. The familiarity of old-fashioned language teaching textbooks are in sharp contrast to the unpredictable nature of the communicative materials of today. In a sense, of course all language use is novel and unpredictable and it is this ability to cope with new utterances in new situations that we are preparing our learners for. However, if unpredictability of task type is coupled with unpredictability of content and language, then we might reasonably expect higher levels of anxiety. As Horwitz, (1989 p. 62) notes:

“Difficulty speaking in class is probably the most frequently cited concern; students report that they feel reasonably comfortable participating in structured language activities or delivering prepared speeches but tend to freeze when required to speak spontaneously.”

#### 5. Ambiguity.

The more ambiguous a situation, the more anxious individuals are likely to be. (Daly 1991; McCroskey and Daly, 1984). Second language learning itself is fraught with ambiguity about meanings, referents and pronunciation which is in itself enough to raise anxiety levels (Oxford, 1999b). Within class, if a student is unsure exactly what s/he is being judged on, the greater the level of anxiety. In this regard, we might expect that teacher expectations with regard to fluency as opposed to accuracy and the extent to which these are made explicit might have a bearing on the level of anxiety experienced.

## 6. Conspicuousness.

Feelings of conspicuousness have long been associated with other anxieties including communication apprehension (Daly 1991, McCroskey 1984). The more conspicuous a person feels, the more likely he or she is to experience anxiety. Termed spotlighting by Young (1990), MacIntyre et al. (1998) notes that the single most important source of language anxiety appears to be the fear of speaking in front of other people, a finding echoed by Price (1991) who asked a group of anxious students what made them most anxious in their foreign language class. All 10 subjects answered that having to speak a foreign language in front of other students resulted in the most anxiety. Crandall (1999) in advocating a cooperative learning approach says that one thing most likely to reduce anxiety is giving learners the opportunity to rehearse their contributions with peers before speaking out in front of the class – a strong argument for the use of group and pair work although such group work must be done with “an eye to the affective safety of all the participants” (Pappamihel, 2002 p.6).

However, the assumption made by researchers is that it is the very act of being spotlighted which brings on feelings of worry, although this worry may be heightened by a poor self-image and feelings of inadequacy. The worry itself is concerned with not getting the question right or “making a fool of oneself.” This ignores the fact that in some cultures and possibly at some ages, it is not accepted for talented students to stand out from their peers. Tsui (1985) makes the point that such behaviour would break the cultural taboo of outperforming peers, a finding echoed by Walker (1997) in a review of children in Hong Kong. This raises the question of whether similar social taboos may be at work in the context of adolescent learners in the UK.

While limited research does exist to show that being “spotlighted” is more anxiety provoking than doing pair work, the relative potential of pair as opposed to small group work has so far not been examined, nor has the reasons why spotlighting is so disliked by the majority of learners.

## 7. Unrealistic beliefs

Unrealistic beliefs about what is achievable in terms of language learning is quoted by Oxford (1999b) as a contributory cause of language anxiety as in the case of the students she cites who think they can speak a language fluently without an accent after two years of studying for an hour a day. This aspect has only been investigated

with adult learners in North America and it is doubtful whether the subjects in our upcoming study would hold similar beliefs.

### ***The Effect of the Teacher***

So far, we have tended to look at causes of anxiety from the point of view of the learner. Dornyei (2001b) describes a survey of English as a Foreign Language Teachers into motivation in the classroom. Teachers surveyed claimed it was their own behaviour which was the single most motivational tool in the classroom with classroom atmosphere second in importance. Furthermore, it would seem obvious that the teacher has the potential to affect this classroom atmosphere both positively and negatively. While other variables mentioned in chapters 2 such as aptitude and intelligence are to a large extent fixed cognitive attributes of the learner, it seems likely that affective variables such as motivation and anxiety can be changed and shaped through teacher intervention in the learning process. Humanistic writers have long acknowledged the importance of affect. Rogers (1983) argues that teaching needs to engage the whole person and that learners are not only physical, cognitive beings but rather emotional beings. Moskowitz (1978) advocates relaxation exercises to foster a stress-free environment. Lozanov (1978) suggests that the teacher goes to extreme lengths such as providing easy chairs and baroque music in order to provide for a non-threatening atmosphere in the class in order to reduce anxiety. Stevick (1980), a long-time, strong advocate of humanistic methods echoes the view of the importance of matching teaching approach to student needs in the affective domain. Teachers who adopt a student-centered approach and follow principles of humanistic teaching or ascribe to the many methodologies which stress the importance of the affective domain are, we are told, likely to minimize anxiety within their classes (Oxford, 1999b, Krashen 1988, Stevick 1999).

On the other hand, insensitive teachers following dubious practices such as that described by Young (1999) of the teacher who forced a young student to read ten lines of text even though it was apparent that the student was getting increasingly nervous, will be likely to exacerbate anxiety.

Indeed, error correction appears to be of particular importance in this regard. Insensitive methods termed “harsh, embarrassing error correction” by Young 1991 are clearly an issue although Turula (2002 p.29) maintains that any type of explicit error correction will be viewed by anxious students as judgmental and will carry the

message “You are inadequate” The importance of sensitive error correction is an issue for both researchers (Terrell 1985, Young 1991) as well as classroom practitioners as evidenced by the following extract from online advice to teachers

“I have found that error correction can be a big cause of anxiety. Correcting errors can cause further errors by flustering the student. My students frequently report periods of despair after continuous error correction.”  
(Gross)

Mason (2003) quotes a study of learner diaries by Ellis and Rathbone who discovered that some learners found any questions on the part of the teacher threatening, “and claimed to freeze up when interrogated.” The fact that the questioning was construed as an interrogation is obviously an issue.

Teachers’ beliefs about their roles are also felt to play a part here. Some teachers feel that not only is it their duty to correct mistakes but that they should persevere until the student manages to get it right, while many teachers really do believe that they should be directive and authoritarian. (Oxford, 1999b). Sometimes, this role is so deeply ingrained within the socio-cultural context that teachers maybe judgemental without even realizing it (Turula, 2002).

A first step in overcoming these problems is for teachers to recognise the existence of language anxiety and their own ability to minimize it. Evidence suggests that many teachers view students’ inability to speak as the result of a lack of motivation or aptitude, rather than because they are anxious.

Where teachers do recognise the existence of anxiety as Horwitz and Young (1991) point out, they generally wish to know which classroom practices cause it. Surprisingly little concrete advice is offered to teachers in this area unless it is such as the tips supplied by Price which are phrased somewhat tentatively. Price says that those instructors who always criticize students’ pronunciation might make students anxious. She suggests that they could reduce students’ anxiety by encouraging them to make mistakes in the class. Price (1991) also advises that instructors should make it clear that the classroom is a place for learning and communication and that mistakes are a natural part of this learning process.

The issue of Wait Time – the period of silence which follows a teacher question - may also be of relevance here. Although increasing Wait Time has a number of positive benefits in terms of increasing correctness of responses (Budd-Rowe, 1974), it may be

that waiting for too long could cause anxiety in students. Conversely, it may be that increasing Wait Time would, as Mary Bud-Rowe found decrease the frequency of non-response or “I don’t know” response in anxious learners.

While teachers may be in a position to change the amount of time they wait specifically and the way they interact with learners in general, a further teacher rooted source of anxiety may be less subject to modification by teachers. Based on her own research, Oxford (1999a) refers to the “style war” which may be present when there is a mismatch between the style of a particular language learner and the style of a particular teacher. Her sample consisted of 300 – 350 adult learners who were asked to focus on teacher / student style conflicts in written narratives they were required to make. The assignment title was *“Have you ever had a conflict of style with a teacher? If so, describe your teacher, tell what happened, and explain what you felt in the situation. If not, select a situation in which you were compatible with a teacher, then describe the teacher, tell what happened and explain what you felt in the situation.”* According to Oxford, most students identified style conflicts although a cynical reader might feel that the fact that “most students were involved in some way with languages, ...all had had some exposure to information on styles” (Oxford, 1999a p.221) could have biased the responses.

A further teacher-centred cause of anxiety could be favouritism, a practice frowned on by educationalists but one which nevertheless exists. Shavelson and Stern (1981) (quoted in Turula 2002 p.30) found that teachers tend to have their favourite students and observed that teacher favouritism is manifested in classroom mainly by inconsistent error correction and unfair distribution of turns. Students will inevitably be aware of this and the fact that the best liked students often have their errors disregarded is likely to raise anxiety levels among those less favoured.

### ***The Educational Context***

Macaro (1997) makes the point that any research into second language acquisition cannot take place in a vacuum. It needs to ensure that “political decisions and socio-cultural influences are recognized as having a real effect on teaching and learning.” (Macaro, 1997 p.1) The educational framework within which British teachers operate is particularly important since “it is concerned much more with teaching and learning rather than syllabus content.” (ibid. p.4). Macaro further points out that directives regarding modern foreign language teaching are much more prescriptive than is currently the case for any other school subject. This has resulted in quite a

rigid methodological framework for teaching modern foreign languages in our secondary schools. The implications of this and in particular the “tenet of L2 exclusivity” (Macaro, 1997 p.38) is discussed below

### ***The Effect of the Classroom***

In a sense it is difficult to isolate the potential causes of anxiety as related to the teacher or the learner without considering the classroom context. As Macaro (1997) points out the foreign language learning classroom is a strange place with a number of characteristics, some of which are bound to exacerbate anxiety. Recent research in the field has begun to look at the effects of specific classroom-related variables (Hinton, 1996; Holthouse, 1996 in Robinson, 1998) and grouping factors (Oxford and Shearin, 1994) on motivation and anxiety. Rardin et al. (1988) mention that anxiety may be mitigated if learners engage in tasks which promote community building. When working together in non-stressful, pleasant activities, students are able to forget their uneasiness, discomfort and anxiety.

Here the effect of the teacher is clearly critical. The Hay McBer report ( DfEE 2000) report found that effective teachers were able to influence the classroom environment to provide both security where pupils are “emotionally supported in the classroom, so that .....(they).....are willing to try new things and learn from mistakes” as well as safety where pupils can be free from “fear-arousing factors” (DfEE, 2000 p.28).

It is clearly not easy to provide for both. Unengaging language activities such as that below where learners were made to discuss one phrase for fifteen minutes led to the comment *“I mean pretty much, if you’re, if you have a pulse, you’re not going to be challenged in those classes”* (Kelly, Hall and Davis, 1995 in Young 1999). The message here seems to be that the teacher needs to achieve a balance between behaviours that will decrease anxiety while including tasks which require a certain amount of tension within students.

Research focused on achieving such a balance is in the minority with most writers making reference to the negative effects of anxiety. Jackson (2002) highlights the anxiety when speaking in large classes and the preference for small groups expressed by students in Hong Kong. Feelings of being isolated in class have also been blamed for causing anxiety. If a learner is supported by close friends in the learning task, he or she is less like to be worried. The arrangement of desks in a classroom can further contribute to isolation. If students do not face one another, or if someone has a place



that doesn't allow eye contact with the teacher and fellow students, feelings of not belonging will grow (Turula, 2002).

The teenage years may be particularly important in this regard. Barton (2002) talks of the reluctance of adolescents and boys in particular "to speak publicly in a foreign language". (p.276). She attributes this to the peer pressures operating on them. Bracken and Crain (1994 in Pappamihel, 2002) write that adolescence is a time for fluctuating interpersonal relationships, with peers becoming more important as teachers become less so. Bourne (1998) quotes research to show that the values of the peer group with whom the adolescent spends the most time are a stronger factor in the student's level of academic success than the values, attitudes, and all the support provided by the family. Indeed Pappamihel talks of a separate peer anxiety within the language classroom where lack of approval from peers and the feeling of not being a group member will diminish sense of self-worth and lead to anxiety. Partial evidence that this might be the case could be seen in our exploratory study.

### ***The Effect of Communicative Methodology***

The effect of communicative methodologies in the class has not been fully explored in the research focusing on language anxiety. However, if as indicated, it is speaking that has the potential to create the highest levels of anxiety, then current methodologies which emphasize this skill would inevitably seem to contribute to such anxiety.

Specific practices in communicative methodology would also seem to be implicated in raising anxiety levels. One strong principle behind the communicative approach in its UK variant is that the use of the target language should be maximized and hence, the use of the mother tongue minimized (Pachler and Field, 2002).

According to Cook (2001) an anti-L1 attitude has been a recurrent element in much mainstream twentieth century teaching methodology. This is partly reflected in the National Curriculum which tells teachers that the target language should be the "normal", "natural" (DES, 1990) or "principal" means (DES 1991) of communication in the modern foreign language classroom. According to Dickson (1996 p.3) the assumption here is that target language use will promote acquisition, "and that the use of the mother tongue (L1) undermines this process by diverting

attention from the object of the pupils' learning." This ignores the effect of direct instruction and which language this should be in. It is obvious that the use of the target language will be anxiety provoking if students don't understand what is being taught. However, Giota (1995) studying the teaching of English in Sweden found that using more of the target language in class had positive effects for the more able students but negative effects on the weaker students. Nevertheless, many British educators focus on the negative aspects of using the mother tongue. Macaro's research investigates "teachers' instances of *recourse* (my italics) to L1 during a lesson" (Macaro, p.207), thus implying that the use of the mother tongue is not used in a purposive way. This pressure on teachers to keep up communication in the target language tips the balance in favour of quantity rather than quality of input and creates feelings of guilt when teachers do "have recourse to" the mother tongue.

Pressure is also present for the pupils to speak in the target language. The extent of this can be seen by the fact that "the National Curriculum states explicitly that 'when a spoken or written response is expected [by a pupil], it should be in the target language' (Dickson, 1996 p.1). Whether teachers actually follow such prescriptions is unclear. According to Cook, teachers frequently do resort to the L1 despite their best intentions and then feel guilty for straying from the target language path. In a review of the teaching of modern foreign languages in 1997, OFSTED commented that the requirement to use the target language required a major methodological shift for some teachers. (OFSTED, 1997). It should also be realized that the use of the L2 also requires a "major adjustment in attitudes" on the part of pupils in that they should respond to the target language as the language of instruction. While the recent trend arguing for a place for the mother tongue (Brown, 2000; Grenfell, 2000) is to be welcomed, communicative methodology still does not emphasize an appropriate balance.

Rote learning is another technique which has found disfavour in communicative times. However, it is interesting that pupils surveyed said that learning things by heart was their preferred strategy in helping them to learn a language (see page 73). It may be that the pendulum has swung too far and that old techniques might be more efficient and less anxiety provoking.

A further clue to the emergence of language anxiety can also be seen from the materials associated with the communicative method. In an attempt to provide interest and variety, activities in the classroom may be quite unpredictable and the

range of tasks in a typical course book can be quite broad. Indeed, in some of the classes we observed, there was no one course as such, the main materials consisting of teacher produced worksheets. According to Miyuki (2000), in the context of Japan, a well-structured program is of supreme importance in reducing anxiety. Students need to know what is expected of them at all times. Some sort of routine is helpful in this. Communicative methodology is clearly not as routinised as more traditional methods.

### ***Feelings of Loss of Control***

Feelings of being out of control and not being able to effect what is happening in the classroom is another potential source of anxiety for students. Such feeling of loss of control are natural in a language classroom where students are asked to operate in a state of near complete linguistic dependence on the teacher (Macaro, 1977) and may increase further when teachers' explanations are unclear or unsatisfactory (Turula, 2002). Further causes are when individuals have no control over their turns to speak in class, the worst case scenario being where other students take over one's turn – turn stealing as opposed to turn taking (Turula, 2002).

Finally the feeling of loss of control may be caused by a domineering, controlling teacher who leaves students feeling that they have no influence over what is going on in the classroom and that their voices do not matter.

### ***Recognising Language Anxiety***

As stated above, a first step in dealing with language anxiety is for teachers to recognise its existence. Hardly surprisingly, anxious learners do not communicate as often as learners who do not suffer from anxiety. Unfortunately, teachers often put this lack of communication down to insufficient motivation or aptitude rather than anxiety. Since language anxiety has been shown to be correlated with low grades then this is partly understandable.

If we do look at the specific symptoms of language anxiety, then these are essentially the same as for any other anxiety and include subjective feelings, psycho-physiological responses as well as behavioural symptoms. (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1991).

The psycho-physiological responses include sweaty palms, headaches and muscle tension (Oxford, 1999b) and with the possible exception of trembling do not really

help us with the problem of identification. Subjective feelings reported in a study of adult learners include things such as feelings of unease and as they are internal, are also not visible to the teacher.

Fortunately, some observable behaviours have been associated with anxiety although here again we need to also turn to the work on more general forms of communication apprehension.

McCroskey (1984) signals two behaviour patterns typical of sufferers: communication avoidance and communication withdrawal. In terms of communication avoidance, learners will try to avoid answering questions by adopting strategies such as sitting at the back of the room (Horwitz 1991), or postponing homework (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1991). Again, there are some indications from our exploratory study that such behaviours are at play in UK language classrooms. Communication withdrawal is more drastic and involves skipping classes or at worst, withdrawing from language learning altogether. This is clearly not an option in our own school context.

## **Conclusion**

While a great deal is written about language anxiety and awareness of the area is increasing among educationalists, it should be noted that all but one of the studies referred to above were carried out with adults. Furthermore, many of the findings were based on case studies of less than a dozen subjects, while other advice given to teachers was of the common sense type based on personal anecdotes. However this second literature review, coupled with findings from our own survey has highlighted a number of promising areas for the next phase of the research. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 8**

What can be done to cure anxiety?

"After a pilot programme in the summer term, massage is now a regular part of classes in the school. One girl told BBC Look North: "I like it because after lunch we have to massage and it calms us down."

BBC i-news UK edition. Wednesday, 26 November, 2003

### **THE RESULTS OF THE CASE STUDY**

#### ***Introduction***

In this chapter, the results of the case study are reported. The findings are discussed and a number of common trends identified. However, it is important to note that data analysis during this phase of the research was ongoing throughout the academic year with one phase feeding into another. On occasions, findings which came up later in the year shed light on earlier investigations and longitudinal comparisons were made. Therefore, in this chapter, the analysis will not be reported in a chronological order. Rather we will revisit the research questions drawn up for this part of the research in order to enable a discussion of how different phases of the research contributed to an understanding of these. Comparisons across time and methods are discussed where appropriate. In Chapter 9, overall findings of the two phases of the research will be discussed.

#### ***The Teacher's Perspective***

##### **Construct Analysis: Examining Teacher's Perceptions of the Class**

A personal construct analysis was carried out to see whether anxiety was a key construct for the teacher when describing the children in her class.

The grid of results relating to personal constructs previously mentioned in Chapter 7 was first of all drawn up.

**Table 8.1** Grid of results relating to personal constructs (repeated)

	DESCRIPTOR OF PAIR	DESCRIPTOR OF SINGLETON
Sharon, Robert, Nigel	Quiet	Forthcoming
Peter, Ann, Martin	Good linguists	Weaker in language
Louise, Robert, Alison	Weak at written work	Natural ability
Mary, Anna, Katiey	Happy to speak	Lacking in confidence
Robert D, Charlotte,	Extrovert, sociable	Loner
Vicky P. Rachel, Jonathan	Lacking in confidence in French	Confident
Anthony, Sharon, Nadia	Find French difficult	Good at French
Martin, Anna, Louise	Try hard	Has other interests (boys)
Katie, Robert, Marrisona	Not confident	Will always have a go at answering
Charlotte, Anna, Nigel	Nice characters	Difficult to get to know
Louise, Nadia, Mary	Can't be bothered	Hard working

The ways in which the teacher viewed her class were then categorized according to achievement, attitude, personality and anxiety as follows:

**Table 8.2** Constructs demonstrating the way in which the teacher viewed the class

ACHIEVEMENT / APTITUDE RELATED CONSTRUCTS	
Good linguist	Weaker at languages
Natural ability	Weak at written work
Finds French difficult	Good at French
ATTITUDE RELATED CONSTRUCTS	
Tries hard	Has other interests
Hard working	Can't be bothered
PERSONALITY BASED CONSTRUCTS	
Extrovert, sociable, has other interests (boys)	Loner
Nice character	Difficult to get to know
ANXIETY RELATED CONSTRUCTS	
Happy to speak	Lacking in confidence
Forthcoming	Quiet
Will always have a go at answering	Not confident

### **Commentary**

Because the teacher was at the time unaware of the researcher's area of interest and because the interviewer played no part in suggesting the actual nature of the constructs, these findings can be seen to represent a personal reflection of how this teacher views the children within her class. For her, anxiety related constructs were clearly one factor in the way she perceived the individual students.

The vocabulary through which the teacher described the ways in which she saw the students was also revealing. She clearly recognized that more general language aptitude played a part in success in French language learning as evidenced by references to generic capabilities such as "*natural ability*" "*good at languages*" although she was unwilling to concede that the opposite might be children who did not possess this innate quality. Instead the opposite end of the construct for natural ability was "*weak at written work*."

Her description of the opposite of a student who was "*lacking in confidence*" as "*always willing to have a go*" would seem to indicate that she viewed risk taking as a characteristic of the confident language learner. Indeed, of particular interest was the fact that the opposites of constructs were not necessarily semantic opposites and represented contrasts rather than dictionary opposites. This was especially revealing in terms of the anxiety related constructs. For example the opposite of "*happy to speak*" was "*lacking in confidence*" and "*will always have a go at speaking*" was "*not confident*". This would seem to indicate that for her lack of confidence or anxiety was manifested by not participating in class.

The constructs which emerged are also significant. Of the 10 pairs elicited during this construct elicitation phase, the fact that three were related to anxiety shows that the teacher did indeed view language anxiety as a key variable when describing children in her class.

### **Teacher Ratings of Class**

Results from the rating of the classes by the teacher also bear out this view. They show that the teacher viewed language anxiety as distinct from general language anxiety with different scores assigned in 85% of cases. This finding was confirmed by the fact that there was no significant correlation between the general anxiety

score and language anxiety score. In the 85% of cases where there was a different score, the language anxiety score was higher than the general anxiety score in all but two cases, indicating that the teacher may have felt anxiety was higher in the foreign language classroom.

### **Teacher vs. Student Ratings of Anxiety**

While the construct elicitation exercise showed that the teacher recognized the existence and importance of anxiety within a class, a comparison of teacher and student ratings of anxiety indicates that she is also able to accurately recognize which individuals are suffering from anxiety, as evidenced by the fact that there was a correlation of .508 ( $p < 0.01$ ) between her assessment of anxiety and that of the students' self-assessment. Further indication of her ability to recognise anxious students can be seen from the fact that the student who rated herself as highest on the anxiety scale was also rated as highest by the teacher. However, there was one mismatch: that of a boy who rated himself as highly anxious who was not perceived as such by the teacher. This individual was later interviewed to discover possible causes for this.

### **Teacher Interviews**

While the ranking and personal construct exercise had indicated that the teacher recognized the existence of language anxiety, discussions with her revealed that her views on the subject were not clear cut. For example, although she felt that language anxiety always hindered an individual's ability to communicate orally, she pointed out that even students with high proficiency in the foreign language may suffer high degrees of anxiety, citing the example of one of the most able students in Set 1 who was also the shyest.

She claimed that anxiety was sufficiently unimportant for her not to take it into specific consideration when teaching. However, she did frequently speak of confidence building, particularly in the case of Set 3. She regretted the fact that the exam was so written-based because it damaged the confidence of students who were nevertheless able to communicate in the language. She spoke of one student *"whose literacy is poor....he does answer, he does put his hand up .....kids like that can achieve success and it builds their confidence."* She spoke of the importance of using French at a level that students in this set could understand to further increase levels



of self-efficacy. *"You have to make them feel like they can do it."*

In the case of Set 1, she said she felt she should be *"pushing the brighter ones more"*. At the beginning of the year, she felt that *"some of them they wouldn't put their hands up; they wouldn't join in"*. She said that she tried to make sure that all the students actually participated when she was doing question and answer elicitation work. She tried to remember who hadn't answered and call on them by name. In speaking of Set 2, she commented *"It's usually the lads that don't answer"*, a finding not borne out by observations. When asked how she dealt with the issue of anxiety, she seemed to equate it with levels of participation and *"make them have a go even if they don't feel like it."* She was aware of the fact that students *"skip ahead to prepare"* if she did exercises round the class, while others *"tune out"*. The avoidance of eye contact as a strategy not to participate was noted by the teacher, who made a point of calling on students if she thought they were trying to avoid answering.

At this early stage of the investigation therefore the teacher's main preoccupation was with ensuring all learners' full involvement in the lesson. Whether or not they were anxious held little importance for her. Her feeling was that it was compulsory to participate in class, and the fact some students would nevertheless try to not take part in class activities should be countered.

However, there appeared to be a change in the teacher's views on language anxiety as the year progressed. She increasingly mentioned anxious individuals and noted their feelings. There was evidence of sensitivity to the fact that some students might not be participating orally not because of laziness or broader-based reluctance but because of genuine anxiety. Referring to an incident, where the teacher had asked a question of a student and received only a one-word whisper in response, she said that she decided not to ask her again so as not to *"put her on the spot cos I know she gets worried."* It seems likely that this increased awareness of the existence of the effects of anxiety may have been a result of the teacher's familiarization with the subject of the research.

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

Does the teacher recognize the existence of language anxiety?

- Results of the construct elicitation exercise show that anxiety is a key construct in the way that the teacher views the individuals in her class
- The fact that she recognizes language anxiety as distinct from more general shyness can be seen from the fact that she assigned separate scores on the two scales in 85% of the cases and that there was no significant correlation between the two scales.

**RESEARCH QUESTION:**

Can the teacher recognize anxious individuals in her class?

- She is reliably able to identify such individuals as evidenced by the correlation between teacher assessment of anxious individuals and pupils' own self-assessment of anxiety levels
- However, she pays limited account of anxiety levels when teaching her classes. There is some evidence that her sensitivity to anxious individuals increases as the year progresses.

## ***Existence of Language Anxiety***

Although the survey described in Chapter 4 did clearly demonstrates the presence of language anxiety, a prerequisite to any further investigation is to establish the existence of language anxiety within this particular population. In this respect, the frequencies compiled in Part A of the student questionnaire revealed similar findings

to the larger survey described in Chapter 4 with 44% agreeing that they did not feel sure of themselves when speaking a foreign language in the classroom and 48% agreeing that they could get so nervous in class that they forget things they know (see Appendix 7.3). 35% felt embarrassed speaking French in the classroom, while even more (40%) felt self-conscious speaking the language. 63% of pupils claimed to have felt embarrassed speaking the language at some time in the past.

The existence of anxiety was confirmed through the individual interviews where both anxious and non-anxious individuals were interviewed. All but two of the individuals identified as highly anxious stated that their anxiety was heightened in the French classroom. One individual who did not agree put her nervousness and shyness down to her personality. She said she did not find French difficult and for her, French was the same as any other subject. She did concede that people commented on the fact that she did not talk a lot. *My mum's always on at me to speak more.*

The other individual (also female) claimed to be happy as she was.

*I just don't like to speak*

And is that different for French? Do you say anything in other subjects?

*No, I don't say anything in any of the other subjects*

Why is that?

*I don't know. I'm just quiet. I'm like that in all subjects.*

So it's just the same really.

*Yeah, it's just the same. I sit in my own corner.*

(RESPONDENT F)

This individual however, was the exception. All other highly anxious learners felt that French was very different to other subjects as evidenced by the extracts over:

EXTRACT 1 (RESPONDENT A)

Do you feel different speaking French than speaking in your English lesson, say?

*Yeah, I feel embarrassed speaking French cause if you get it wrong....everyone's looking at you*

Oh, are they? And is that different to if you get a wrong answer in another subject say?

*Yeah. Kind of different. In English at least I know I'm saying the right words, the ....(inaudible) but in French, I don't know*

EXTRACT 2 ( RESPONDENT D)

On your form you say that you sometimes feel embarrassed speaking French, then?

*Yeah*

Why's that?

*It's French. I don't mind like any other lessons because English I know what I'm saying but because it's a different language you don't know really know what you're saying all the time so you might say something you don't really mean and the accent and all*

Even non anxious individuals felt that the French classroom was different

*In other subjects it's not as embarrassing because you understand the word being as like it's all in English. In French, if you don't understand the words, it's harder to understand what you've got to do. (INFORMANT J non-anxious)*

The structure of a French lesson could also be partly to blame in this regard. A particularly clear illustration of what was meant was provided by the following exchange:

*You can't ever really relax in French*

You mean you don't feel relaxed when you're speaking French?

*No, it's just that there's never time for just listening.*

What about when you do listening comprehension?

*No.....like in history.... You know there's a time and you just get to listen to the teacher. You know you're not going to get asked. You can get asked all the time in French Even when you're writing like in the test....she can ask you something.*

(RESPONDENT T)

This underlines the special nature of language learning as distinct from any other school subject.

These results together with the results of the survey indicate that language anxiety does exist for a significant proportion of the sample and that the phenomenon is worthy of further investigation with this particular sample.

**RESEARCH AREA:****Existence of Language Anxiety**

- The survey found that language anxiety exists within the population studied in similar proportions to those found in the first larger survey. This finding was confirmed through the individual student interviews where the anxiety experienced was very specific to the French language classroom.

***Characteristics of the Anxious Learner*****Anxiety and Language Proficiency**

Literature reviews of previous chapters have identified somewhat uncertain results with regard to the relationship between anxiety levels and achievement in the foreign language. It has been speculated that in part this is due to the measures used to assess achievement. Achievement for the purposes of this study was measured in two ways: self-assessment of proficiency and teacher assessment.

Results of the teacher ratings showed a correlation between ability in French and levels of anxiety. Spoken ability in the language was negatively correlated with language anxiety ( $r = -.636^{**}$ ) showing that spoken ability was highest among those with low anxiety levels. More surprisingly, there was also a negative correlation between anxiety and written ability in French ( $r = -.548^{**}$ ).

Similar, though weaker, correlations were found between students' self-assessment of anxiety and their ability level in the language.

**Table 8.3** Pearson correlations of self and teacher assessment with written and spoken ability

	WRITTEN ABILITY	SPOKEN ABILITY
Self-assessment	-.375**	-.331*
Teacher Assessment	-.548**	-.636**

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

It is therefore possible to conclude that, in the eyes of both teachers and students,

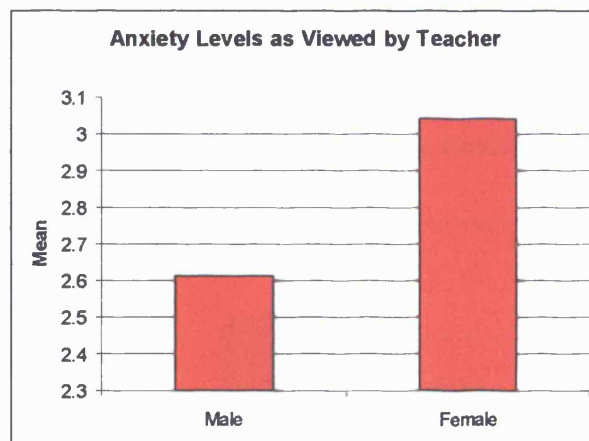
anxiety appears to be related to ability in both spoken and written work.

### Anxiety and Gender

In common with much of the literature in the field of individual variables and language anxiety, the literature on language anxiety and gender is inconclusive with a number of studies finding that girls tended to be more anxious than boys while other studies found no relationship.

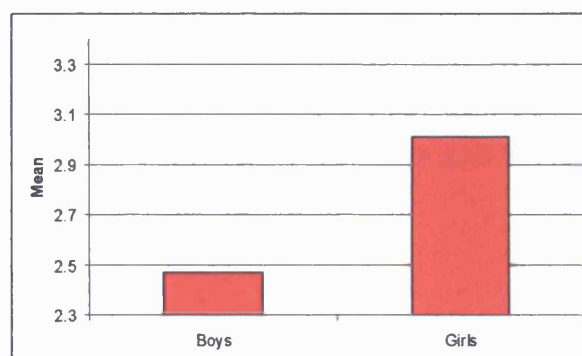
Our own study appears to indicate a difference in anxiety levels between boys and girls in both the eyes of the teacher and the students themselves. Teacher assessment of anxiety levels indicate that boys ( $\bar{X} = 2.778$ ) are considerably less anxious than girls ( $\bar{X} = 3.34$ ), a finding replicated by the students' own self-assessments.

**Figure 8.1.** Differences in language anxiety scores between boys and girls as viewed by the teacher



In common with the teacher's perceptions, girls felt themselves to be significantly more anxious than boys ( $r = .288^*$ ).

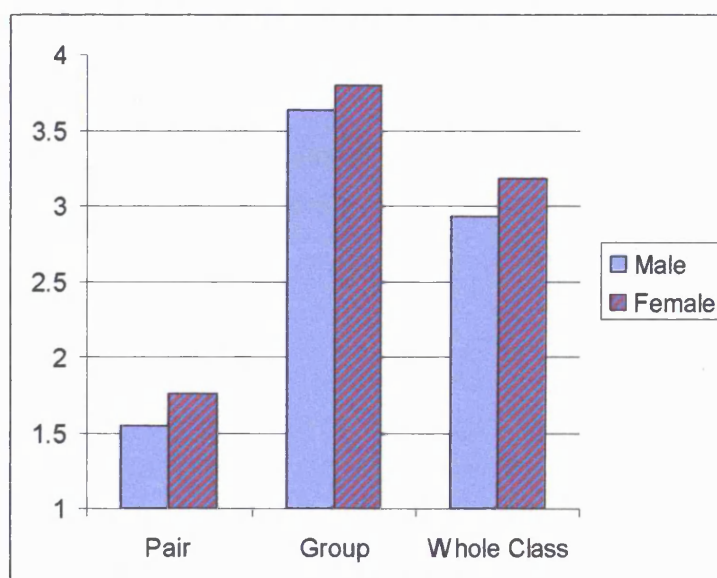
**Figure 8.2.** Differences in language anxiety scores between boys and girls according to self-assessment



The disparity between boys and girls emerged in other areas, for example, in respect of item B14 relating to the fear of making mistakes where girls were slightly more afraid (mean – 3.77 as opposed to 3.2).

Section B of the questionnaire further showed that girls were more anxious than boys in whole class, group and pair work situations as can be seen from the figure below.

**Figure 8.3** Anxiety Levels in Pair, Group and Whole Class Interactions for Boys and Girls



Further weight to this finding can be seen from the composition of those groups categorized as high (>3.5 on the composite anxiety score derived from section A of the student questionnaire) as well as those categorized as having low anxiety

(<2.5). Of the six learners with low anxiety, only one was a girl while of the seven characterized as having high anxiety, five were girls.

Gender differences were also evident in the behaviours learners engaged in. A greater percentage of boys than girls avoided answering questions and boys also claimed to volunteer answers to questions more than girls (see Appendix 7.3), a finding confirmed during observations.

### Anxiety and Set

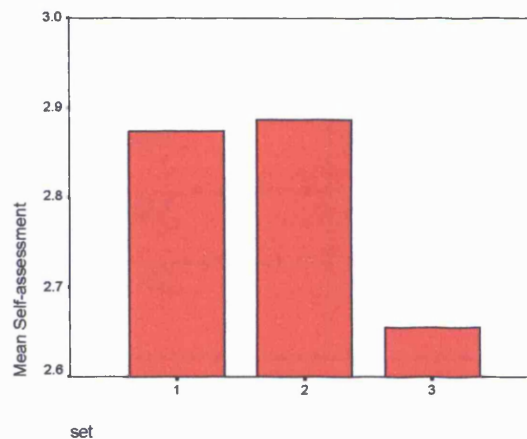
Teacher assessment showed some interesting differences in levels of foreign language anxiety according to set in the opinion of the teacher who viewed those in Set 1 as less anxious than those in Set 2 while those in Set 2 were less anxious than those in Set 3

**Table 8.4:** Differences in language anxiety scores as perceived by the teacher between the three sets

SET	MEAN	N	STD. DEVIATION
<b>1</b>	2.92	19	1.15
<b>2</b>	3.05	18	1.05
<b>3</b>	3.14	14	1.18
<b>Total</b>	3.03	51	1.11

However, this finding was not replicated by students' self-assessments. Indeed, students from Set 3 assessed themselves as the least anxious in this regard.



**Figure 8.4** Self-assessment of anxiety levels by set

There was little difference between anxiety levels in pair and whole class interactions between sets, although Set 1 children were slightly more anxious in both situations. However, there was a significant correlation between sets ( $r = .637^{**}$ ) with regard to anxiety level in group interactions with Set 1 the most anxious and Set 2 the least.

**Table 8.5** Mean Scores by Set on Pair, Group and Whole Class Anxiety Scales

	Pair Anxiety	Group Anxiety	Whole Class Anxiety
Set 1	1.78	4.16	3.36
Set 2	1.54	3.75	3.10
Set 3	1.60	3.11	3.18

In interpreting these results, however, it should be noted that when Cronbach Alpha was computed for the three scales, the internal reliability for dyadic communication anxiety was on the low side, making it doubtful whether we could be confident that the three items did truly represent a scale. This scale was therefore not used in further analysis.

**Table 8.6** Cronbach Alpha calculations for Section B

SCALE	ALPHA CRONBACH RELIABILITY	NO OF ITEMS	NO OF CASES
Pair Communication Anxiety	.6493	3	48
Group Communication Anxiety	.7567	3	48
Whole Class Communication Anxiety	.8482	3	47

However, the significant findings relating to group anxiety detailed above were not affected and we can be confident that the fact that learners in Set 1 were significantly more anxious than learners from the other two sets is a meaningful result.

Further significant differences among sets emerged in response to the question of receiver anxiety where students from Set 1 were significantly more worried ( $r = .339^*$ ) about not understanding the teacher than students from the other sets. Other findings though not significant were also interesting. For example, in response to item B 14 those in the top set were most afraid of making mistakes and those in set 3 the least.

When these results were shared with the teacher in interview, she had an interesting perspective on the issue. She suggested that this might be that the children in Set 1 were high achievers and more competitive, a reflection of the narrow divide between competitiveness and facilitating vs. debilitating anxiety identified by Bailey (1983). She also felt that Set 1 were much more sophisticated in their approach to the language learning task and used this to explain the fact that they had spoken in overt terms about learning strategies in their responses to the last two questions on Section A. She felt that such sophistication might make them more susceptible to introspection about the language learning task and consequent anxiety.

The teacher further surmised that anxiety may result from the fact that, according to the teacher, the pupils in Set 1 tended to be more worried about making mistakes. She felt this might be because they set higher expectations of success for themselves, again a finding which could not be confirmed empirically.

In retrospect, it would have been interesting to see whether these perceptions after the fact on the part of the teacher might have been borne out by conducting a personal construct analysis where the elements consisted of children from across three sets, rather than looking at one set.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What are the characteristics of anxious learners?

#### **Proficiency**

- Anxiety (at least in whole class situations) is related to perceived levels of proficiency in the language
- Anxiety is related to ability in the language as measured by the teacher assessment

*The lower the language proficiency, the higher the level of anxiety*

#### **Gender**

- Girls are more anxious than boys as measured both by teacher assessment and self-assessment of anxiety levels

#### **Set**

- Students from Set 1 are more anxious about listening and in group work situations than students from other sets. This may be due to heightened feelings of competitiveness or perfectionism.

## **Test Anxiety**

The findings regarding the existence of test anxiety and its positive aspects on language learning were one of the more surprising results to emerge from the larger survey described in Chapter 4 and it was therefore decided to investigate this issue further.

## **Findings from Student Questionnaire**

The findings with regard to test anxiety arising out of section A of the student questionnaire on this occasion proved even stronger on this occasion than in the large survey described in Chapter 4. Over 60% of learners felt that tests were useful in helping to demonstrate knowledge; 62% felt that tests helped them to study with

over half the students feeling that tests were useful in the learning of spelling.

However, the spread of responses to question E11 *Tests help me to study* was much wider with responses at both ends of the scale particularly in the case of Sets 2 and 3 with some individuals strongly agreeing that tests did indeed make them study while others strongly disagreed (see Appendix 7.3)

Surprisingly enough therefore, the question in Section C focusing on preferred activities yielded only one response wishing there were more tests (specifically listening) while four respondents wished that tests were fewer in number, although, again, there was some evidence that at least one respondent had been influenced by the earlier part of the question since his response parroted one of the items from Section A *I don't like tests as I get nervous and forget things I know*.

### **Findings from Semi-Structured Class Discussion**

The semi-structured class discussion was also helpful in confirming the finding that tests were useful in helping students to learn, in particular in helping students to learn items of vocabulary. *"We wouldn't learn the words if we didn't have tests."* However, a number of students in Sets 2 and 3, where there had been a greater spread of responses to the items relating to test anxiety on the questionnaire, felt that tests were too frequent and that they would study more if there were fewer tests. The fact that there were, at least in the eyes of a couple of students, so many tests meant they were not taken seriously.

It was, in any case, common to review the items for the test just before the lesson or *"on the bus in the morning, you look at the stuff"* even if students did not sit down and study more formally during the time they did their homework. One student said that he went upstairs and said things out loud, even when the test was a written one.

The difficulty level of the test seems to be key here. *"Not really like big tests"* were requested. Spelling tests were helpful in learning where the accent goes. The tests the teacher gave seemed to be manageable *"if you learn it"*. One student did mention the fact that it was possible to forget what you knew if you felt very nervous, but the predictability and narrowness of the test content meant that students could be fairly confident of success if they memorized what they were supposed to. A contrast was made by the students of Set 2 with exams in this regard. Exams were much more problematic since the content was broader and tasks generally required a greater

degree of application of knowledge. As one student put it *"Even if you learn everything, you might not be able to do what they ask."* Listening tests, which a student from Set 2 had requested more of, were difficult in this regard. The fact that it did not really matter in life terms whether you did well in a test or not *"she's not going to kill you"* also may have helped to alleviate anxiety.

## Findings from Interviews

Tests were mentioned little during the interviews, although one girl did mention how she had scored really low marks in an exam which she termed as *unfair* as it had included content that had not been covered. She then went on to say that she was not good at French, suggesting that at least in part she attributed her lack of success to her own proficiency in the language. Other mentions did however, tend to confirm the fact that tests had a generally facilitating effect triggering a variety of strategies to help in learning the language.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Does test anxiety have a facilitating effect on language learning?

- Results from both the survey and the semi-structured class discussion show that test anxiety has a generally facilitating effect on language learning.

Are certain types of tests more likely to trigger facilitating test anxiety?

- Validity of the test is the biggest issue here. If the test covers what has been taught and is fair and manageable in the eyes of the students it is likely to have a facilitating effect

Tests appear to work through encouraging short term learning. Thus facilitating test anxiety would seem to have a link with extrinsic motivation.

## ***Causes of Anxiety***

A major aim of this case study was to investigate the reasons why an individual might have been anxious. The literature indicated that there were a number of reasons associated with past experience which may cause language anxiety to emerge.

### **Past Experience as a Source of Anxiety**

#### **Findings from the Survey**

The students were asked whether they had ever been in certain situations which the exploratory interviews (described in Chapter 5) appeared to indicate might be possible causes of anxiety. The results appear over:

**Table 8.7** Sources of anxiety (Responses to Items C 3 – 5)

Have you ever been in a situation where.....			
	Yes	No	Can't remember
you felt embarrassed speaking French?	29 (63%)	14 (30%)	3 (6%)
other pupils made fun of you when you spoke French?	6 (13%)	36 (78%)	4 (9%)
a teacher made you feel embarrassed in the French lesson?	23 (46%)	17 (37%)	6 (13%)

Although there were relatively few pupils who claimed that others had made fun of them, those answering Yes to this question were selected for follow up interview during a later phase of the research (see discussion on effect of peers later in this

chapter). Worthy of comment is the large number of pupils who claimed that a teacher had made them feel embarrassed in the French lesson. Exact incidents were elicited from a number of those who reported this during follow up interviews. There were no significant differences among males and females or among sets in responses to these questions.

### **Findings from the Interviews**

For all but one of the people who claimed a teacher had made them feel embarrassed, this had a negative effect on their future learning of French. The boy (respondent P) who was the exception (who also claimed to answer questions as much as possible) was fairly philosophical about this.

You said that at one time a teacher made you feel embarrassed when you were speaking French

*It wasn't at this school. It was in my old school*

But you still remember it, do you?

*We had a funny teacher. She did it to most people.*

Did she? What did she used to do then?

*Put you down if you were wrong. Not like every time. She used to do it sometimes.*

Did that affect the way you feel about French?

*No, not really. I just think it's that teacher being funny.*

For all others however, being made to feel bad had a lasting effect on their feelings towards language learning.

Past experiences where learners had felt embarrassed were frequently attributed to a dislike for the language and in particular lack of self-confidence. This is particularly clear from this exchange with a male informant from Set 2 (Respondent E).

*It was at my old school. Cause I'd just come into the class and we were doing something I didn't know very well and she asked me to say all this stuff and I didn't know how to say it all and I made a complete fool of myself.*

And what happened? Did the other people laugh at you or what

*No because they didn't know how to say it either cause she didn't teach them*

And how has that made you feel about French?

*It's put me off*

It's put you off even for this school?

*I try to get involved as much as I feel confident which is not a lot really.*

What effect has this teacher had then?

*Well it makes me think about it a lot more. I think am I saying it right or am I going to make a complete fool of myself.*

While for most students, it was the teacher who caused them to feel foolish, there was one case of this having happened in relation to peers. A boy described an incident when he had said something in response to a teacher question obviously quite fluently in an overtly French accent. This caused a little laughter in the class at the time but subsequently the phrase *Pas du tout!* was repeated to him outside class to the accompaniment of some amusement. He said he did not speak much in class after that. Apart from appearing to speak in too much of a French way, there was also an element of the boy having shown himself to be above the level of the rest of the class by responding in this way. Although he went on to say "*They couldn't have said it*" there was a feeling that he had been rejected by his peers for displaying his knowledge in an inappropriate way. This resonates very strongly with the intuitive feeling that peer pressure exists not to show that you work too hard or know too much although when probed this subject claimed that this was not a factor in his particular case. However, other responses during the interviews showed that caring about what others thought and wanting to fit in were very strong in this age group. One respondent commented on the fact that many people know the answer but don't necessarily say it, so she didn't want to either. She claimed to find French easy but "*I don't want to show off.*" This girl seemed to experience a conflict between standing out from the group by showing what she knew and conforming to group norms by reducing her input. This would suggest that the influence of peers is particularly powerful in setting norms for classroom behaviour.



### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What part do negative past experiences play in triggering language anxiety?

- A negative experience in the past can cause lasting anxiety in an individual
- The most frequent such negative experience is having been made to appear foolish by a teacher
- Less frequently ridicule on the part of peers could cause anxiety

### ***Present Sources of Anxiety***

While causes originating in the past are clearly outside the control of the teacher, a major aim of this part of the study was to identify those aspects of the current classroom context which might cause or exacerbate anxiety.

The first area to be investigated was the effects of different classroom interaction patterns on levels of anxiety.

### **Interaction Patterns and Anxiety**

Section B of the student questionnaire looked at anxiety in group, pair and whole class interactions. The mean for the three scales – Dyadic (composed of items B4, B7 and B9 reversed) Group (composed of items B1, B3 and B6 reversed) and Whole Class (composed of items B5, B8 reversed and B12 reversed) was calculated. Results were as follows:

**Table 8.8** Mean Scores for Anxiety in Dyadic, Group and Whole Class Interactions

	Mean	Standard
Dyadic	1.65	.66
Group	3.71	.66
Whole Class	3.03	.54

As might have been expected, anxiety in pair interactions was extremely low with a mean of 1.65 and only three students scoring above 3 on the composite dyadic anxiety scale.

However, as shown in the table above, anxiety was greater in group situations than in whole class interactions. The semi-structured class discussion did not shed any light on this matter. Pupils in Sets 1 and 2 reported that they didn't mind working in groups. Pupils in Set 3 claimed that they rarely worked in groups and that pair work was much more common.

The heightened anxiety may possibly be a reflection of the fact that group interactions required lengthier output in the foreign language. The researcher observed group work being used to practice a dialogue based round shopping where the students had to make decisions about what to buy, in what size, colour etc. which required the formation of fairly long sentences on the part of students. On the other hand, French language response use in the larger class tended to be confined to single words or much shorter sentence responses (see Appendix 7.8). It may also be due to the effects of peer evaluation highlighted in the literature review of chapter 6 and commented on by the student on page 187. Students are likely to be more critical of their peers when not overheard by the teacher.

It may also be that group work was not frequently practiced in the classes observed as stated by the pupil in the semi-structured class discussion. Further indication that this may be the case can be seen from responses to the item in Section C *In French class, I wish we did more of*, where the most frequent request was for more pair and group work with 8 responses from Set 2 wishing for more of these type of activities and 5 from Set 1. One response from Set 2 talked of the need for more realistic group work *"group role plays, not whilst sitting at my desk"*. One also wonders just how frequent pair and group work is in the class despite the orthodoxy that says such interactions should be maximized in view of the comment *"speaking in pairs (like we did with directions last term) "*. Later investigations did indicate that it may be that group work was relatively rare in these classes and that the unfamiliarity of the practice heightened the anxiety level.

It may also be that it is the way in which the group work is presented and the clarity of the expectations the teacher has of outcomes that affect anxiety levels. There was one request in Section C of the questionnaire for the teacher to do more *"explaining so we know exactly what to do in activities etc."* Setting up complex information gap activities to be completed in groups can put considerable strain on a teacher's abilities to give instructions particularly if she tries to do this in the target language.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What effect do classroom organizational structures have on language anxiety?

- Students show least anxiety when working in pairs and most when working in groups. This relationship is significant in the case of Set 1

**Activity Type**

In common with our other findings, it was mostly oral work that caused the greatest degrees of anxiety for students as can be seen from the overwhelming agreement to items from part A of the questionnaire dealing with anxiety while speaking.

However, it is interesting to know exactly what it is about the speaking activities which causes particular anxiety and whether some task types are more anxiety-provoking than others. Some reasons for this emerged during the semi-structured class discussions. For example, the response to question A7 *I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class* was followed by a discussion of why learners might get nervous and confused. Time was felt to be most important. Oral work simply did not allow sufficient time for reflection.

Unsurprisingly, speaking in front of the class was problematic for many. Having to speak *“with a foreign accent when it doesn’t sound right”* was felt to be worst. *“You feel daft if you try to imitate the accent / sound too French”*. Being made to repeat *“If you don’t sound French enough”* was mentioned by a student in Set 1. If the teacher attempted to correct, this could exacerbate the situation even further *“when she’s correcting and you still can’t get it right”*.

Listening also received a number of mentions. In interview, two learners said they found listening to the tape particularly difficult.

*I can’t do it*

*So what do you do?*

*It just goes too fast.*

Do you try and understand?

*Yeah. I try....but I can't never.... I don't like it.*

However, while large numbers of students claimed to dislike certain types of activities, when probed, it did not seem to be the activity per se which caused anxiety but rather other factors external to the task itself. Feelings of conspicuousness, looking silly in front of peers, worry about the image being put forward by using a French accent could all occur regardless of the task type.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What effect do task types have on language anxiety?

- While it has been shown that oral work provokes greatest anxiety, there appear to be other factors at play which are responsible for the creation of such anxieties which are more relevant than the actual task type.

## ***The Effect of Materials***

### **Findings from the Questionnaire**

The communicative approach has long been associated with providing a varied menu of activities to prevent boredom and engage interest (Hubbard et al. 1983).

However, there is also evidence that unpredictability heightens levels of language anxiety. The effect of unusual or unpredictable language learning activities as opposed to more traditional exercises which learners may engage in regularly in most lessons was therefore included in the student questionnaire (Item B2).

The overwhelming majority of students (over 60%) preferred doing activities that they were used to in language class. There was little difference between boys and girls in this regard. However, Set 1 was the most conservative in wishing to stick to usual activities and set 3 the least ( $r = .306^*$ ). Interestingly also, the five most anxious learners all strongly agreed that they preferred doing activities that they were used to in the French language classroom.

In order to investigate this further, it is also worth looking at the activities students preferred in terms of the responses from Section C relating to activities they wanted

to do more or less of.

The responses to *In French class, I wish we did less of.....* gave surprising insights into how learners viewed activities.

Coloring and crosswords were two examples which according to the teacher she did not engage in very often, although obviously too often for a number of respondents who claimed to dislike them and find them boring. One activity which came in for three mentions was a recent information-gap activity in pairs where learners had to give one another directions. This had been prepared by the teacher at considerable expense in terms of time and other resources. She expressed great surprise that activities which she regarded as fun had been disliked by students.

In terms of more of the activities requested in Section C of the questionnaire, there was a split between wanting more fun activities on the one hand (*“funny activities like directions on a cartoon map”*) and more traditional exercises on the other (*“set exercises from Étoiles”*). One respondent combined the two requests *“more games and written work out of a book”*. There were a number of mentions of using a book more, in particular *Au Secours* and *Étoiles*. At the time, the teacher did not use a set book as such but rather supplemented the set books with her own handouts and board work. It is also worth noting that these books were supplied as a class set which was distributed at the beginning of the lesson and collected at the end. This meant children had only worksheets and their own notes for reference after the class had ended.

### **Findings from Semi-Structured Class Discussion**

Written exercises, which were essentially repetitive in nature, were felt to be useful for students from Set 1 in helping the students to learn, particularly when the teacher and class did some together first. These types of exercises were contrasted with oral exercises where *“It’s difficult to concentrate in case she asks you.”* suggesting an indication of possible anxiety.

Students in Set 1 commented that they did not like doing exercises from the board or OHT. In fact, it transpired that they would prefer to have one text book and do away with worksheets etc. although they did accept the teacher’s response that the text

book needed to be supplemented. One pupil mentioned that she had disliked an information gap activity that the teacher had devised to practice direction-giving in groups, a finding which came as a great surprise to the teacher.

### **Findings from Content Analysis of Book**

The main supplementary course book *Etoiles* which used to supplement class materials had a very “busy” look to it, making it difficult for a pupil to see exactly what the main focus of the lesson might be. A content analysis of this book revealed that while it had clearly been written to a template, the overall impression it tried to convey was that of a magazine. The most common exercise format was cartoon story (see Appendix 7.11). While it might be predicted that cartoon stories belong to a certain genre, this was not the case with the reading texts in *Etoiles*. Historical facts, traditional Aesop’s fables and dialogues between professionals were all presented in cartoon strip format. Activity types with the exception of *Mécanique de la Langue Française* were not labelled. It would have been difficult for a pupil to open the book and see whether a page consisted of reading, listening, or speaking activities. Some activities appeared only once. Others were very unevenly spaced. For example there were eight songs in the book, with the first one appearing in Unit 1, the next not until Unit 6 and two songs came one page after another in Unit 8.

The literature surveyed in Chapter 6 indicated that unpredictability heightened levels of anxiety. It might be surmised that in the search to keep students motivated through a varied menu of activities, we might actually be raising anxiety levels through reducing predictability.

### **Findings from Teacher Interviews**

When asked what she felt she needed to do in order for a lesson to be successful, the teacher’s responses were most interesting. She said the key thing was that there should be lots of varied activities. *“They need to be kept on the ball, so they don’t know what’s coming next.”* When probed on this point, she said that this was reflective of real communication in that you did not know what you would be asked next. In terms of providing other communicative opportunities, she also felt that it was extremely important for students to learn to listen to one another and regretted the fact that much communication took place through her.

The teacher was also given the opportunity to view the videos and although no

analysis was undertaken at that stage, it was apparent that she generally kept up a brisk pace in the classes. When the researcher questioned the speed with which she moved from one student to another when asking questions, her response was that she felt uneasy if she got no response at all from someone. *"I don't like silence."* She also reiterated the fact that *"you have to keep them on the ball."*

### **Findings from Observations**

While the lesson with set 1 and set 2 which consisted of writing contained only 3 distinct activities, there were 8 different phases to the lesson with Set 3. The pace as noted by the teacher herself was extremely brisk with the teacher frequently speeding "from activity to activity with scarcely a pause for breath or wait time." (Cajkler and Addelman, 2000 p. 12)

#### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

What effect do materials have on language anxiety?

- Students indicated that they preferred predictable activities. A content analysis of the course book showed that activities in class could be highly unpredictable. There are indications that such unpredictability might exacerbate anxiety levels.

### ***The Role of the Teacher***

A finding which emerged in the semi-structured class discussion across all three sets was the pivotal role of the teacher as a potential source of language anxiety.

However, a distinction was made between teacher personality factors which caused anxiety and teacher classroom practices. Some teachers, it was agreed, were *"scary"*. *"You can't... like talk... or do anything in their classes"*. The present teacher did not come into this category. The atmosphere in her class was friendly and she was *"not too strict."* However, there were a number of behaviours which she exhibited which did contribute to heightened anxiety levels.

“Spotlighting of students” where the teacher asked a question in French, then looked round the class for someone to ask was felt to be somewhat anxiety inducing particularly if an individual did not know the answer to the question. One student reported that looking down was a good thing to do in this case as it tended to mean that the teacher would avoid asking you.

An interesting incident occurred during the video recorded discussion with Set 3 which was led not by the teacher herself but by a colleague from the School of Education. The teacher would often chip in with questions of her own. On one occasion when the colleague was eliciting responses regarding reasons for shyness, she interrupted with

*Can we ask Rachel? Cos Rachel doesn't like answering questions.*

Rachel, who was then focused on in the video, hid behind her hands and made no response.

The teacher could even trigger writing anxiety. The way in which she walked around the class making a noise with her heels and could come up behind you at any time was mentioned by those in Set 1. During tests, the way she might walk around, read what had been written and then not comment made one student feel that he had written down the wrong answer even when he knew he hadn't.

## **Teacher Use of French**

The teacher's use of French to give instructions was very much disliked. In general, according to results of the semi-structured class discussion, children across the three sets felt that she used French too much with frequent reports of not understanding particularly from Sets 2 and 3. “*You ought to say it in English if you want us to do something.*” This is in sharp contrast to the teacher's opinion that she did not speak French enough.

When students were given the opportunity to give their own advice to the teacher, the use of the target language came in for the most comment with frequent requests for more English.

However, the teacher's views on the matter were very different. She recognized that speaking French might cause anxiety but felt that this was not a reason to change her



practice as the benefits outweighed any disadvantage. She quoted the orthodoxy that all communication should be in French and mentioned that she felt pressured to keep up communication in French throughout the lesson. Indeed, she felt that she should be speaking French even more. *"I feel I don't speak it half enough and they don't speak it half enough."* Encouraging the students to speak in French was also a constant battle for the teacher. *"If you give them half the chance, they revert to English. They don't even try to speak in French."*

When the issue of the language of direct instruction was raised and she was asked how she might teach a particular grammar point, she responded with the orthodoxy that she gives pupils examples of the language, trying to provide enough examples so that they work out the rule for themselves.

These findings seem to indicate that the use of the target language is complex and this area will be discussed further in relation to both teacher and students.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?

- Spotlighting of students.
- Walking round during tests
- Overuse of the target language (in the eyes of pupils)

### ***Further Investigation of Language Use***

From the results above, it can clearly be seen that French language use is an area of critical importance for both the teacher and students. However, while the teacher feels under considerable pressure to keep up the flow of speaking in the foreign language, students report that speaking in French can cause them anxiety.

It was therefore interesting to note that results of the observation showed that student language use was relatively low. Although one should not make the generalization that any type of talking necessarily equals learning, results show relatively low percentages of the use of the target language across all three classes. In all cases, the teacher spoke far more than the students, including during the periods where written

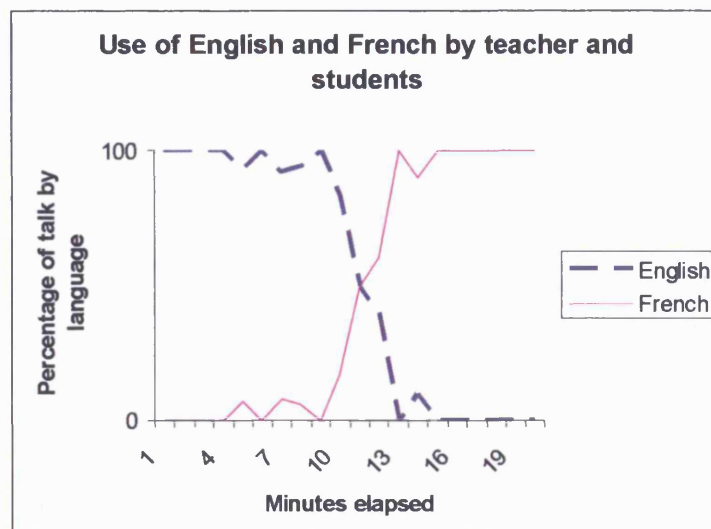
work was taking place. However, the mean length of the teacher's utterance was comparatively short (mean – 8.7 words per utterance). Furthermore, results of the 30 second wave combined with an analysis of transcripts showed there was no sustained talk on the part of the teacher without some response required of students. In fact, transcripts showed that the longest length of time across all three sets that the teacher spoke without a response from students was 90 seconds. This meant that students could in theory be called upon to answer at all and any time of the lesson.

Patterns of language use became more apparent, when the results of the word count were combined with the results of the thirty second interval analysis across the three sets. A large part of the English spoken occurred at the beginning of the lessons and was concerned with non-French lesson related “housekeeping matters”. For example, most of the English used in Set 2 occurred at the beginning of the lesson when the teacher was trying to establish the reason for some absences.

In fact, in the case of all three sets, most of the English use on the part of the teacher, occurred at the beginning of the lesson – the register was taken in English, comments were made to students in English, particularly in the cases of sets 2 and 3 “*Tuck your shirt in please, Richard.*” It appeared as though there was in effect a preliminary, introductory part to the lesson which took place in English, an intermediate section when the teacher mixed French and English use and the main part of the class which took place in French. This was marked by the transition “*Bon, alors*” in the case of Set 2 and “*Alors, page numéro trente et un*” in the case of Set 3.

It might be speculated that allowing the class to tune into the use of the foreign language in this way, could, in itself, be construed as an anxiety reducing technique.

**Figure 8.5.** Use of English and French by teacher and students by time elapsed (Set 2)



The findings here echo those of Cajkler and Addelman

“Despite the prescriptions of the National Curriculum, the pronouncements of OFSTED and the aspirations of the majority of teachers, the average pupils in a languages classroom in an English school can expect to hear and use a significant amount of English.” (Cajkler and Addelman, 2000 p.12)

However, this teacher in common with many others felt guilty about this fact. It was therefore decided to investigate the area further in order to see whether her use of English was in fact purposeful and might have played a role in alleviating levels of anxiety.

## The Nature of Teacher Talk

### Code Choice and Code Switching

As can be seen from the teacher’s own comments during interview, she made a real effort to increase her use of French. However the classroom observations showed that her use of English and French was quite distinct. Establishing reasons for absences and taking the register took place in English. Social comments were made almost

entirely in English. Classroom management took place in both English and French depending on the purpose. Disciplinary comments were in English. *Well, that's not very nice, is it?*

Intersentential code switching was frequently used to facilitate learning - for explanation or clarification, for example. In the cases of Sets 1 and 2, this type of strategic use of the L1 was evident when the teacher gave an unfamiliar word in English or where she would provide the English translation of the word. Code switching was often used to help with unfamiliar lexis in this way. This involved intrasentential code switching by translating a single word into English with L1 words embedded in a French sentence and was particularly common when giving instructions or engaging in other management tasks.

*Vous avez fini tout ça. Presque nearly. Presque fini*

Checking that students had actually understood the nuances of what they were saying was also checked through intersentential code-switching.

*Alors, c'est son visage.....his face in particular.... qui est important pour toi.....not his general appearance then??*

It was particularly interesting to see how Jane used English and French for a variety of explanatory and clarification purposes in this way and how her code switching served as a learning prop particularly in the case of set 3.

*Alors, tu veux acheter du lessive.....some washing powder.*

While queries on the part of the students were without exception in English, the teacher would attempt in the case of Sets 1 and 2 to respond in French.

*S: Do we have to put it into two lists?  
T: Oui, j'ai dis.....j'ai déjà expliqué ça.*

The fact that she would often first try French before resorting to English is evident from exchanges such as the one below:

*S: Miss! What's semblance mean?  
T: Son ....général.....what she looks like in general.*

In the case of Set 3, however, pupils' use of English tended to trigger a switch from

French to English on the part of the teacher.

Paraphrasing into less complex French also took place both in the case of the language being taught as part of the lesson as well as in this rare case of social interaction taking place in French.

*Alors vous avez eu quelle cours? Quelle leçon?*

(at the beginning of the class with Set 3)

The explanation of purpose of lesson took place only with sets 1 and 2 and both times, was done in English.

*What we're doing here is an exercise in saying his or her.*

Instruction giving was almost exclusively in French. *Je repete et vous verifiez* for Sets 1 and 2 and in French followed by an English translation in the case of Set 3. *Vous allez pratiquer le dialogue.....You're going to practise the dialogue*

Code switching was also used to explain a grammar point although this occurred with only in the case of Set 1 and was in response to a query from a student. The major part of the explanation took place in English with

*Teacher: Non ....pas son taille.*

*Student: But it's him.*

*Teacher: Oui, c'est vrai.... But it's not like that in French. It doesn't work that way. You see the important bit is that ... what you need to know is the gender of the word.....whether it's le ou la + not who it belongs to. It's not important if it belongs to a man or a woman because I can say to him SA taille. I can say to her SA taille I can say to him SES vêtements I can say to her SES vêtements . So it does not matter if it belongs to a male or a female: it's what the actual thing is.....its gender.....inaudible....., masculine or feminine. D'accord?*

A common strategy apparent only in the case of set 3 was to give instructions first in French but then offer a full translation in English.

*Alors, changez le stylo, si vous pouvez. If you've got another colour pen, use another colour.*

The teacher also used other non-verbal strategies to support her use of French

particularly in the case of Set 3. This involved drawing on the board or using mime in an attempt to help students to understand.

*Du savon....qu'est-ce que c'est en anglais? (Miming washing hands)*

Follow up interviews suggested the teacher was well aware of these support strategies particularly in the case of Set 3 where she knew that she frequently offered a translation. Her claim that she tried to speak French more slowly with Set 3 was not apparent from video viewings. The extent to which such support did in fact help anxious learners will be explored during the interviews with students.

A further trigger for the switch from French to English was to make humorous asides related to the task.

*J'ai fait du canoëing.... (referring to a picture on the worksheet) Without a life jacket!!! Tut... tut!*

Such use of humour was common and did in fact take place in French on a couple of occasions.

*J'ai fait de la planche à voile... (miming falling) et puis je suis tombé*

Although much more commonly in English:

*You want to do a crossword. I'll give you a cross word (laughter)*

(Source extra video snippet from Set 3).

Such use of humour in the classroom has long been acknowledged as a way of improving the affective atmosphere and as such may have a part to play in the lowering of anxiety levels (Price, 1991)

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

**What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?**

- Strategic use of French to aid understanding e.g. restating information in English; switching to English for unfamiliar words
- Humour was used to create a relaxed learning atmosphere

## ***Use of Target Language: A student perspective***

While such strategies are clearly laudable whether they are sufficient to help those learners who were most anxious is debatable. Actual lack of comprehension as well as the fear of not understanding what the teacher was saying emerged as a major issue for a number of learners:

*Sometimes you don't understand what she's saying and then when she gets you to answer it, you don't understand what she's saying and then you're thinking I don't want to like answer in case you get it wrong.* [INFORMANT F]

Pleas for more explanation in English came from one source who claimed

*Well, I'm not very sure what.....about what to do quite a bit*

Why is that?

*Well, when she speaks in French I try to understand but it takes me quite a long time to click (?) on*

What do you do when you don't understand?

*Sit there* [INFORMANT C]

This issue of incomprehensible input was a real one for approximately a third of anxious learners surveyed.

Speaking in the foreign language was related to the fear of sounding silly "*It sounds daft when you try to speak French.*" Some people didn't even try.

Other respondents in interview referred to the fear of giving the wrong message when you are trying to communicate in a foreign language.

*In English at least I know I'm saying the right words* [INFORMANT A]

The effect on self-image of trying to portray oneself through a language over which one does not have complete mastery has been well documented and also seemed to be at play here.

## ***Feelings of Conspicuousness***

A common reason for embarrassment was the feeling of conspicuousness associated with having to answer questions in French in front of the whole class. Responses to the prompt "*You said that you sometimes feel embarrassed speaking French?*" were as follows:

*I just don't like everyone looking at me.* [INFORMANT A]

*Yeah, I feel embarrassed cause if you get it wrong....everyone's looking at you.*  
[INFORMANT D]

In speaking of communication apprehension (CA), McCroskey (1984 p.25) states that "Probably nothing can increase CA more than being conspicuous in one's environment." Interestingly whereas a main focus of this work is public speaking, an example he gives of conspicuous is "standing up to make a comment in a meeting or a classroom." (ibid.) It would seem likely in view of the quotes above that conspicuousness is also one of the major causes of language anxiety in the classroom.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

Which aspects of the classroom situation affect anxiety?

- Feeling conspicuous when speaking is a likely cause of language anxiety

## ***Further Effects of the Classroom***

### **Teacher Style Conflicts**

Style conflict between the teacher and the pupils is one area mentioned in the literature review as causing the potential for anxiety. While this was not a direct focus during the present case study, there are some indications that this might have been the case. When asked about her teaching style, Jane was able to identify herself as fairly directive. She equated being in the classroom to "*like being an actor or an actress*" but then said that her somewhat controlling teaching style was the result of her personality.

*I am a bully. I can't help the way I am. I entice information, but I don't intimidate them. If someone gets something wrong, I'm not going to shout or go off the deep end.*

In follow-up discussions after lessons, when certain aspects of the lesson were focused on, the teacher repeatedly rationalized her approach by saying *It helps them to learn*. Thus getting them to copy things from the board, to practice in pairs for



lengthy periods of time or to associate words with drawings were all ways to help students learn. However, at no time during the discussions after lessons was there any indication that the teacher felt that students learned in different ways. This was particularly the case in relation to the absence of periods of silence. There was no acknowledgment or possibly even awareness on the part of the teacher that some students might have preferred some periods of silence to process new language.

Sometimes, her attempts to involve quieter students appeared to be designed to merely highlight their non-involvement in the lesson rather than involve them in responding using the target language

*C'est huit, n'est-ce pas William?* (Extract from Set 2)

A student had already given the answer and William was not required to do or say anything.

There were repeated references to keeping students on their toes, involving everyone and keeping up the brisk pace of the lesson. At least initially, Jane was also unwilling to concede that there might be a case for not forcing all students, even those most anxious, to speak when they did not want to. An example of how this might cause style conflict comes from the student who said she liked to just listen went on to say that she needed time to learn *inside her head*. This time to reflect is clearly absent from the French foreign language classroom where no silent period is encouraged or allowed. Similarly the preference expressed by many students for a course book supplemented by explanation may indicate that the style in which students prefer to learn is not supported by the teaching offered.

“In order to enable the most learners possible to learn as much as they can, we need to give them every advantage, including a program that enables to start out in a relatively comfortable and stress-free way. That means giving them the opportunity to learn in their preferred learning styles, rather than always outside of them, which can happen in the interests of keeping classrooms paced to the majority...” (Ehrman et al. 2003 p.324)

However, in interview there were repeated references to the pleasant atmosphere in Jane's class and whether this apparent style conflict had any bearing on language anxiety levels is unclear.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?

- There is some evidence for a style conflict between teacher and students but whether this is a cause of anxiety is not proven.

**Teacher Questioning Strategies**

The literature suggested that the way in which the teacher questioned students may also have been a potential source of anxiety. The exploratory interviews had further suggested that not knowing when one was going to be asked heightened anxiety levels. It was therefore decided to look at the ways in which students were selected or selected themselves to respond to questions.

The teacher would frequently repeat a question more than once if no response was forthcoming within a couple of seconds. Most frequently, the question was repeated verbatim but rephrasing did occur in a couple of instances.

*Alors vous avez eu quelle cours? Quelle leçon?*

Translating the question into English was not seen. Wait time was generally very short and even with the video, it proved difficult to calculate an exact time in seconds.

Although the teacher's favoured strategy was to invite open elicits from the entire class, she did appear to be aware as stated in her interview as to who exactly was contributing and how much.

*...not Jason... Garry come on* (Extract from Set 3 extra video snippet).

**Table 8.9** Nomination versus numbers of students volunteering answers

	Volunteering Answers	Nomination
<b>Set 1</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Set 2</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Set 3</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>4</b>

Students in Set 3 volunteered the most answers, followed by Set 1 with Set 2 the least. Again this must in part be due to the nature of the lesson but may be a result of the fact that students in Set 3 felt themselves to be the least anxious.

The videos did not allow for accurate counting of responses to open elicits from boys and girls although direct nominations were almost equally directed to males and females. However, during the last observations focusing on individuals, males did volunteer more than females (20 males out of 36 instances of volunteered answers observed) while no anxious learner across the three classes was ever observed to volunteer an answer.

Most questions asked were of the IRF type “an initiation by a teacher which elicits a response from a pupil followed by an evaluative comment or feedback from the teacher”. (Edwards and Mercer, 1987 p.9)

However, it is teacher reactions to students’ responses which have been shown to have an effect on levels of anxiety. “Making fun” of what students had said was a particular issue identified in previous chapters and it was therefore also decided to look at how the teacher replied to student utterances.

The teacher’s responses to answers were noted and categorized according to extremely positive *Excellent! Super!*, Positive *Oui, C’est ça!*, negative (usually simply *Non?*). Teacher responses which consisted of overt correction were dealt with separately (see above) and were not included in this section of the analysis.

**Table 8.10** Teacher feedback categorized according to Extremely Positive, Positive and Negative

	EXTREMELY POSITIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Set 1	12	12	4
Set 2	12	11	3
Set 3	18	6	0

It is interesting to note that praise was given almost exclusively in the target language *Excellent! Voila!*. Negative feedback could be given in either language. “Harsher” feedback tended to be given in English leaving no possibility for misinterpretation. “*You can do better than that!*” This reflects the common finding that teachers tend to

praise in the foreign language and criticize in the L1, a finding nicely captured by the following cartoon.



in Butzkamm (2003 p.38)

There were a couple of instances where feedback did not however fit comfortably into the three column categorization above. This occurred when the teacher praised participation rather than correctness of response "*Good Try! But no*". Such encouragement, although rare, might be seen as a useful strategy to give students the confidence to answer regardless of whether they were sure that their answer was correct.

One example of negative feedback which would not fit neatly into such a categorization was noted during the ethnographic first observation. This consisted entirely of non-verbal behaviour. Here, the teacher sighed demeaningly and rolled her eyes. The class giggled while the girl who had responded shifted uncomfortably.

Most feedback was on the correctness of response rather than true communicative feedback although there were a couple of instances of feedback on meaning.... *Tres interessant* in response to a student saying that money was not a consideration for her when choosing a boyfriend or girlfriend.

### **Correction Techniques**

Since the literature had suggested that correction strategies might be responsible for increased anxiety, it was decided to look at what the teacher corrected and the ways in which she corrected it, separately from the more general categorization into positive and negative feedback. A detailed analysis of the error correction methods employed by the teacher was undertaken. Note was taken of the errors made. These were categorized according to the skills-focus of the task.

**Table 8.11** Teacher Correction Strategies

Pronunciation	Teacher corrects exaggerating pronunciation mistake No student response required
	Teacher corrects Makes all class repeat
	Teacher corrects Makes all class repeat Then back to individual
Meaning	Non to first generally elicited response Non Non pas seulement Asks for four responses and then checks students understand the word in English before giving the response herself
	Non to first wrong response Second response by student correct
Written Error	Points out error in student's work, then "tu peux faire ça" - pointing at board
	Points out mistake -son corps avec s - regarde

Pronunciation mistakes were the most common type corrected in an overt manner,

frequently by exaggerating the mispronunciation.

*Ce n'est pas veee....eee....lo! vélo! Repetez*

Sometimes this was done with an element of humour, which may have been construed as “poking fun” (see later discussion of student interviews). It was also most common to make the student repeat, further highlighting the student’s sense of conspicuousness.

There was one incident in the case of Set 1 where the teacher persevered with correction although the student appeared quite nervous and began to speak in a much quieter, more hesitant voice.

*T: Louder, can you say it louder. Pardon. I can't hear you.*

### **Persevering with Questioning in the Face of Non-comprehension**

Correction strategies received a large number of mentions during students interviews as being responsible for heightening anxiety levels.

*It was the first year of NAME OF SCHOOL. Me and Joanne didn't really understand French much and we couldn't cope with it very well. ....[INFORMANT G]*

*Well, she asks you and I said I don't know and then she starts asking you and goes on. [INFORMANT J]*

*Like they should ask you and if you don't know they should ask someone else [INFORMANT Q]*

The last response would indicate a clear message to the teacher about the importance of achieving a balance between allowing a student sufficient opportunities to answer and correct him or herself and not causing the student undue distress. Overzealous correction particularly in the arena of pronunciation was also mentioned. Sometimes students could quite simply not hear what was required. One student said she just couldn't pronounce the word however many times the teacher made her repeat it.

*Some of the words I can but some.... She says repeat it and I can't repeat it. I find it really hard to repeat it. [INFORMANT B]*

Whether multiple repetitions are the best way to actually teach pronunciation is, of course, another issue.

When asked directly what the teacher should do when asking questions, other responses were also forthcoming. The issue of sufficient time and the brisk pace of many of the lessons was raised. *I'd like to have more time to get my answer ready*, although when probed the reason seemed more to do with perfectionism identified in the literature as a trait of some anxious individuals. *I like to make sure I'm right....*

Using more natural approaches (i.e., those often used in maternal language development) such as asking clarifying questions, rephrasing the statement in the correct manner, and creating situations where students can negotiate meaning, create less stressful language learning environments. These were rarely seen.

Self-correction and peer correction have also frequently been viewed as effective and positive means of addressing the issue of errors (e.g., Calvé, 1994; Edge, 1989; Bartram and Walton, 1991) and more importantly, for the purpose of this discussion, are less intimidating for students. A couple of instances of this type of correction were observed during this study.

Calvé (1992) also cautions teachers not to interrupt students in order to correct errors. From the affective perspective, this seems logical as doing so would definitely undermine the student's confidence. Correcting errors is one way of giving feedback to your students but teachers need to also incorporate other feedback strategies into their teaching. Statements such as "Can you tell me more" or "Très intéressant" can show students you are listening and encourage them to focus on meaning (Kramsch, 1987). When students receive feedback of this sort, it boosts their confidence and validates their contributions.

## **Views of Self**

There was also the issue of feeling that you always had to get everything right. Getting things wrong in class was used as evidence of *being no good* despite the fact that making errors is a quite natural step in the language learning process. The belief that as in other subjects, there is always one right answer does not encourage risk-taking. This feeling that you should only say things which are correct perhaps illustrates the focus on form and accuracy which still exists even in the days of the supposed communicative era.

Interviews of the five most anxious learners yielded interesting information about

view of self. Informant B claimed to be bad at languages despite the fact that she had never studied another language.

*I've never been very good at languages*

Have you done German or any other language then?

*No, only French* [INFORMANT E]

There was evidence that students used a wide range of benchmarks when evaluating their own language learning ability. There was the comparison with peers and thinking that others in the class were better as evidenced by the fact that exactly half of all students surveyed agreed or agreed strongly with the claim that *I keep thinking other students are better at French than I am* Item A3. Evidence that students did also compare themselves with peers also emerged from the interviews.

So, you'd never ask a question?

*No*

Do you always understand everything?

*Sometimes, I want to ask a question but then I think everyone (i.e. the students in the class) knows the answer*

[INFORMANT O]

Other respondents in interview referred to the fear of giving the wrong message when you are trying to communicate in a foreign language.

*In English at least I know I'm saying the right words* [INFORMANT A]

The effect on self-image of trying to portray oneself through a language over which one does not have complete mastery has been well documented. However, other aspects of self-image were also at play here.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

**What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?**

- **There were a number of instances of positive feedback which might be thought to alleviate anxiety.**
- **Correction techniques particularly of pronunciation were causes of both past and present anxiety**



**RESEARCH QUESTION**

How is view of self related to language anxiety?

- There was a general feeling that it was important not to make mistakes. Anxious individuals in particular felt that they had to get everything absolutely right
- Comparing oneself unfavourably with peers was a characteristic of the anxious learner

## ***Relationship with Students***

The fostering of a positive classroom atmosphere is frequently quoted as an important factor in lowering anxiety levels (Krashen, 1982, Stevick, 1980, Moskwitz, 1978) Jane felt that she had a good relationship with all three of her classes but particularly Set 3. She had impressive knowledge of the interests and families of many of her learners. When asked how she achieved this, she said it was mostly through personalized activities in the lessons. She was also aware of the positive effects of self-disclosure in establishing rapport. *I tell them about myself.* As a result, Jane felt the atmosphere in her classes was relaxed enough to minimize anxiety. She took an interest in individuals. On one occasion, she was upset by the way in which some of the girls from Set 3 were treating one girl who had previously been a friend. She did comment on their behaviour in class when they refused to sit next to her *That's not very nice, is it?* but was not sure how she should deal with this issue. Indeed, Jane seemed to have a particular affinity to Set 3. *I do love that class* although she admitted that it was sometimes difficult

*You just have to battle on. As long as you make them feel they are making progress, it builds up their confidence, it builds up their self-esteem.*

Of particular interest was that, in contrast to the research cited earlier that girls tend to have closer interpersonal relationships with teachers which in turn tends to minimize anxiety (Bracken and Crain in Pappamihiel, 2002). This teacher felt that she found it easier to build up close relationships with boys and, indeed, part of her work with the University of Leicester focused on this area. Classroom observations

held earlier shown that she paid more attention to the boys, reflected not only in the fact that they were spoken to more frequently but also in her movements round the class where she would gravitate towards the parts of the class where groups of boys were sitting.

Classroom observations gave other indications of the teacher's use of rapport to stimulate a comfortable and non-threatening atmosphere. It is interesting to note that many of these were directed at individuals rather than at the class as a whole. The teacher clearly had a depth of knowledge which developed as the school year progressed of the individuals within her class. She made reference to siblings of the children, remembered that one girl had a brother who had been in an accident and was very aware of the friendship groupings in the class. Her pastoral role was clearly visible to the extent that she said she had visited one of the boys who had been ill at his home in the weeks previous to the third observation.

Pupils in interview also reiterated the many positive ways in which the teacher helped them individually and all were generally agreed that the atmosphere in her classes was conducive to learning.

#### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?

- A positive classroom atmosphere has generally been seen to lower anxiety levels
- The teacher made a conscious effort to establish good rapport both with the class and with individuals within it
- She also tried to build up the confidence of individuals within the class

## ***The Effect of Peers***

The questionnaire showed that while there were relatively few instances of students having been made fun of by their peers, comparisons with peers were frequent as evidenced by responses to question A3 *I keep thinking other students are better at French than I am*. 40% of respondents agreed or agreed strongly that they kept having these thoughts.

The fact that such feelings can cause anxiety came through in the semi-structured class discussion where a student from Set 3 compared herself with the others in the class. *"If you say the wrong word, and someone else knows"* although she denied that the others in the class were unkind to one another in this regard.

There were a great many reports of feelings of this kind in the individual interviews which took place with students.

There were few mentions of actual instances of being laughed at by peers but a couple of mentions of reticence in class *"in case they laugh."* Indeed, what others were thinking was mentioned and not answering or speaking up *"cos of what they might think."* was also an issue. Even if students could imitate the French accent one informant mentioned that he would tend not to – speaking in a French accent singles you out by your peers. *"I don't try to speak in a French accent"* and *"can't speak in a French accent – try to stay away from it"*.

However, there were indications that peer relationships could be a positive factor as well. This tended to happen in English. There was no spontaneous student to student interaction in French observed apart from one instance of *Merci* to being given a pen. Students spoke French to one another only within the strict confines of controlled practice of a situation. However, a number of interesting exchanges did take place in English. Apart from instances of jokes and reparties some which could not be understood by an outsider, during the third observations focusing on individuals it was common to observe learners asking one another when they did not understand. This occurred while they were doing both spoken and written work. Another strategy which was observed twice during these final observations was for that of the girls (in both cases) to check their answer with their peers before replying to the teacher. On one other occasion, when a student was struggling another interrupted and supplied the response. In the interviews it was apparent that asking

friends was far more common than resorting to the teacher.

What do you do when you don't understand?

*I ask my friend*

You don't ask the teacher?

*No...just my friends* [RESPONDENT B]

All of the above are examples of a supportive peer relationship which goes against the usual stereotype of peer pressure commonly held to have a negative effect on learning. It is interesting, however, that all the quotes above referring to the positive effects of peer relations were made by girls

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What role do peers play in contributing to or alleviating anxiety?

- Peer pressure and worry about portraying the wrong image in front of peers can cause anxiety
- Pupils will help one another, particularly in the case of girls

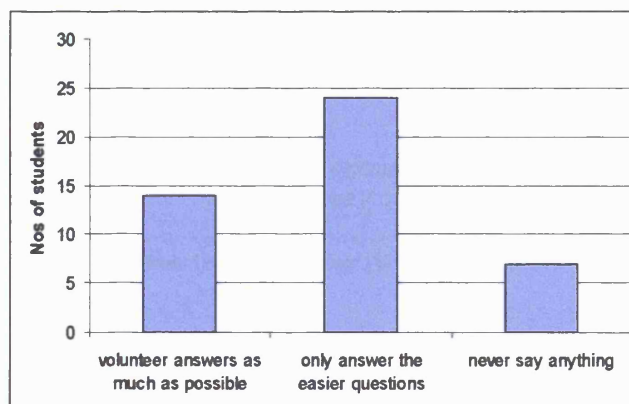
## ***Effects of Anxiety***

### **Manifestations of Anxiety in the Classroom**

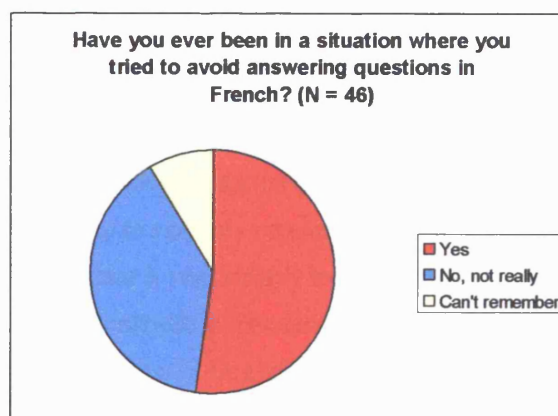
#### **Answering Questions**

A number of items in section C of the questionnaire were designed to tap into behaviours that learners might exhibit if they were anxious. A number of these were concerned with the volunteering of information.

A surprisingly high percentage of students (31%) claimed to volunteer answers as much as possible in the classroom, while only 7 students in the whole sample reported that they never said anything. The 5 most anxious students fell within this latter group.

**Figure 8.6** Patterns of answering questions

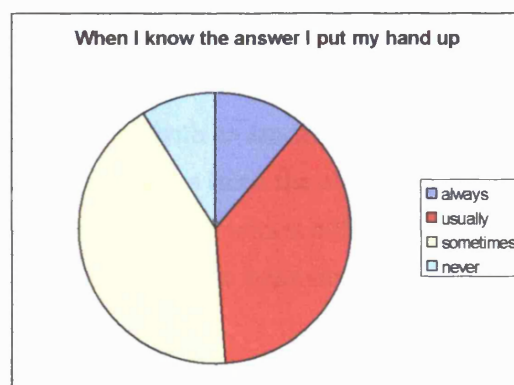
52% of the sample, including all the anxious learners, reported that at some time they had tried to avoid answering questions in French. Interestingly enough, more males reported this than females and more students from the lowest set than from the highest. More than half the students said that they had tried to avoid answering questions in French, with no significant differences across sets or between genders (see figure 8.7 below).

**Figure 8.7** Responses to Item *Have you ever been in a situation where you tried to avoid answering questions in French?*

### Willingness to Communicate

The last question in Section 3 focused on how frequently learners put up their hands when they knew the answer to a question.

**Figure 8.8** Responses to *When I know the answer I put my hand up always / usually / sometimes / never*



The majority of learners in the sample (36 out of 45) usually or sometimes put their hands up if they knew the answer to a question. Only five students always put their hands up and four claimed never to do so. Of these four students, three had been categorized as highly anxious.

It is however, uncertain whether all of these behaviours could be attributed to language anxiety. Indeed results of the semi-structured class discussion indicated that reasons for not participating could be varied.

The discussion of Section C Question f relating to how frequently answers were volunteered, revealed a breadth of reasons for not answering. Sometimes, non-response could be attributed to reasons relating to anxiety, such as not being sure the answer was right. Other times it was simply because the students hadn't been following and weren't concentrating. The issue of language did arise with students from Set 1. Answering questions in English was much easier than answering in French and therefore answering in English was rarely avoided. Short answers in French such as *Oui* or *Non* were felt to be OK, although a student from Set 1 added *as long as you understand the question*. Even if the question was not understood, it was pointed out that there was a 50% chance of being correct.

As previously mentioned, 7 students claimed never to say anything in class, 5 of them anxious students. Of these, it was clear that their reasons for not putting their hands up to volunteer were in fact related to anxiety. *I'm worried it might be wrong.*

However, one of the non-anxious students claimed his reason for not volunteering was that he couldn't be bothered. This clearly indicates the importance of not ascribing non-participation to anxiety without examining the issue further. It may be here that the recent literature on WTC (Willingness to Communicate) is more relevant here (MacIntyre, Babin and Clement, 1999; MacIntyre, Baker, Clement and Donovan, 2002). WTC is related both to anxiety but also to other personality and socio-psychological issues. It appears from the above that contextual factors also have a part to play. Thus in the section which follows on manifestations of anxiety, great care must be taken not to attribute behaviours to anxiety without careful investigation of the subjects.

### Avoidance Behaviours

Nine students reported that at some time they had chosen to sit in a place where they wouldn't be noticed in the language class. (Item C e) The five most anxious learners again fell into this sub-group.

Nine students reported having sat in a place where they wouldn't be noticed in the language class, with the largest number in Set 3 where 36% of those surveyed claiming to have used this avoidance strategy.

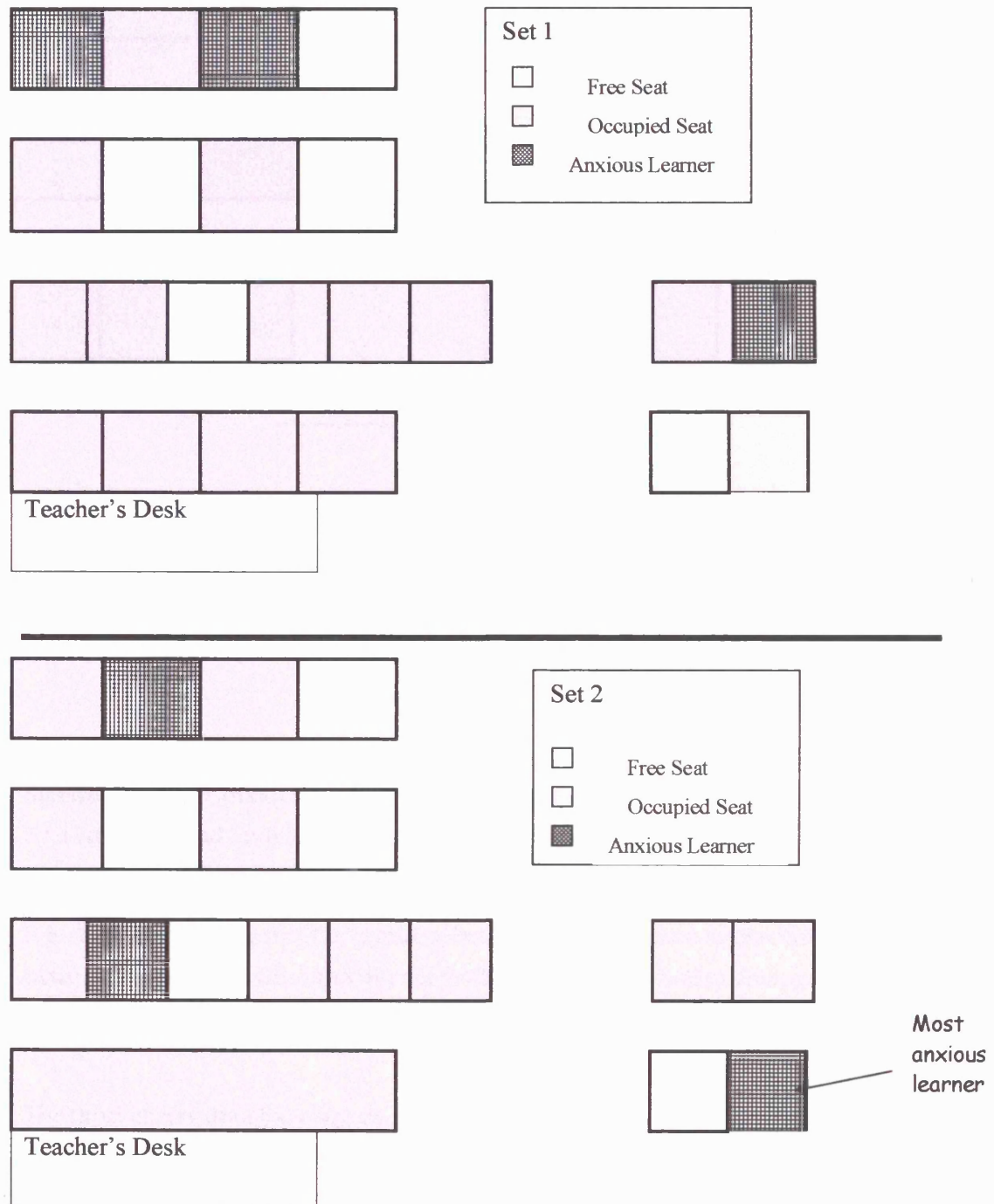
**Table 8.12** Responses to question *Have you ever been in a situation where you chose to sit in a place you thought you wouldn't be noticed?*

	Yes	No, not really	Can't remember
Total (all sets) N=45	9	33	3
Set 1	3	11	
Set 2	1	14	2
Set 3	5	8	1

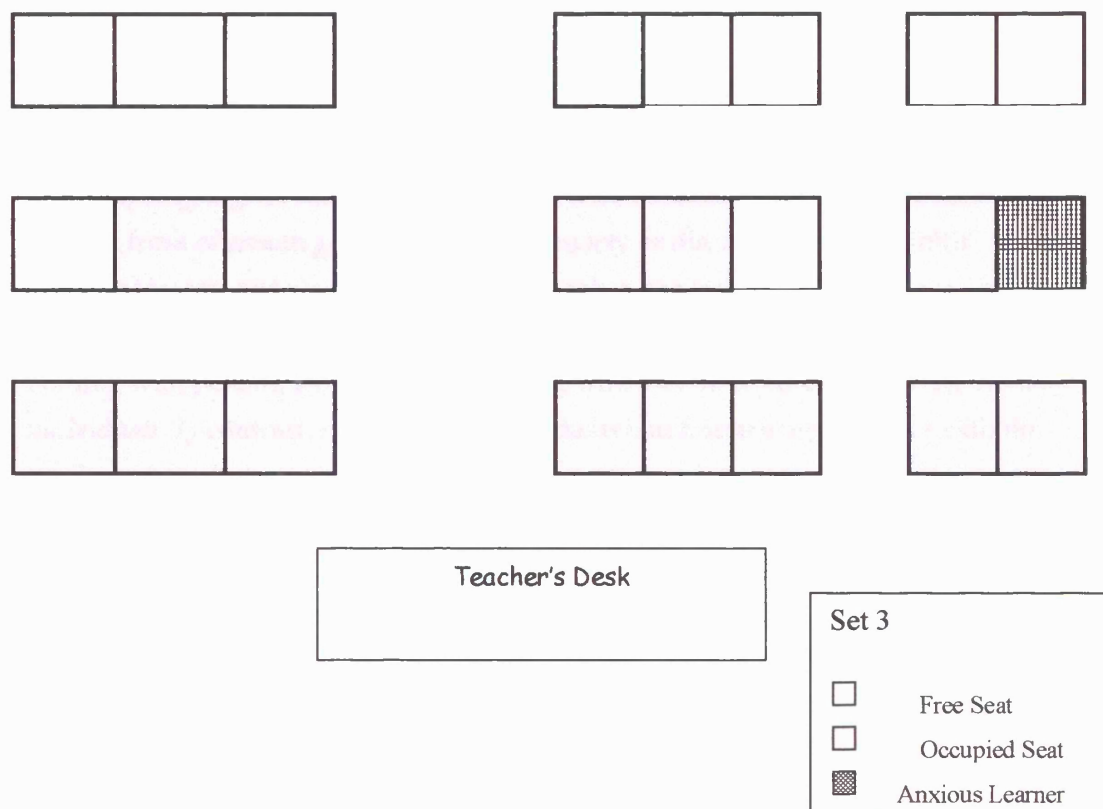
The class seating charts which were drawn up yielded interesting information in this regard. The positioning of learners identified as anxious (over 3.5 on the scale

derived from Part A of the questionnaire) was quite marked (see below).

**Figure 8.9** Seating chart for Sets 1, 2 and 3







In Sets 1 and 2 no anxious learner sat directly in front of the teacher. The learner identified as most anxious from Set 2 sat in the corner of the room partially hidden by a cupboard and built himself a defensive wall with bags and books so he was almost completely cut off from the teacher and the rest of the class.

It is also worth noting that the layout in both classrooms where instruction took place, was very traditional and did not facilitate group interaction amongst learners.

### Avoidance Behaviours

The third observation focusing on individual learners did yield some interesting results in the area of avoidance behaviours. Although there was no avoidance behaviour observed which was as dramatic as that described in Chapter 5, during the focused third observation, behaviours such as looking down when a question was

asked were observed particularly in the instance of the girls. A common strategy was for the student to put up his or her hand just as or just after the teacher had nominated the pupil to answer.

### **Body Language**

The body language of those individuals identified as anxious was quite marked. The hand in front of mouth gesture signifying anxiety or discomfort (Pease 1995) displayed by one girl was not modified even when the teacher asked her a question. Throat clearing before speaking was also marked in one male. Behaviours such as fiddling with pencils, looking down, playing with hair were observed among anxious individuals. By contrast, non-anxious individuals had frequent eye-contact with the teacher when she was speaking, looked at the overhead projector when that was the focus of the lesson and generally gave the impression of being more alert. It is interesting to speculate whether this type of body language is picked up by the teacher and is partly responsible for the uneven turn allocation discussed below.

### **Participation by Anxious and non-Anxious Learners**

Although the amount of participation by individual was not quantified during this observation, it was apparent that allocation of turns was very uneven. During the short observations on anxious individuals, not a single one volunteered an answer, although on two occasions when a choral response was given, the anxious individual did appear to be whispering the answer. Across the three sets, anxious individuals were only singled out to participate on two occasions. This is in sharp contrast with non-anxious individuals who volunteered answers most of the time and who received more nominations than the non-anxious learners.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How is language anxiety manifested in the language classroom?

There is evidence that students use avoidance behaviours such as

- a) not putting up their hands when the teacher asks for an answer
- b) looking down to avoid answering
- c) seating themselves in places where they feel they can go unnoticed

### Manifestations of Anxiety

As stated above, students who had said they never put their hands up in class were asked about their reasons for this. While laziness was one reason previously mentioned, other responses appeared unrelated to anxiety, giving weight to the fact that talking did not necessarily equal learning and that some people learn better by listening and processing the new information.

*I don't volunteer, no.... but I'm doing stuff. I just like to listen and follow what's going on.* [RESPONDENT I]

For others, it was a matter of their own character.

*I think it's a matter of personality... I like to talk and I'm not worried about putting my hand up* [RESPONDENT O]

One informant mentioned that the fact that she didn't put her hand up to volunteer answers didn't mean that she was unwilling to participate. She did not object to being singled out to answer and said that this was the only time she participated in the class.

*I think calling out names is a good way... Otherwise only people like N and N would speak.* [RESPONDENT P]

When questioned about avoidance behaviours, most informants were remarkably frank and also surprisingly aware of their own behaviour in this area. When asked what they did students were able to recognize the fact *I don't look. I look down.* One

student said that she sat in a place where she felt she wouldn't be noticed. She said she did not want to sit at the back because *that's where everyone's talking, see*. She felt that by sitting at the end of a row near the front, she was less conspicuous. *I usually sit around the middle.*

### **Coping Strategies**

Students asked what they did when they felt anxious. Some mentioned the fact that they do their best to avoid participating in the activity. Others mentioned the importance of rehearsing the answers so that they were prepared when the teacher asked. If the teacher asked round the class, they would frequently skip ahead to prepare. Speaking when unprepared was felt to be particularly difficult. Checking with friends sitting close for the correctness of a response was also something which was noted. Overall peers were asked for help ahead of the teacher although this usually meant whispering and losing at least some of the thread of what was happening.

One student mentioned how in other subjects he was able to see what was coming up. The lack of a course book where he could be prepared meant that French lessons were frequently unpredictable in terms of both content and format. This is clearly linked with the issue of lack of unfamiliarity and it may be that this lack of predictability exacerbates anxiety.

### **Summary of Student Interviews**

The interviews with students were particularly useful in shedding light on causes of anxiety. However, it should be noted that although responses have been categorized in the analysis above, in reality a number of reasons were at play in the case of any one individual. For example, one informant said that she was no good at French. When probed, she mentioned the fact that the teacher had put her head in her hands and pretended to scream when she had responded once. The other students then laughed, though she did concede that this was more because of the teacher's acting and they all looked at her. Thus we have the case of a student with poor self-image caused possibly by a past negative experience where she was ridiculed and made to feel very conspicuous.

## ***Limitations***

There were a number of limitations associated with this phase of the research. Firstly, there was a need to accommodate the teacher's concerns and areas of interest. This meant incorporating areas which may not have been of direct relevance to the main focus of language anxiety at critical periods during the research. A further challenge was the intensity of the activity yielding an enormous amount of data which had to be dealt with in a short period of time. This meant that for example, only a limited analysis of the questionnaire was carried out during the investigation period. A detailed statistical analysis of the questionnaire data was not carried out until more time was available. Similarly it was not possible to transcribe all the video footage during the period under investigation and decisions about courses of action had to be taken on the basis of impressionistic viewing of videos. When a quantitative analysis of the videos was carried out, it was too late to go back to the class to investigate some of the issues which had arisen. Furthermore, it was not always possible to see all one wanted merely from the video footage e.g. who exactly was responding to a teacher question.

A further limitation is well known in the literature. Although attempts were made to be as unobtrusive as possible, the halo effect of having an observer in the classroom is difficult to avoid. Research confirms that teachers ask better questions, are less critical and more affirming when an observer is present (Wragg et al. 1996). The events which took place in the classroom were bound to be affected by the presence of the researcher and by the fact that the focus of the research was known to the teacher.

Limitations also exist in regard to both the student interviews and the questionnaires which were based to a large extent on self-report data. However in examining language anxiety, the perspective of the learner is a vital one if we are to understand more about the effects of anxiety on learning. In order to counter the criticism made by Bailey (1983 and others) that an interviewee may say "what he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear" attempts were made to back up the findings with teacher perceptions and classroom observations.

There is, also, a tendency when engaging in case study research to feel that one has the whole picture simply because of the extent of the data collection mechanisms.

Merriam (2001) in his overview of case study research methods warns researchers against thinking that they necessarily have the whole picture. Although initially the approach to classroom observations was ethnographic, the content of the descriptions was inevitably influenced by the strong purpose of the research in the mind of the researcher. It should be noted that there are issues of generalizability with any case study. Although the number of subjects in the present instance ( $N=52$ ) is quite large in relation to many case studies of this kind, the fact that this phase of the research took place with one teacher in one location means that the possibility to extend these findings to other situations is also severely limited.

### **Conclusion**

Despite these limitations, the case study described here has yielded some interesting insights into language anxiety from the perspective of the learner. We have further information about the characteristics of the anxious learner and what they do to manage their anxiety. We know what the pupils in our study feel are causes of anxiety. When combined with the findings from the larger study, our findings take on even greater importance. It is the combination of the findings which will form the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 9**

**“Help students learn to differentiate between constructive and destructive instances of anxiety”**

*Glasgow and Hicks (2003), What Successful Teachers Do*

### **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Having conducted both a large scale survey and a smaller scale classroom-based case study, it now seems appropriate to return to the original research questions and review the results of both parts of the research. This chapter summarizes and combines the findings from both the initial survey and the case study, and proposes a model for foreign language anxiety. The importance of the study in furthering research in the field is discussed and potential areas of practical application are also identified. The limitations of the research are acknowledged and directions for further investigations are outlined.

#### ***Introduction***

The focus of this study has been the phenomenon of language anxiety, its relationship to other variables, its causes and its manifestations. In order to address the research questions, a developmental research design was developed based on two main phases of observation. The first phase of the study consisted of a survey of 600 adolescent learners of French, German, Italian and Spanish. This was followed by an intermediate investigatory period during which questions for further investigation were fine-tuned. The second major phase of the research consisted of a case study of three Year 10 classes taught by the same teacher.

## ***Research Area 1a: Existence of Language Anxiety***

Just as with maths anxiety, if one does not suffer from it, it is easy to be dismissive of its existence. The first prerequisite to any in-depth investigation of anxiety and its relationship to other variables was to ascertain that it was indeed a factor in the learning process for our target population. The results obtained in this area are unequivocal.

We can say with a degree of confidence that language anxiety does indeed exist within the population of 14 – 16 year old learners. The numbers reporting themselves to be anxious came very close to the alarming numbers reported by Price (1991). The size of the sample for the survey in Chapter 4 makes it clear that we can be confident in the results found. Just over half of students reported never feeling sure of themselves when speaking in the foreign language while nearly 1 in 4 of learners reported that they felt frightened in their language class when they were unable to understand what the teacher was saying.

The case study, although with much smaller numbers gave further weight to the findings from Part 1. A refined version of the survey again showed that language anxiety existed for a significant portion of the sample with nearly half feeling that they could get so nervous in the language classroom that they might forget things they knew.

Thus, we were able to be reasonably confident that language anxiety did exist and that the phenomenon was worthy of further investigation. It is again worth reiterating at this point that this is one of the few studies to address the issue of language anxiety in adolescents and is the first empirical in-depth study of this area in the United Kingdom.



### **Research Area 1b: Existence of Test Anxiety**

One of the more surprising findings of the study was that while test anxiety did exist, it had a facilitating effect on language learning. The large survey of Chapter 4 found that learners professed to like tests, feeling that they helped them to study and learn the language more efficiently. These findings were later confirmed in the modified survey which formed part of the case study. The semi-structured class discussion led to further insights into the phenomenon. Although the item from the Horwitz questionnaire used in our own survey was phrased as follows: *Tests help me to show what I know* (E2), learners appeared to view tests as much more than a chance to show what they knew. Rather they viewed tests as an opportunity to check their own learning as opposed to merely displaying knowledge. In other words, the focus was less on the extrinsic issues of demonstrating ability to others but rather on the more intrinsically based self-assessment of learning.

It would therefore seem from our own research that the common Yerkes-Dodson inverted U-shape which asserts that there is an optimal amount of stress may be oversimplistic. It is not the amount of anxiety, if indeed anxiety can be quantified, but the type of pressure which will cause the nature of anxiety to become either facilitating or debilitating.

Other researchers make the generalisation that tests are “typically a source of fear and anxiety in the language classroom, whether the method be multiple-choice questions or oral performance tests.” (Finch, 2001 p.142). However our own research, discussed in the previous chapter, appears to show that it is not the type of test in the narrow sense but rather the nature of the test that is crucial here. Tests which are within the competency level of the students and whose content is predictable seem to be the most effective in helping students learn.

However, since test purpose rather than test type was investigated, we cannot be certain that anxiety is not associated with test type, particularly as research in the area has, in the past, shown such an association. For example, Madsen et al. (1991) found that translation tests provoked the most anxiety whereas true-false and dictation activities the least. While we are able to say that short vocabulary quizzes were liked by the students, our own findings are more linked to broader aspects of the test rather than test format. Tests which are closely linked to previous learning and which are manageable are the most effective in promoting a degree of facilitating anxiety.

Such a finding is extremely encouraging. Not only are tests an important tool in the language learning process but students appear to be taking responsibility for using them for their own learning purposes rather than merely using them to show what they know to the teacher. In this sense, students are making use of the testing opportunities provided to self-assess their own language level in a more personalized and autonomous fashion. Harris (1997, p.19) sums up the benefits of this approach most eloquently, pointing out the benefits of helping learners to perceive their own progress and the value of what they are learning. “The best motive to learn is a perception of the value of the thing learned.” Harris further argues for the greater use of self-assessment in “test-driven secondary education” claiming it can help learners in such contexts to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses.

It would be extremely interesting to build on the current research and that by others such as Madsen, Brown, and Jones (1991) to examine whether test format is really a

key issue here or whether the facilitating effects of tests are more associated with the way that the individual makes use of the testing opportunities presented.

## ***Research Area 2: Anxiety and Other Variables***

The literature reviews established the complexity of the interrelationship between the individual variables at play in the processes of language learning. Once the existence of language anxiety in the target population had been established it was appropriate to see how it was related to other variables in the field of foreign language acquisition. Our research questions from the survey attempted to answer the following:

*How does anxiety relate to other variables, in particular:*

- *Age*
- *Gender*
- *Attitudes*
- *Enjoyment of language learning*
- *Motivation to learn the foreign language*
- *Use of learning strategies*

In the case study, we re-examined these and other variables such as aspects of personality, including general shyness. We also attempted to investigate the relationship between anxiety and achievement in language learning.

The findings in this area found evidence of some relationships, but not others. Results from the survey showed that anxiety was statistically unrelated to many of the variables we had selected for analysis, including attitudes, enjoyment of language learning, motivation, learning strategies as well as whether or not students had visited the countries of the language they were learning. There were however a number of variables which did prove to be related to foreign language anxiety. Some of these variables were very strongly related to anxiety while in the case of others, there was evidence of some sort of relationship which might be worthy of further study.

## **Gender**

Our survey data is inconclusive in showing whether girls are more anxious than boys. There was no significant difference between anxiety levels in boys and girls in the large sample of 600 learners. However, in the sub-sample of more anxious learners, there was a significant difference with girls reporting themselves as more anxious than boys. This was also borne out by the case study where not only did the teacher view girls as more anxious than boys but the results of the self-assessment exercise showed that the girls viewed themselves as more anxious in pair, group and whole class situations.

We can therefore at best only speculate that girls may be more anxious than boys in some contexts. However, in the light of the contradictory findings above, it is not possible to make any definitive statements in this area with confidence.

## **Achievement**

Results from the case study further demonstrated a significant relationship between both spoken and written achievement and levels of language anxiety as measured both by the learners and the teachers. There was a significant negative correlation between levels of anxiety and spoken and written ability as viewed by students in their self-assessment. That is, the higher the levels of anxiety, the lower the perceived ability level. There was also a similar relationship between ability levels and the teacher's perceptions of spoken and written ability. There was one notable exception: a girl from Set 1 who self-reported the highest level of anxiety and was also identified as extremely anxious by the teacher but who nevertheless was extremely competent in French. It seems likely from the interview data that other factors such as personality were at play here.

According to the teacher's perceptions the students from Set 3 were the most anxious and the students from Set 1 the least. Here there was a mismatch between teacher and student assessment. One surprising finding, that is if we equate set with achievement, is the fact that students from Set 3 had the lowest levels of anxiety on the self-assessed anxiety scale derived from Part A of the questionnaire. Furthermore,

there were significant differences in anxiety level in group situations among the three sets with pupils from Set 1 rating themselves as the most anxious.

There were also greater degrees of agreement with some individual questions relating to language anxiety from pupils in Set 1 than pupils in Set 3. For example, 65% of pupils from Set 1 agreed or strongly agreed that they kept thinking that other students were better at French than they were (Item A3) as opposed to 35% of students from Set 3.

For a possible explanation here, we need to return to the literature on facilitating as opposed to debilitating anxiety. It is all too easy to assume that all anxiety is bad, especially in view of the fact that the majority of literature in the area makes this assumption. However, it has been discovered that sometimes students who are anxious do perform better than those who are not. This is because higher levels of anxiety may be associated with higher levels of risk-taking, so that those who actually attempt to produce more difficult structures may report more anxiety than those who are content to remain at a lower level of attainment (Kleinmann, 1977).

The teacher made an interesting comment which partially supports this view. She felt that the students in the upper sets did set themselves higher standards and were also more competitive with one another. According to her, this may have been a reason for the reportedly higher levels of anxiety. This is also linked to the literature on perfectionism which indicates that those students who tend to be more perfectionist by nature suffer the greater degrees of anxiety. Bailey's (1983) study also illustrates the fact that too much competitiveness can tip students from motivation to anxiety.

## **Personality**

For some learners, at least according to the interviews, language anxiety was closely linked to aspects of personality. Two students identified as highly anxious reported that non-participation in the lessons was due to the fact that they were naturally shy and behaved like that in all lessons. Although this makes it seem likely that shyer individuals may be more prone to anxiety of this nature, the fact that general shyness

and language anxiety are separate constructs can be seen from the results of the personal construct analysis exercise. The teacher clearly viewed general shyness as distinct from specific language anxiety.

The exact nature of the effects of personality on language anxiety is unclear and this is perhaps an area worthy of further research. This finding also underlines the importance of investigating other causes apart from anxiety when faced with non-participation in lessons.

### **Self-confidence and Related Variables**

It is likely that there is also a link between levels of self-confidence and anxiety. In both parts of the research, a significant percentage of learners said that they felt that others were better than them at the language. This finding was confirmed through the interviews where anxious individuals claimed to be no good at languages, unable to understand the teacher and felt that they could not keep up with others in the class.

The first survey also identified a significant relationship between anxiety and perceived difficulty level of difficulty of the language. The more worried the learners were, the more they perceived the language as difficult. The causal nature of this is unclear however, and, as Finch (2001) notes, learners who believe themselves to be unsuccessful may engineer results which will prove their beliefs. This suggests that there may be closer links with feelings of self-efficacy related to the language learning task in particular, rather than with feelings of self-confidence as a general personality trait. This view was partially supported by interview comments of learners who mentioned the difficulty level of specific tasks. Listening in particular was one area where learners tended to give up and switch off if they believed the task was too difficult.

Another related construct here which may be worthy of further investigation is that of self-regulation. Self-regulation forms a relatively new area in psychological

research and has only recently started to be applied to the field of education.

According to Zeidner, Boekaerts and Pintrich (2000 p.751 in Boraie, 2003 p.56)

“self-regulation involves cognitive, affective, motivational and behavioural components that provide the individual with the capacity to adjust his or her actions and goals to achieve desired results in light of changing environmental conditions.”

Self-regulation, therefore, involves learners in managing their thought processes, emotions and actions in order to successfully complete the task at hand. Self-regulation is cyclical involving a feedback loop which enables individuals to adjust their behaviour in order to reach a specific goal. It would therefore appear to be of clear relevance to further research in the area of language anxiety. Individuals who have high anxiety levels yet are successful language learners may be good self-regulators, able to manage their emotional response in order to achieve specific goals. A further area of interest is whether self-regulation can be learned and if so, whether it might be useful as a tool for those anxious learners who experience difficulty managing their anxiety.

### ***Research Area 3: Causes of Language Anxiety***

The case study of Chapters 7 and 8 attempted to look at sources of anxiety, in particular seeking answers to these two questions:

*What can trigger language anxiety in an individual?*

*What aspects of the classroom situation can affect anxiety?*

*What specific teacher behaviours contribute to or alleviate anxiety?*

*What role do peers play in contributing to or alleviating language anxiety?*

### **Prior History**

A major question for investigation during this part of the research was the issue of what might trigger the development of language anxiety in an individual. Based on evidence from student interviews, prior history emerged very strongly as a major cause of language anxiety. A previous negative experience could have a profound

effect on a student's feelings about the language learning process in the future. The teacher was the main culprit in this regard.

The most common experience to have a lasting effect was feeling embarrassed in the language classroom. Error correction was often the trigger for such an incident. Students reported they had felt foolish when an error was corrected in an insensitive or harsh way by the teacher. The fact that they were the focus of attention of all in the class further exacerbated the situation. Some respondents felt humiliated by the experience and interpreted the teacher's behaviour as ridiculing them in some way. One negative experience of this kind could make an individual not only wary of participating in class in the future, but create a lasting dislike of the subject.

While the teacher was most frequently responsible for such incidents, there was also a mention of an incident involving peers who had laughed at a boy who had spoken in a French accent. Previous failures in specific tasks can also contribute as evidenced by the girl who had done badly in a test and who then went on to say she felt she was no good at the subject.

The very strong effect that a single incident can have is a lesson for teachers to think carefully about their classroom behaviour and in particular, error correction. If students are to succeed in the language learning task teachers need to create an atmosphere where learners are not afraid to make mistakes and are encouraged to take risks. Whether such an atmosphere generally exists in second language classrooms in UK is not clear.

## ***The Classroom Context***

Reid (1999 p.297) makes the point that "even in optimum conditions, students can experience destructive forms of anxiety..." Although she does not specify exactly what these conditions are, a number of classroom-based causes of language anxiety were identified during the case study. All of these had the potential to affect levels of anxiety both positively and negatively.



## **Feeling Conspicuous in the Classroom**

In common with the literature on communication apprehension, feelings of conspicuousness did heighten anxiety levels. While such attributions are common in the literature on communication apprehension (McCroskey, 1984) this is the first study where such an issue has been empirically investigated with regard to foreign language anxiety. Although intuitively it might be the case that if an individual feels they are the focus of attention in the classroom, then anxiety will be heightened, our study shows that this is a major source of situationally-based anxiety in the classroom. Students reported being very wary of being the centre of attention and hesitant to speak in case others looked at them. Peer group rules of conduct strongly discouraged behaviours which made one stand out in the class.

## **The Effect of Classroom Structure**

Classroom structure here is used in the sense used by Kagan (1992) where “structures are generic, content-free techniques for organizing instruction (Kagan, 1998 p.3) that describe the various ways of organizing the classroom not in the physical sense but in terms of the patterns through which learners cooperate in order to accomplish tasks.

Students found communicating in pairs less anxiety provoking than communicating in groups or in the whole class. One surprising finding, however, was that interaction in groups caused more nervousness than speaking in class situations. This is in contrast to all other research which shows that it is communication in front of the whole class that it is most likely to raise levels of anxiety.

As previously noted, there are a number of possible reasons for this finding. It may be that group interactions required lengthier output in the foreign language whereas French language response use in the larger class tended to be confined to short single sentence or even single word responses. It may also be due to the effects of peer evaluation highlighted in the literature review of chapter 6. Later investigations further indicated that it could be that group work was relatively rare in these classes

and that the unfamiliarity of the practice may therefore have further heightened the anxiety level.

## **The Effect of Methodology**

The interviews confirmed that the pressure to keep up communication in the target language was an issue of concern to this particular teacher. The data further confirmed that she felt that she should conduct most aspects of her class in French including direct instructional aspects, such as teaching about the language. However, this stated concern with communication did not carry over into practice. The teacher almost always explained the purpose of the lesson in English and did do some overt grammar teaching in English. She would also tend to switch to English fairly promptly if it was apparent that students were not understanding her French. Therefore despite the stated pressure on her to communicate in French, the teacher would make strategic use of code switching to help students with their understanding. Thus, helping students to understand not unnaturally took priority over French language use. Whether other teachers modify their teaching behaviours in a similar way might be an area for further investigation.

It is also worth mentioning another aspect of teaching behaviour which, at least on the surface, runs counter to theories of communicative methodology with their accompanying focus on fluency. Despite the fact that fluency in the language is a stated aim of language instruction, there did seem a disproportionate emphasis on accuracy in this teacher's classroom and certainly in the minds of the students there existed the feeling that they needed to make sure that everything they said was correct. Ehrman et al (2003) make the point that while language teaching methodologies come and go, each leaves a trace in how we currently teach languages. Approaches to error correction are perhaps a relic of a by-gone accuracy focused era which seem to have remained at least in this particular language classroom.

A more pessimistic reason for this is provided by Doherty (2002), in talking about the difficulties of implementing the policy of maximising exposure to the target

ilanguage. According to Doherty (2002 p.3) the problem is “that pupils can get through GCSE on Skinnerian techniques, with a minimum of grammar and a sausage-machine approach to teaching and there is therefore a temptation to get them through on this basis, under pressure for good grades and from league tables”

However, although the teacher’s use of language may not have been affected to a large degree by communicative methodology, she did keep up the pressure on students to communicate in the foreign language. *En francais, s’il vous plait* was a common request particularly with the upper sets.

Our early hypothesis that communicative methods with their pressure on individuals to communicate in the target language might exacerbate anxiety has, therefore, not been proved. At the moment, there is insufficient evidence to show that this is a factor in the raising of anxiety levels.

## **The Effect of Materials**

Clearly if language learning materials are not pitched at the right level for the students, then learning will not take place. If they are too easy, learners will be insufficiently challenged; if too hard, then it is likely that anxiety will result. This did not prove to be an issue with regard to the current research except in the instance of a couple of learners who reported finding the listening too hard. There was, however, mention in the interviews of the fact that not having a course book which students were able to take home was a factor in raising anxiety levels. Teacher handouts and worksheets were not deemed an adequate substitute nor were notes and vocabulary lists made by the pupils.

The lack of a course book also meant that individuals had little idea of either the content or the format of the lesson, adding to the unpredictability of the language learning experience for them.

## Familiar Activities

The finding above takes on even greater importance when one considers that the overwhelming majority of students (over 60%) preferred to do activities they were used to in the language class, even going so far as disliking the novelty of certain information-gap activities that the teacher had gone to great lengths to prepare. Set 1 was the most conservative in this regard, with the greatest degree of agreement to the statement. B2 *I prefer doing activities I'm used to in the French class*. In the semi-structured class discussion, they claimed to like repetitive exercises from the book which made them learn and were fairly dismissive of the more creative ideas the teacher brought to her classroom.

This is particularly interesting in light of much of the advice given to novice teachers by writers such as Cajkler and Addelman (2000) who feel that fun in the class can be achieved through the unexpected and the unpredictable. While it cannot be claimed that repetitive exercises would diminish anxiety, given the fact that anxiety does lessen in predictable situations, coupled with the fact that the majority of students dislike new activities, it is worth investigating the relationship between anxiety and predictability of materials further.

This also has clear implications for the manner in which the teacher plans her lessons and might suggest the wisdom of allowing for a degree of structure which does not vary from lesson to lesson. When these findings were shared with the teacher, she expressed a degree of surprise since she felt it was her role to make the lessons as varied and interesting as possible. Indeed, keeping the learners entertained was an important consideration for her. Here, there was a clear mismatch between students' wants and teacher expectations. The teacher felt that she had to keep the students on their toes and specifically avoid the familiar: *so that they don't know what's coming next*.

It should be noted that the teacher in this study was extremely well-intentioned. She had very strong feelings about ways of helping the learners and put a great deal of energy into trying to help learners in all three sets. However these ways of helping

may have been more suited to her own personality and style of learning. As Ehrman et al. (2003 p.324) point out “a genuine desire to help can become interference for a learner whose approach to learning differs from the teacher’s preferences.”

## **Overall Classroom Atmosphere**

Classroom atmosphere is clearly an issue which a teacher can affect both positively and negatively. As evidenced by the survey, students generally found the atmosphere in their classroom was relaxed. The teacher also acknowledged the importance of establishing a positive learning climate within her class. Her main strategies for doing this were to try to establish good rapport and a relaxed atmosphere. However, this relaxed atmosphere did not extend to one where students were encouraged to take risks and feel free to make errors without fear of embarrassment or negative comments on the part of the teacher. As previously mentioned, the focus was very much on producing correct answers in accurate French within a short time period.

## **The Role of the Teacher**

There was evidence from both the interviews and the observations which showed that the teacher has the power to affect levels of anxiety in both positive and negative ways.

A number of practices were instrumental in raising levels of anxiety.

## **Error Correction**

The teacher’s manner of error correction which was the main source of negative experiences in the past, was the area also identified as a source of situationally-based anxiety in the present. Although lip service was paid to communicating fluently in the target language, the focus was very much on correctness of the response. It is interesting to note that such an emphasis on accuracy is to be found in some of the literature which gives advice to novice teachers. Indeed in Atkinson and Lazarus (1998 p.19) teachers are told that “At the practice stage, errors need to be avoided since it is pointless to practice mistakes.”

While there was a noticeable focus on grammatical and lexical accuracy, it was the correction of pronunciation that pupils found particularly anxiety-provoking. There were frequent reports of feeling extremely self-conscious trying to adopt a French accent. The teacher's main correction strategy in this area, i.e. that of forcing pupils to repeat was not helpful and indeed, there is evidence that it further exacerbated levels of language anxiety. Some learners claimed not to be able to hear what the teacher was correcting, while others said that no matter how many times they were asked to repeat, they could still not pronounce the word or words correctly. Persevering with correction in the face of embarrassment was particularly disliked. This finding supports much of the literature in the area.

In 6 books of advice to new teachers surveyed, sections on pronunciation were short and the advice general as in the following extract "It is easy to neglect the fact that speaking a foreign language is a physical activity and that difficulties in making the sounds of the language interfere with learning " (Atkinson and Lazarus, 1998 p.27). It may therefore be that teachers really do not have the techniques at their disposal to either teach or correct mistakes of pronunciation in a more sensitive way. It is however worth bearing in mind the comments made by Gross in this regard.

"There is nothing more paralyzing to language acquisition than the insistence on producing only right answers, and its companion, the fear of making mistakes" (Gross, 2004)

### **Teacher Behaviour during Written Tests**

A further occasion when anxiety levels could be heightened was during written tests. This is an area which was not anticipated nor one which has received any attention in the literature. A couple of aspects of teacher behaviour which exacerbated language anxiety were mentioned in this regard. Walking round the room so that her approach could be heard was mentioned, as was coming up and reading what students had written without comment. This is an area where a teacher could easily

modify her behaviour to make students more relaxed at what is, for some, a stressful occasion.

### **Incomprehensible Input**

Incomprehensible input was another area which caused a degree of anxiety, with a significant number of learners in the larger survey claiming to be frightened when they did not understand what the teacher was saying. This, when coupled with “being put on the spot” with little time to answer questions, could be particularly anxiety-provoking.

While the survey highlighted practices which might tend to increase anxiety, the interviews coupled with the observations highlighted the very great potential the teacher has to alleviate such anxiety. The first of these is quite simply to recognise its existence and the effect it can have on the language learning experience.

### **Teacher Awareness of Existence of Language Anxiety**

Language teachers are by definition good language learners and just as mathematicians have difficulty understanding that maths anxiety exists and librarians wonder at the fact that library anxiety is a subject of research, so too may language teachers underestimate the very real effects that language anxiety can have on the individual. It is interesting that in the exploratory phase of the research described in Chapter 2, while teachers expressed their concern at lack of participation in classes, such non-participation was put down simply to a lack of effort or insufficient motivation. Even some of the literature appears sceptical. Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001 p.259) talk of “the *purported* (my italics) anxiety of learners” which “has become a central concern of foreign / second language acquisition research”. It would therefore appear that an essential first step is for the teacher to recognise both that language anxiety exists and that it can have an effect on language learning. Only then can teachers exert their power to decrease the levels of anxiety which exist within the individual and within a class.

The teacher in this study was able to recognise the existence of language anxiety. Results from the construct elicitation exercise showed that she viewed it as an anxiety existing within her language class which was separate and distinct from the general shyness or nervousness that students might exhibit in other situations. In fact, she was remarkably accurate at recognizing those individuals who were anxious. There was a significant correlation between the self-assessment of anxiety levels and the assessment of anxiety on the part of the teacher. It is interesting, however, that the teacher claimed at least in the early days of the research that she did not explicitly take anxiety into account when dealing with the individuals in the class. Despite this, she did exhibit a number of behaviours which would serve to decrease anxiety levels.

### **Modifying Language to Aid Comprehension**

Jane was very sensitive to students' levels of comprehension. This was evidenced by a number of strategies she adopted. For example, her instruction-giving was markedly different in the cases of Sets 1 and 2 and Set 3, reflecting her ability to modify her language to varying levels to ensure comprehension on the part of the students. Whereas instruction giving was almost exclusively in French in the case of Sets 1 and 2, it was frequently followed by at least a partial translation into English with Set 3. Likewise with Set 1, she would attempt to answer queries in French or at least would answer them with a strategic mixture of French and English. In the case of Set 3, a question from a student on all occasions triggered a switch from French to English. She would also frequently use other props to ensure comprehension: drawing on the board, an exaggerated use of mime or rephrasing into easier French. On other occasions, she would give clues in English or even switch to English completely when an individual did not understand. She also indicated in the interviews that she was well aware that showing students they could understand French would greatly help to increase their self-confidence.

She did, however, repeatedly indicate that she felt guilty about using English. This, the literature suggests, is a common feeling among teachers (Butzkamm, 2003; Cook 2001). It is perhaps worth remembering that although a monolingual lesson is



theoretically possible, monolingual learning is not. As Butzkamm (2003 p.31) states, “No one can turn off what they already know.... the mother tongue is “silently” present in beginners even when lessons are kept monolingual”.

### **Creating the Right Atmosphere**

A further way in which the teacher managed to reduce anxiety levels was through the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere (see above). She had excellent rapport with the boys in particular, achieved through the use of humour and through chatting about areas of mutual interest e.g. television programmes. She took a real interest in the private lives of the children and was self-disclosing about herself, one way which is advocated in the literature as a simple way to establish rapport (Randall with Thornton, 2001). It is extremely easy, as humanistic methodologists have pointed out, to view learning as something which is done “from the neck up”. By not ignoring the affective aspects of language learning, the teacher did undoubtedly decrease anxiety levels.

The teacher was also aware of a further aspect of the creation of a positive atmosphere: that of creating a non-threatening environment in the classroom. She paid lip-service to the importance of allowing students to experiment with the language and make mistakes. Unfortunately, this did not always transfer through to her real practice. Although, on a few occasions, she did praise an attempt to respond in French, most of the feedback she gave to learners was on the accuracy of their responses. This can hardly have encouraged learners to feel free to make mistakes or to take risks.

A further tool for alleviating anxiety is to take on board the wishes and feelings of the learners. The teacher was very open and willing to do this and sought opportunities to allow the learners to express their thoughts on the language learning process. Reid (1999) talks of the fact that teachers are responsible for providing the scaffolding for effective and efficient learning. They do this through listening to the students express their needs, beliefs and perceptions. Underhill sees this act of in-depth listening to

the student as having a real impact on the atmosphere of learning since “our students don’t necessarily need reassurance, what they need is to be heard” (1989, p.256).

Although the semi-structured class discussion was designed as a research tool to dig deeper into issues raised by the questionnaire, its use as an anxiety-reducing technique in its own right is worthy of mention. The teacher in this case also mentioned how productive it was to view the videos of the lessons and get learner perspectives on issues ranging from the text book to individual activities. It is likely that allowing learners the opportunity to voice their emotions and opinions in this manner could help to reduce anxiety levels in the class overall even if not in individual learners.

All of this perhaps indicates the importance of self-examination and reflection on the part of the teacher. Thornbury (1996) discusses teacher talk from a training standpoint, although the points he makes are of relevance to many aspects of teacher behaviour. He strongly advocates the use of a “bottom-up” approach to raise teachers’ awareness of their classroom talk through the use of video recording, transcription and analysis of lessons. The teacher who was part of the case study very clearly benefited from such an approach and it may be a useful way to sensitize teachers to their own classroom talk and its effect on students.

**Table 9.1.** Summary of teacher behaviours which may heighten or alleviate anxiety

ANXIETY HEIGHTENING	
Test Taking	Walking round the room so she can be heard Coming up and reading what someone has written without saying whether it is right or wrong
Use of language	Using the target language to the exclusion of English when students did not understand
Correction strategies	Exaggerating the pronunciation when a word was wrongly pronounced
	Persevering with correction
	Praising correctness of response to the exclusion of effort made on the part of the learner
Questioning strategies	Putting learners "on the spot"
	Allowing too long to elapse before moving on to the next person
ANXIETY ALLEVIATING	
Classroom atmosphere	Use of humour
	Building rapport through shared interests
	Viewing learners as individuals with their own feelings
Use of language	Using clues to help meaning e.g. clues in English, mime, drawings
	Rephrasing into simpler French or providing partial translation into English
Questioning Strategies	Allowing sufficient time to formulate a response

Thus the teacher can have both a positive and negative effect on the levels of anxiety. Indeed as pointed out it may be that the event itself is perceived differently by different individuals. An example here would be how long the teacher waits before requiring a response. What may seem excessive to one individual might be viewed merely as reasonable thinking time by another. Whereas the traditional view of facilitating as opposed to debilitating anxiety assumed that there was a certain amount of anxiety which was too much, it may be here that a number of antecedent factors which predispose the learner to higher levels of anxiety come into play affecting the way that classroom practice is viewed and meaning that the same situation might have a different effect on the individual learner.

## **The Social Setting of the Classroom: the Influence of Peers**

Results from the interviews indicated that peers could be powerful in both supporting others as well as being potential sources of anxiety. Strong worries about negative evaluation or rather humiliation in front of peers were repeatedly mentioned during the interviews. The teenage years are a time when peer pressure is typically at its height. The pressure to conform to similar values, beliefs and behaviours and adopt similar attitudes means that learners are particularly sensitive to anything which will draw attention to them as different. This seemed to be true for both males and females. It appears that the attraction of peer identification will cause learners to avoid anything which singles them out and will become anxious about behaviours which might have this effect.

However while peer pressure typically portrays a negative stereotype, there was also evidence of co-operation to achieve tasks associated to language learning. While it is acknowledged that peers are the primary source of emotional support for adolescence, there was a great deal of evidence backed up by questionnaires, observations and interviews that peers also provided academic support to one another. If a student did not understand something in the lesson, he and more particularly she would usually ask the person sitting next to her to help. Checking of responses prior to speaking was also an activity which students engaged in. On a couple of occasions, peers would help out a student who was struggling to answer in the target language. This positive peer co-operation may be an underused resource in the language learning classroom.

One further isolated source of anxiety was raised by the teacher. One of the girls (sitting alone during the last observation of Set 3) had recently “fallen out” with girls she had previously been friendly with. This according to the teacher was causing her considerable distress and clearly heightening her overall anxiety levels. While such a reason is totally unrelated to the specifics of the language classroom, it does underline the fact that the classroom is a social setting, that learning is a social event and that difficulties encountered in social interaction will inevitably spill over and

affect learning. Research into the narrow confines of language acquisition has, perhaps, failed to take these aspects into account sufficiently in the past, although many teachers are very sensitive to intra-class relationships of this sort.

## **Research Area 4: Effects of Anxiety**

The fourth and final major area of research was concerned with the effects of anxiety. Specifically, we looked at:

- *How is language anxiety manifested in the classroom?*
- *What do anxious learners think and how do they feel?*
- *What effect does anxiety have on their learning?*
- *Do learners attempt to manage their anxiety and if so, in what way?*

## **Manifestations of Anxiety**

Observations showed the non-verbal communication of anxious learners mirrored that characterizing anxiety in the literature (Pease, 1995). Anxious learners avoided eye contact with the teacher, fidgeted, spoke in quiet tones, at times barely above a whisper and coughed nervously when called upon to speak. There were a number of “coping” strategies mentioned in the literature and which were observed during this study. These could also provide clues to the teacher that an individual is suffering from anxiety.

## **Coping Strategies**

The learners surveyed did not use particularly sophisticated coping strategies to deal with their anxiety. The two most common forms of coping were communication avoidance and communication withdrawal. Thus, the learners would try to avoid answering questions through their positioning in the class and through not establishing eye contact. The more extreme communication withdrawal was also observed. Learners would quite simply not say anything. The most anxious learner adopted this strategy even when she was nominated by the teacher.

Other strategies were to ask for help from friends although this usually involved just asking for the answer rather than asking for specific help to deal with anxiety. Rehearsing the answer was also mentioned.

When questioned during the interviews, learners appeared to have no other specific strategies of the types mentioned in the literature e.g. focusing, breathing. Whether such strategies could be used in the secondary classrooms in Britain is a matter for debate.

## **Effects of Anxiety**

The relationship between anxiety and achievement as perceived by learners has already been mentioned above. The major effect of anxiety on the individual which emerged from the interviews was that those suffering from anxiety would do their best to avoid participating in the language process. Although one girl claimed that she did not need to be able to speak in order to learn the language, whether it is actually possible to learn a language without speaking is open to question. The feelings expressed by anxious individuals were feelings of insecurity about language, about how they would be viewed by others, and feeling that they were the object of every one's attention. Such feelings are bound to distract the learners from the cognitive task at hand.

## **Limitations**

The research on which this thesis is based has a number of imperfections. The limitations inherent in the large survey have already been mentioned and are connected with the difficulties of combining the research into language anxiety with the larger action research focused aims of the LINGUA study.

Limitations relating to the interviews with teacher and students, the semi-structured class discussion and the observations have already been mentioned in Chapter 8. However, combining all of these in the case study also brings another set of its own

limitations. This case study has all the hallmarks of the typical case study in that it was conducted in one particular place with one particular set of individuals at one particular period of time. Case studies are easily open to accusations of subjectivity (Yin, 1994), and the interpretations of the researcher in a case study are also subject to being criticized as biased. Although care was taken to avoid a one-sided view of the complexity of students' experiences by checking interpretations with both teacher and students, inevitably inferences were made and personal interpretations placed on some of the classroom events. There are further issues connected with the internal validity of the case study. The importance of the teacher and her ability to motivate and alleviate or cause anxiety has been well documented. However, just as students vary so do teachers, in their personalities, in their teaching / learning styles, in their overall aptitude and in their self-efficacy. Given this, it is difficult to argue that the findings from a single case study could be generalisable to the larger population.

A further limitation is concerned with the focus of the study itself. While the study has focused on affective variables and looked at them in the context of the classroom, it has not been possible to look at everything. The cognitive aspects of learning, in particular are missing from this study. We should perhaps take note of Stevick's (1999 p.43) warning against viewing affective variables as the "new philosopher's stone" of language teaching and applied linguistics in light of the increasing popularity of the study of affective variables in these fields.

## ***IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY***

After many years of being relegated to a peripheral status in the consideration of variables in second language acquisition, there is now some evidence that an understanding of language anxiety is critically important for educators and researchers.

Despite the limitations mentioned above, this study contributes to our understanding of language anxiety in a number of ways: First of all, it is the first study of its kind to look at the phenomenon of anxiety in such a large population of adolescents, a time

when anxiety levels may be prone to being particularly high. The finding that it does exist is particularly significant both for researchers and practitioners. Secondly, although studies of language anxiety have taken place in other English speaking countries including the US and Australia, this is the first in-depth study of the phenomenon in Britain.

Furthermore, until recently there was a gap between theoretical research into motivation to learn languages and what teachers really wanted to know. There has been a similar gap between theory and practice in the literature on language anxiety with many of the studies offering mere suggestions as to what teachers should do which are not rooted in empirical study. This is the one of the few studies to offer advice to teachers which is based on the realities of the classroom situation.

Additionally, by being firmly rooted in the classroom, the study is of interest to researchers who have felt that the social aspects of the classroom which give rise to anxiety have been neglected. It is hoped that the key findings of the research will enable teachers to bear these social considerations in mind.



### SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- Language anxiety exists within the population of 14 – 16 year old learners.
- Girls are more anxious than boys in whole class, group and pair situations
- Those who are more anxious perceive the language as more difficult
- There is no difference among anxiety level according to the language studied
- Test anxiety also exists but has a generally facilitating effect on learning

### CAUSES

- Past negative experiences most commonly error correction or being put “on the spot” by the teacher
- Fear of negative evaluation by peers
- Overzealous error correction on the part of the teacher
- Unpredictability of materials and classroom processes
- Feelings of conspicuousness
- Negative thoughts e.g. thinking that others are better at the language

## IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE

The great increase in the study of language anxiety, even within the last five years, has been noted in the literature. The assumption is that an understanding of the causes and effects of language anxiety will help classroom practitioners to recognize its existence and minimize its negative effects. A further belief is that if anxiety is minimized, it will improve learner performance and increase learning satisfaction

As stated in the literature (Phillips, 1999; Oxford, 1999) it is clear that the teacher has a central role to play in alleviating such anxiety. However, much of the literature merely provides common-sense solutions or talks in broader general terms about the importance of creating a non-threatening classroom atmosphere without specifying what such a classroom might look like. This whole area of specific teacher practices which alleviate as well as cause anxiety is one that still needs further clarification and opens a wealth of research agendas for researchers of anxiety in the future.

Although it is beyond the scope of this study to experiment with anxiety-reducing techniques, the research very clearly points to specific practices that the teacher might adopt to achieve classroom conditions which are optimal for learning. Such indications of what teachers might do is based not on intuitive notions of best ways to learn but on the responses of those who are anxious in the classroom and, as such, these lessons are worth noting in this final chapter.

### ***Suggestions for the Low-Anxiety Classroom***

Oxford (1990, p. 163) delineated three types of affective strategies that can be used to regulate learner attitudes, motivation, and emotions. These include strategies for anxiety reduction (using progressive relaxation and deep breathing exercises, music, and laughter), for self-encouragement (making positive statements, taking risks wisely, and administering self-rewards), and for monitoring emotions (listening to the body, completing a checklist, writing a language learning diary, and discussing feelings with peers). While these may be workable in an American context of adults learning a foreign language, whether it is possible to incorporate deep breathing and relaxation exercises into the Leicestershire classroom is a moot point. However, there are a number of things that can be done to reduce anxiety based on the findings from the present study.

#### **1. Encourage realistic expectations of accuracy and errors**

The research showed that the teacher had a very high requirement for correctness and suggested that students felt that they always had to respond with the correct answer. This is quite simply not realistic or feasible in a language learning context. Errors are a natural part of the learning process and should be viewed as such by learners. More activities focusing specifically on fluency might help to redress the balance. Creating an expectation that errors are a natural part of the learning process and encouraging an attitude of risk-taking will also help in this regard.

#### **2. Provide positive feedback to students**

This is linked to the point above. Maslow's well-known hierarchy of human needs stresses the importance of self-esteem and the esteem of others. (Maslow, 1954). The teacher needs to give feedback in such a way that students feel their contributions are valued. Even negative feedback should

contain an element of praise. Cajkler and Addelmann point out that the most powerful motivator to learn is self-esteem. Teachers must make sure that they build up and do not destroy this feeling.

**3. Students' fears of public embarrassment must be taken seriously**

The teacher needs to be aware of the depth of feelings on the part of learners and avoid putting them in situations which are awkward for them. Error correction needs to be done in a sensitive way. The traditional method of getting another student to supply the correct response if the first student is unable to self-correct and then returning to student one is a possibility here. Pronunciation errors cannot be solved merely by getting the student to repeat the word.

**4. Be sensitive to pupils' feelings about the use of the target language**

Fear of not understanding the teacher was a major contributor to language anxiety. A number of writers (Butzkamm, 2003; Cook, 2001) point out that it is natural to use the L1 when learning a second language Macaro (1997) suggests providing explicit rules for the language classroom along the following lines

“your teacher will speak in French exclusively;  
you are free to use English until you yourself feel ready to try speaking French  
you should not try to use French until you are completely comfortable doing so.” (p.128)

**5. Make the curriculum explicit so that learners know what they will be studying, in which order and at what pace**

Our research showed that uncertainty and unpredictability were factors in the maintenance of language anxiety. Providing learners with a timetable of what will be studied, enabling them to look ahead and making sure that they are always clear about the focus of the learning and the expectations that the teacher has of them are all useful strategies to give the language learning process a clear sense of direction in the eyes of students

**6. Use cooperative learning activities (Kagan, 1998)**

The research showed that peers had a part to play in the development and maintenance of language anxiety, causing learners to feel lack of confidence in using the language they knew. Cooperative learning techniques which have been used in mainstream education in the United States for the last fifteen years but are not popular in Britain are particularly helpful in ensuring that social constraints do not prevent students from maximising their language learning possibilities

**7. Reflect on your own teaching**

Students are increasingly being encouraged to reflect on their own learning, how they learn best and what their particular learning style is. One lesson we might take from the study is that teachers should do the same. They need to be

aware of possible mismatches between their own learning style and that of their students. They should ensure that they cater to all learning styles in the class rather than teaching just to their own.

**8. Create a positive classroom learning environment**

This can be done by:

- The use of humour as practiced by Jane in this study. Care must be taken to laugh with not at the students. Using materials which have an element of humour is also a possibility.
- Treating the learners as people. Respecting their needs and learning preferences. Language learning involves an interplay of personalities not only between the teacher and students but between the teacher and the class and the students and students.
- Paying sufficient attention to the social setting of the classroom and the dynamics at play within it. Build in community building activities which can easily be structured to also provide a language learning focus (Hadfield, 1992).

## ***Implications for Theories of Language Anxiety***

As well as practical implications, this study has a number of implications for theories of language anxiety. First it adds to the weight of evidence to show that language anxiety and test anxiety are indeed separate constructs which can have an effect on language learning. However, it is one of the first studies to show that the effects of test anxiety can be positive.

Secondly, it shows that the study of language anxiety is applicable not only to adult learning situations in the United States but that learners of secondary school age here in Britain may suffer as much, if not more, from this form of anxiety.

Thirdly, it adds to our knowledge of how anxiety is linked (or not linked) with other variables. It shows that it may be related to achievement, personality, self-confidence and gender. Furthermore, it is one of the first empirical studies to demonstrate the relationship between anxiety and contextual aspects of the learning situation such as materials, the teacher or other students.

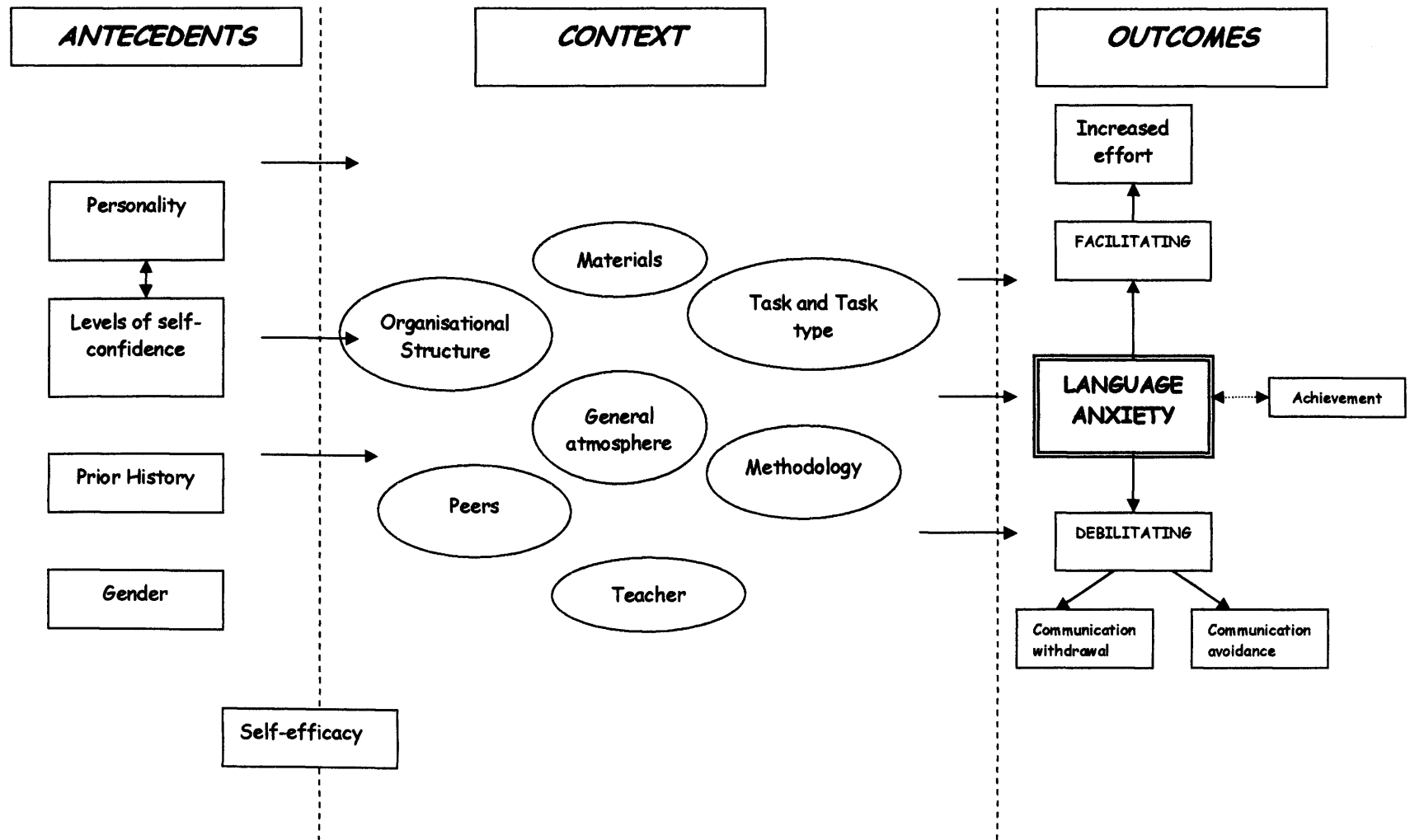
The modified version of the Horwitz instrument which was used to measure anxiety in this study may also prove to be of use to other researchers, particularly those interested in further investigating the phenomenon of language anxiety with adolescent learners outside the United States. This instrument proved to have a high internal reliability ( $\alpha = .78$  in the first study and  $\alpha = .79$  on the general anxiety scale in the second). Furthermore, whereas the validation of the Horwitz instrument was limited, our own modified version proved to have not only high face validity but also high concurrent validity in its ability to identify those learners who were assessed as anxious by the teacher.

However, perhaps the most important feature of the present research is that it has attempted an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of language anxiety in its social context and identified features of the learning environment which may cause or exacerbate anxiety. By combining the results of both parts of the research, it is possible to propose a model to provide a representation of how the variables previously identified may interact with one another in the social context of the classroom.

The model on the page which follows groups variables under two main categories: those of antecedents which the learners bring with them and which the teacher must take account of but cannot change and aspects of the classroom situation which the teacher can affect to a greater or lesser extent.

To the left of the diagram, we have antecedents. Personality, levels of self-confidence and gender represent characteristics that learners bring with them to the foreign language learning situation. Some of these, such as self-efficacy, may be amenable to change, while others such as gender are clearly fixed. All these, however will have the potential to affect levels of anxiety in the classroom. The model on the following page looks at these antecedents that learners bring with them and then at the contextual features of the classroom which can exacerbate anxiety. The final part of the model looks at the possible effects that anxiety may have on the learning process.

Figure 9.1 A Situational Model of Language Anxiety



## **Antecedents**

Personality, levels of self-confidence and gender have already been mentioned as antecedents that learners bring with them which have an effect on anxiety. Prior history is also important in this model. Learners bring with them the more or less fixed attributes of self-confidence, personality and gender and these, coupled with their past experiences of language learning, will colour the way they feel about the classroom and the events which take place in it.

Feelings of self-efficacy straddle the divide between antecedents and the classroom, since evidence seems to suggest that while that self-efficacy can be affected by variables such as personality, it is in part at least, a learnable skill which can be applied to the language learning context.

## **Learning Context**

A number of key aspects of learning context also have a part to play in the model. The general classroom atmosphere has been placed in the centre of this section since it is affected by all the other factors in the outer circle. The teacher is able to affect anxiety levels both positively and negatively, as are peers. Task type particularly if it involves speaking will also cause a rise in levels of anxiety. The organisational structure of the classroom will also have an effect, with individual work the least anxiety inducing and group or public work the most. Unpredictability in terms of both materials and methodology may also heighten levels of anxiety.

It is, however, important to note that many of the above factors are interdependent. For example, the teacher has been placed in the outer circle but it is interesting to note that it lies within her power to affect many of the other factors. While changes in methodology may require a radical shift in teacher behaviours, it is much easier to take materials, task types or organisational classroom structures into account to cater for differing anxiety levels within the class. The effect of peers is more difficult to counter but is again linked to other factors. For example, the task type and the classroom organizational structure can be planned so that peer co-operation, which has been shown to diminish anxiety, is built into the equation. The methodology will

also to an extent affect both the task type, the organizational structure and the materials and have a secondary effect on the predictability of structures and materials. It seems likely that while the representation of the model includes neat, compartmentalised variables, in reality these will interact in a number of ways both within the classroom and within the individual.

## Outcomes

The variables within the learning context will have various effects on the individual, depending on the antecedents at play within that individual. Thus anxiety may be facilitating and result in increased effort as was evidenced by the results relating to test anxiety. It can also be debilitating in which case the two most common results observed within the present study were communication avoidance and communication withdrawal. The arrow connecting achievement and anxiety represents a two way process where anxiety may affect achievement and achievement may affect anxiety. The arrow itself is dotted as the nature of the relationship is still far from clear.

In terms of anxiety outcomes, however, the issue of degree is an important one which is frequently not given the attention it deserves. It should be noted that there are various forms that the anxiety might take. These might range from the mild: feeling of being inhibited about asking questions, as was the case with respondent C of the case study, to the severe (that of the girl in Chapter 5 who spent a significant part of the lesson under the desk.) Much of the literature talks of anxiety in quantifiable terms e.g. high anxiety, too much anxiety etc. A further area of research might be to examine the Yerkes- Dodson model and see exactly how closely it does match reality in terms of optimum levels of anxiety.



### ***Summary of Possible Areas for Further Research***

There are several implications for further research based on this study. These have already been mentioned within this chapter. However it is worth reiterating the three main areas which could usefully be further investigated.

Significant numbers of adolescents were found to be anxious. Certain characteristics predisposed them to such anxiety, but there were a large number of aspects of classroom behaviour which could exacerbate such anxiety. All of this suggests possibilities to build on work already accomplished to investigate in greater depth individual aspects related to anxiety in teenagers such as the effect of the teacher or peers in raising anxiety.

A second possible area is to look more closely at test types and purposes in order to build on the positive attitudes towards test-taking that were found in the current study. Types of tests which have facilitating as opposed to debilitating levels of anxiety should be investigated in order to allow teachers to maximise the facilitating effects of such tests. It is in this context that the Yerkes-Dodson model could also be put to the test.

What can be done to help anxious individuals is the third area which is of clear interest. Investigations into self-efficacy and self-regulation to minimise the negative effects of anxiety is a further area which would be of real practical help to teachers. However, language learning does not take place in a vacuum. The classroom is a social place, learning is a social event and therefore social factors may have more influence than we realize. This resonates very strongly with the intuitive feelings of many foreign language educators. However, the social setting of the classroom and its effect on affective factors has also not been thoroughly researched and further work is needed in this area.

### ***Conclusions***

An analysis of the major journals in second language acquisition over the past year shows an increased interest in language anxiety. However, not a single one of these

studies is set in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, most of the research into second language acquisition in general and language anxiety in particular neglects the largest body of learners: those of school age who have no choice but to learn another language. The research that does take place often fails to reach those in schools. Instead much of the advice to teachers centres on general hints as to ways of motivating learners and providing a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning.

By looking at how pre-existing variables can interact with variables within the language classroom to cause different outcomes in terms of type of anxiety, this study has pushed forward the boundaries of our knowledge of the area. In particular the model proposed on page 230 aims to provide a more sophisticated explanation of the phenomenon than the traditional Yerkes-Dodson inverted U model. The model proposed does not address language anxiety in isolation but recognizes the fact that anxiety may be a socially determined construct and as such deserves to be examined in context.

Cajkler and Addelman (2000) invite us to put ourselves into the position of an adult learning an alien language, to make us realise that “the activity involves pressure to perform, pressure to “get it right”, little chance to relax, the stress of launching into a sea of the unknown (i.e. the target language). Evidence appears to show that once language anxiety takes root, it can transfer over into future language learning opportunities. We should perhaps view our role not only as providing a comfortable relaxed atmosphere for language learning to take place but preparing our learners for future successful language learning experiences.

It is hoped that the present study will not only further understanding of language anxiety in terms of providing new insights into the phenomenon in British teenagers but will also highlight the importance of the area for teachers and other educators.

# Appendices

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# Appendix 1

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## **Summary of other key research in the area of language anxiety**

## SUMMARY OF OTHER KEY RESEARCH IN THE AREA OF LANGUAGE ANXIETY

Author (s)	Focus of Research	Subjects	Methodology Used
Aida (1994)	Negative Correlation of anxiety with course grades	College students	Survey based on FLCAS plus two other measures
Argaman and Abu Rabia (2002)	The effect of anxiety on reading and writing skills	68 12 – 13 year old Hebrew speaking children	Survey based on FLCAS
Ariza (2002)	The effect of more traditional methodologies on reducing anxiety	4 children learning Spanish in Puerto Rico	Introspective Action Research
Bailey (1983)	The relationship between competitiveness and anxiety	Author's introspection	Diary Study
Bailey, Daley & Onwuegbuzie (2000)	Relationship between anxiety and achievement plus measure of other variables	184 college students	Survey
Brown, Robson & Rosenkjar (2001)	Effect of personality, motivation, learner strategies and anxiety on proficiency	320 EFL university students in Japan	FLCAS used for anxiety measure
Campbell (1998)	Gender differences in language anxiety	177 military personnel	Survey
Casado & Dereshiwsky (2001)	Differences in levels of anxiety between beginners and 1 semester users	114 Students of first semester Spanish 169 students of second semester Spanish Young adults	

Chen (2003)	Anxiety and communicative language teaching	2 ESL undergraduates (one Japanese, one Korean in US)	Interviews
Chen (2002)	Managing anxiety	30 adults EFL	Interviews
Desrochers & Gardner (1981)	The effect of participation in bilingual excursion programs on a number of variables including anxiety	Young adults	Survey
Ehrman & Oxford (1995)	Investigation of correlates of language learning success	855 adults	Survey
Ganschow & Sparks (1996)	Relationship between proficiency in L1, language aptitude and language anxiety	154 female 16 – 18 year olds	FLCAS
Gardner, Day & MacIntyre, (1992a)	Integrative motivation, induced anxiety, and language learning	University level students	Video observation
Gregerson & Horwitz (2002)	Relationship between perfectionism and language anxiety	8 ESL students in Chile	Talk aloud
Hanks (1988)	Investigation of the social aspects of classroom learning on anxiety	Single female adult learner	Interview
Hilleson (1996)	Personal feelings about anxiety	5 ESL 16 – 17 year old students at boarding school in Singapore	Diary study
Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986)	Presence of language anxiety in four classes	75 university students from four intact Spanish classes in US	FLCAS
Jackson (2002)	Causes and manifestations of anxiety	Hong Kong University students	Ethnographic study
Kitano (2001)	Two possible causes of language anxiety: fear of negative evaluation (FONE) and self-perceived language ability (SPLA)	212 college students of Japanese	Survey
Kiziltepe, (2002)	Attitudes and motivation of Turkish EFL learners towards the learning of English	308 15 – 18 year olds	FLCAS

Kleinmann (1977)	Avoidance behaviors due to anxiety	39 ESL university level students	Survey
Koch & Terrell (1991)	Anxiety and other affective reactions in relation to the national approach	119 students (age range 17 – 44)	Survey
Kondo & Ying-Ling (2003)	Construction of an anxiety scale	148 Japanese university students	5 surveys including FLCAS
Kondo & Ying-Ling (2004)	Strategies used by students to cope with anxiety	209 Japanese university students	
Levine (2003)	Relationship between target language use and anxiety	600 anonymous learners	INTERNET based survey
Macaro (1997)	Attitudes towards collaborative learning and other classroom practices	271 year 8 students in UK	Questionnaire and interviews
MacIntyre & Gardner (1989)	Evaluation of Horwitz's theoretical framework of language anxiety	104 native English adults learning French – English pairs	5 anxiety scales
MacIntyre, & Gardner, (1991a)	Relationship of language anxiety to other anxieties and to processing in L1 and L2	95 first year psychology students	Survey
MacIntyre & Gardner, (1991b)	Anxiety reactions to tasks	39 adult learners of French	Six anxiety scales, essay
MacIntyre, & Gardner, (1994)	The effects of induced anxiety on three stages of cognitive processing in computerised vocabulary learning.	97 First year university students	Video camera used to induce anxiety during vocabulary learning task
MacIntyre & Noels (1996)	Relationship between a number of variables including language anxiety and strategy use	138 adults	Survey
MacIntyre, Noels, & Clement (1997)	The interrelationship between anxiety, self-rating of competence and actual competence in French	English college students studying French	Survey and language test
MacIntyre, Clement and Donovan (2002)	Relationship between willingness to communicate, language anxiety and perceived competence	Junior high, high school and university	Survey
MacIntyre, Baker, Clement & Donovan (2002)	Sex and age effects on anxiety	Junior High School French immersion students	Survey

McKnight & Redmond (2003)	Anxiety producing and anxiety alleviating situations Teacher strategies to reduce language anxiety in their students	55 High school students in US 8 foreign language teachers	Survey
Matsuda & Gobel (2001)	Measuring language reading anxiety	252 Japanese university students	Survey
Matsuda & Gobel (2004)	Anxiety and predictor of performance	252 Japanese university students of English	FLCAS
Meijas. Applbaum, Applbaum & Trotter (1991)	Levels of Oral Communication Apprehension	429 Mexican students in US	PRCA
Mercedes- Cortes (2002)	The relationship between attitude, motivation, anxiety and proficiency	2000 first year ESL college students in Puerto Rico	Survey
Murray, BoKyung (2002)	Redefining motivation and language anxiety: An empirical validation of psycho-educational models in an EFL context		3 written surveys
Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (2000)	Effects of a range of variables on foreign language achievement	184 college learners of French, German, Japanese and Spanish	Survey
Oxford (1998)	The clash between teacher and learner styles as a source of anxiety	300 – 350 university students	Written narratives from participants focusing on experiences with regard to teacher / student style conflicts
Pappahimiel (2002)	Language anxiety in the mainstream classroom	178 Mexican middle school students in US	ELAS (based on FLCAS)
Park, H. (2002)	Foreign language reading anxiety in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students: Preliminary study	29 students average age 26	FLCAS Foreign Language Reading Anxiety



Price (1991)	Subjective Experiences of Anxiety	15 university level students	Interview
Rodriguez & Abreu (2003)	Stability of the construct of foreign language anxiety across two languages – English and French	110 university level Spanish-speaking learners of English and French in Venezuela	FLCAS
Saito & Samimy (1996)	Anxiety in beginning, intermediate and advanced level students of Japanese	University level students in US	Survey
Saito, Horwitz & Garza (1999)	Stability of language anxiety across language studied	University level students in US studying French, Japanese and Russian	FLCAS plus Reading Anxiety Scale
Sellers (2000)	Foreign language reading anxiety in EFL	89 college students	FLCAS plus Reading Anxiety Scale
Steinberg & Horwitz (1986)	Effect of induced anxiety on the ration of denotative and interpretive story content in US	20 Spanish adult ESL students	Interviews
Tsui (1995)	Reticence of students to communicate	Secondary School in Hong Kong	Ethnographic study
Turula (2002)	Language anxiety and classroom dynamics	50 adult learners	Ethnographic observations
Woodrow & Chapman (2002)	Second language speaking anxiety	257 EAP students at university in Australia	Questionnaire and interview
Young (1999)	Sources of language anxiety within the classroom	135 university level beginning Spanish students 109 high school students	Questionnaire
Young (1991)	Relationship between anxiety and foreign language proficiency	60 university level students	Survey including items taken from FLCAS

## Appendix 3.1

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### **Lingua project questionnaire design**

## **LINGUA PROJECT**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN**

#### **Pilot Phase**

#### **PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE**

##### **Issues to be investigated**

1. Personal data
  - 1.1. Male / Female
  - 1.2. Age
  - 1.3. School
2. Pupil background
  - 2.1. Mother tongue
  - 2.2. Other languages learnt
  - 2.3. Previous language learning experience (factual)
  - 2.4. Past experiences of target country
3. Attitudes to learning situation
  - 3.1. Perception of difficulty of foreign language in relation to other school subjects
  - 3.2. Perception of areas of difficulty within the subject area
  - 3.3. Self-rating of success in foreign language
  - 3.4. Enjoyment of foreign language learning
  - 3.5. Enjoyment of specific language activities
4. Attitudes to aspects of target culture
  - 4.1. Attitudes to target culture
  - 4.2. Attitudes to target peoples
5. Perceived usefulness of learning a foreign language for:
  - 5.1. Future career
  - 5.2. Holidays
  - 5.3. Languages as useful qualification in the new Europe
6. Preferred learning strategies
7. Perceptions of classroom procedures
8. Parental attitude
9. Language anxiety

## Appendix 3.2

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### **Pilot Lingua questionnaire**

# **LINGUA STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THIS IS NOT A TEST**

In this booklet are some questions asking how you feel about German and some of the things you might do in your German lessons.

This isn't a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what YOU think about German.

**SECTION A****PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF****Please tick one box**

- 1    Boy   ☐    Girl   ☐
- 2    Age  
13   ☐            14   ☐            15   ☐            16   ☐
- 3    What language or languages do you speak at home? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4    What language or languages are you learning at school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5    How long have you been learning German? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6    Have you ever visited Germany?            Yes   ☐    No   ☐
- 7    When did you go? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8    How long did you go for? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9    Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION B

The next section contains some statements about German.

FIRST, read each statement carefully, NEXT decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I'm glad I'm learning German rather than another language					
2	German is one of my favourite lessons					
3	I am not interested in meeting German people					
4	I think my parents are pleased I'm learning German					
5	I would like to visit Germany					
6	I find German too hard					
7	I don't like learning German					
8	I would like to stay with a German family					
9	German will be useful to me after I leave school					
10	German is usually boring					
11	I find German more difficult than other subjects					
12	There are more useful languages to learn than German					
13	I don't like German because I'm no good at it					
14	I am better at German than at other subjects					
15	My parents think that learning German is a waste of time					
16	I am not interested in going to Germany					
17	German is one of the easiest lessons					
18	I don't need German for what I want to do					
19	I think there are many jobs where German would be useful					
20	I enjoy other lessons more than German					
21	I understand most things in German lesson					
22	I enjoy learning German					
23	Knowing German will help me get a job I like					
24	I would like to have a German boy or girl to stay					
25	Learning foreign languages is a waste of time					
26	I'm quite good at German					
27	German will be useful for me when I go on holiday					
28	Learning a European language will help me to become a better European citizen					
29	We should learn another European language because we are part of Europe					
30	I have learnt a lot about life in Germany from TV					
31	I have learnt a lot about German people from television					
32	I have learnt German from pop songs					

### SECTION C

Please answer these questions about Germany and German people.

1 What do you think life is like in Germany?

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2 What do you think of German people?

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3 Can you describe any differences between the people of different regions in Germany?

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## SECTION D

Please answer these questions about the way you learn German.  
Do you use the following ways to help you learn?

	Often	Some- times	Not often	Rarely	Never
Repeating words to yourself					
Silent practice					
Practice with a friend					
Reading your exercise book					
Reading your text book					
Memorising words					
Testing yourself on words					
Trying to use the language whenever possible					
Revising what you have done in class					
Listening to FL songs					
Listening to cassettes					
Watching videos					
Writing					
Watching satellite tv					

Do you think that the teacher should speak the foreign language all the time in the classroom?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How useful do you think the following are?

	Very useful	Useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Useless
Grammar Exercises					
Pair Work					
Using a textbook					
Listening to cassettes					
Role Play					
Playing language games					
Copying from the board					
Writing					
Listening to the teacher					
Computer activities					

## SECTION E

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class					
2	In German class, I get so nervous I forget things I know					
3	I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in class					
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in German					
5	The atmosphere in my German lessons is quite relaxed					
6	I keep thinking that other students are better at German than I am					
7	It embarrasses me to speak German in class					
8	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class					
9	The more I study for a German test, the more confused I get					
10	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students					
11	I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in my language class					
12	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class					
13	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language					
14	Tests help me to show what I know					
15	Tests help me learn how to spell					
16	I sometimes get nervous and confused when we have a written test					
17	During German I find myself thinking about things which have nothing to do with the class					
18	Tests make me study					

## Appendix 4.1

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### **Letter to schools outlining project procedures**

Dear ,

## LINGUA CO-OPERATION PROJECT

Thank you for agreeing to take part in Year one questionnaire activities of the Leicester-Palma-Genoa co-operation project. I apologise for not writing sooner, but we are now almost at the point of finalising procedures for the activity across the three communities.

Before the end of February, I shall write to you and your Head of Languages outlining the procedures for the first phase of the activity. Gradually, we intend that the activity should become more focused on teacher development, as results of the action research emerge.

In the first phase of the activity modern languages teachers are requested to respond to a questionnaire without reference to other colleagues. After that, discussion of the results in school departments is encouraged, but we would like to receive unamended responses after any departmental discussion. Similarly, when pupil questionnaires (for Year 10, or Year 9 in High Schools) are administered, we believe that modern languages teachers should have first access to the information and insights offered. Then we request that responses be sent to us so that a comprehensive view of responses across the three communities can be offered.

The questionnaires are being tested and piloted during the month of February. We expect that final administration will be in April or early May. I thank you again for your participation in this professional development activity. I enclose a copy of this letter for your Head of Modern Languages.

Yours sincerely,

Wasył Cajkler  
ECP Co-ordinator

## Appendix 4.2

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### **Lingua Questionnaire**

# **SPANISH QUESTIONNAIRE**

## **LINGUA STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **THIS IS NOT A TEST**

In this booklet are some questions asking how you feel about Spanish and some of the things you might do in your Spanish lessons.

This isn't a test. There are no right or wrong answers. We just want to know what YOU think about Spanish.

## SECTION A

### PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF

Please tick one box

- 1    Boy   ☐    Girl   ☐
- 2    Age  
13   ☐                      14   ☐                      15   ☐                      16   ☐
- 3    What language or languages do you speak at home? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4    What language or languages are you learning at school?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 5    How long have you been learning Spanish? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6    Have you ever visited Spain?            Yes   ☐            No   ☐
- 7    When did you go? \_\_\_\_\_
- 8    How long did you go for? \_\_\_\_\_
- 9    Reason \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION B

The next section contains some statements about Spanish.

FIRST, read each statement carefully, NEXT decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement.

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	I'm glad I'm learning Spanish rather than another language					
2	Spanish is one of my favourite lessons					
3	I am not interested in meeting Spanish people					
4	I think my parents are pleased I'm learning Spanish					
5	I would like to visit Spain (if you have already visited Spain, please answer whether you would like to go again)					
6	I find Spanish too hard					
7	I don't like learning Spanish					
8	I would like to stay with a Spanish family					
9	Spanish will be useful to me after I leave school					
10	Spanish is usually boring					
11	I find Spanish more difficult than other subjects					
12	There are more useful languages to learn than Spanish					
13	I don't like Spanish because I'm no good at it					
14	I am better at Spanish than at other subjects					
15	My parents think that learning Spanish is a waste of time					
16	I am not interested in going to Spain					
17	Spanish is one of the easiest lessons					
18	I don't need Spanish for what I want to do					
19	I think there are many jobs where Spanish would be useful					
20	I enjoy other lessons more than Spanish					
21	I understand most things in Spanish lesson					
22	I enjoy learning Spanish					
23	Knowing Spanish will help me get a job I like					
24	I would like to have a Spanish boy or girl to stay					
25	Learning foreign languages is a waste of time					
26	I'm quite good at Spanish					
27	Spanish will be useful for me when I go on holiday					
28	Learning a European language will help me to become a better/European citizen					
29	We should learn another European language because we are part of Europe					
30	I have learnt a lot about life in Spain from television					
31	I have learnt a lot about Spanish people from television					
32	I have learnt Spanish from pop songs					



## SECTION C

Please answer these questions about Spain and Spanish people.

- 1 What do you think life is like in Spain?

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- 2 What do you think of Spanish people?

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- 3 Can you describe any differences between the people of different regions in Spain?

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## SECTION D

Please answer these questions about the way you learn Spanish.  
Do you use the following ways to help you learn?

	Often	Some- times	Not often	Rarely	Never
Repeating words to yourself					
Silent practice (thinking in your head)					
Practice with a friend					
Reading your exercise book					
Reading your text book					
Memorising words					
Testing yourself on words					
Trying to use the language whenever possible					
Revising what you have done in class					
Listening to FL songs					
Listening to cassettes					
Watching videos					
Writing					
Watching satellite tv					

Do you think that the teacher should speak the foreign language all the time in the classroom?

Yes ☐ No ☐

How useful do you think the following are?

	Very useful	Useful	Quite useful	Not very useful	Useless
Grammar Exercises					
Pair Work					
Using a textbook					
Listening to cassettes					
Role Play					
Playing language games					
Copying from the board					
Writing					
Listening to the teacher					
Computer activities					

## SECTION E

Please answer these questions about your Spanish lessons:

		Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	The atmosphere in my Spanish lessons is quite relaxed					
2	I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class					
3	I <i>don't</i> worry about making mistakes in class					
4	It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language					
5	I keep thinking that other students are better at foreign languages than I am					
6	In language class, I get so nervous I forget things I know					
7	It embarrasses me to speak Spanish in class					
8	I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class					
9	The more I study for a Spanish test, the more confused I get					
10	I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students					
11	I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class					
12	I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language					
13	Tests help me to show what I know					
14	Tests help me learn how to spell					
15	I sometimes get nervous and confused when we have a written test					
16	Tests make me study					

# Appendix 5

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## **Interview schedule**

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS: PART 2: ANXIETY**

[Part 1 of the interview related to learning strategies]

How do you feel about your French / German lessons?

How would you describe the atmosphere in your French / German class?

Your teacher says you're sometimes a bit nervous in your French / German lessons?  
What do you think about that?

[What sort of thing makes you nervous?]

Do you ever get frightened if you don't understand what the teacher is saying?

[Do you get nervous in other subjects?]

[Which other subjects?]

[What is it about French / German that makes it different than other subjects?]

[What do you do when you get nervous in French / German?]

[I noticed you..... Why was that?]

## Appendix 7.1

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### **Prompt sheet for teacher rating of class**

Please rate each pupil in terms of:

- a) **General anxiety** — how anxious / apprehensive they are in a normal social situation with their peers

Using a scale of 5 to 1

5 = always shows signs of anxiety  
4 = never shows signs of anxiety

- b) **Foreign language shyness** — how apprehensive /anxious/ shy they are about speaking French

Using a scale of 5 to 1

5 = highly apprehensive, very hesitant about speaking  
1 = initiates and responds without hesitation

Please also rate the pupils in their **spoken** and **written** ability in French using a scale of 5 to 1

5 = extremely strong  
1 = extremely weak

## Appendix 7.2

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### **Questionnaire used in case study**



**Please complete the questions about  
how you feel about learning French**

**Name.....**

**Set .....**

## SECTION A

**FIRST**, read each statement carefully.

**NEXT**, decide whether you agree or disagree with each statement

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNCERTAIN	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French class					
2. Tests help me to show what I know					
3. It embarrasses me to speak French in class					
4. In French class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know					
5. I keep thinking that the other students are better at French than I am					
6. I feel very self-conscious about speaking French in front of other students					
7. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class					
8. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language					
9. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting					
10. Tests help me to learn how to spell					
11. Tests make me study					

## SECTION B

Look at the following statements describing how students feel in their French lessons.

Put a mark in the appropriate place on the line which best describes you

### EXAMPLE

I feel nervous when we have a spelling test in French  
Please place a mark on the appropriate place on the line

Not like me  
at all

Very like  
me

X

For example, if this is quite like you, place a mark about here

1. I dislike speaking French in groups
2. I prefer doing activities I'm used to in the French class
3. I am tense and nervous when speaking French in a group
4. I am usually tense and nervous during pair work
5. I am usually nervous if I have to speak French in front of the whole class
6. Generally, I am comfortable when speaking French in groups
7. I'm afraid to speak up in French in pair work
8. Usually I am calm and relaxed when I have to speak French in front of the whole class
9. I am usually calm and relaxed when speaking French with my partner
10. I like to get involved in speaking French in a group
11. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my French class
12. I am calm and relaxed when the teacher asks me questions in front of the class
13. It worries me when I'm not exactly sure what the teacher wants
14. I'm afraid of making mistakes when I speak French

Not like me  
at all

Very like  
me

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## SECTION C

PLACE A TICK IN THE APPROPRIATE BOX

When I am in French class, I:

- a) volunteer answers as much as possible ☐
- b) only answer the easier questions ☐
- c) never say anything ☐

When I know the answer, I put up my hand:

- a) always ☐
- b) usually ☐
- c) sometimes ☐
- d) never ☐

Have you ever been in a situation where:

a) you felt embarrassed speaking French?

Yes ☐

No, not really ☐

Can't remember ☐

b) other pupils made fun of you when you spoke French?

Yes ☐

No, not really ☐

Can't remember ☐

c) a teacher made you feel embarrassed in the French lesson?

Yes ☐

No, not really ☐

Can't remember ☐

d) you tried to avoid answering questions in French?

Yes ☐

No, not really ☐

Can't remember ☐

e) you chose to sit in a place where you thought you wouldn't be noticed in your French class?

Yes ☐

No, not really ☐

Can't remember ☐

Complete the following sentences:

In French class, I wish we did more of.....

In French class, I wish we did less of.....

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

## Appendix 7.3

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### **Basic Frequencies and Percentages Section A and C**

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNCERTAIN	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French class (Total – all sets)		16 (33%)	10 (21%)	17 (34%)	5 (10%)
Set 1		3 (18%)	7 (41%)	6 (35%)	1 (6%)
Set 2		5 (29%)	1 (6%)	9 (53%)	2 (12%)
Set 3		8 (57%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)
2. Tests help me to show what I know (Total – all sets)		8 (17%)	8 (17%)	27 (56%)	5 (10%)
Set 1		4 (24%)	5 (26%)	8 (47%) (53%)	
Set 2		3 (18%)	1 (7%)	12 (71%)	1 (6%)
Set 3		1 (7%)	2 (14%)	7 (50%)	4 (
3. I keep thinking the other students are better at French than I am (Total – all sets)	3 (6%)	10 (21%)	11 (23%)	16 (33%)	8 (17%)
Set 1		1 (6%)	5 (26%)	7 (41%)	4 (24%)
Set 2		5 (26%)	4 (24%)	6 (35%)	2 (12%)
Set 3	3 (21%)	4 (28%)	2 (14%)	3 (21%)	2 (14%)
4. In French class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know (Total – all sets)	4 (8%)	15 (31%)	7 (13%)	19 (42%)	2 (4%)
Set 1	3 (18%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)	7 (41%)	1 (6%)
Set 2		7 (41%)	5 (26%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)
Set 3	1 (7%)	4 (28%)	1 (7%)	8	
5. It embarrasses me to speak French in class (Total – all sets)	5 (10%)	18 (38%)	8 (15%)	15 (31%)	2 (4%)
Set 1	1 (6%)	6 (35%)	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	1 (6%)
Set 2	2 (12%)	5 (26%)	4 (24%)	5 (26%)	1 (6%)
Set 3	2 (14%)	7 (50%)	1 (7%)	4 (28%)	
6. I feel self-conscious about speaking French in front of other students (Total – all sets)		10 (21%)	18 (37%)	17 (35%)	3 (5%)
Set 1		2 (12%)	7 (41%)		1 (6%)
Set 2		4 (24%)	5 (26%)	2 (12%)	
Set 3		4 (28%)	6 (42%)	4 (28%)	
7. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class (Total – all sets)		22 (46%)	10 (21%)	14 (30%)	2 (4%)
Set 1		7 (41%)	5 (26%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)
Set 2		7 (41%)	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	1 (6%)
Set 3		8 (56%)	2 (14%)	4 (28%)	
8. I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language (Total – all sets)	9 (18%)	18 (34%)	13 (27%)	6 (12%)	2 (4%)
Set 1	3 (18%)	8 (47%)	3 (18%)	3 (18%)	
Set 2	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	6 (35%)	1 (6%)	1 (6%)
Set 3	4 (28%)	3 (21%)	4 (28%)	2 (14%)	1 (7%)
9. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting (Total – all sets)	6 (12%)	27 (56%)	13 (27%)	2 (4%)	
Set 1	1 (6%)	13	3 (18%)		
Set 2	3 (18%)	8 (47%)	4 (24%)	2 (12%)	
Set 3	2 (14%)	6 (42%)	6 (42%)		
10. Tests help me to learn how to spell (Total – all sets)	1 (2%)	15 (31%)	9 (19%)	22 (46%)	1 (2%)
Set 1		6 (35%)	3 (18%)	8 (47%)	
Set 2		7 (41%)	4 (24%)	6 (35%)	
Set 3	1 (7%)	2 (14%)	2 (14%)	8 (56%)	1 (7%)
11. Tests make me study (Total – all sets)	3 (6%)	8 (17%)	5 (10%)	25 (52%)	7 (15%)
Set 1	1 (6%)		2 (12%)	10 (59%)	4 (24%)
Set 2	1 (6%)	4 (24%)	1 (6%)	9 (53%)	2 (12%)
Set 3	1 (7%)	3 (21%)	3 (21%)	6 (43%)	1 (7%)

## SECTION C

				Total no of respondents
When I am in French class, I:	volunteer answers as much as possible	only answer the easier questions	never say anything	45 (missing 7)
Total (all sets)	14 (31.1%)	24 (53.3%)	7 (15.6%)	
Set 1				
Set 2				
Set 3				

When I know the answer I put my hand up	always	usually	sometimes	never
Total (all sets)	5 (11.1%)	17 (37.8%)	19 (42.2%)	4 (7.7%)
Set 1				
Set 2				
Set 3				

Have you ever been in a situation where you felt embarrassed speaking French	Yes	No	Can't remember	Total no. of respondents
	29 (63%)	14 (30.4%)	3 (6.5%)	46 (missing 6)
other pupils made fun of you when you spoke French?	6 (13%)	36 (78.3%)	4 (8.7%)	46 (missing 6)
a teacher made you feel embarrassed in the French lesson?				
Total (all sets)	23 (50%)	17 (32.7%)	6 (11.5%)	46 (6 missing)
Set 1				
Set 2				
Set 3				
you tried to avoid answering questions in French?				
Total (all sets)	24 (46.2%)	17 (32.7%)	4 (7.7%)	46 (6 missing)
Set 1				
Set 2				
Set 3				
you chose to sit in a place where you thought you wouldn't be noticed in your French class?				
Total (all sets)	9 (17.3%)	33 (63.5%)	3 (5.8%)	45 (7 missing)
Set 1				
Set 2				
Set 3				



## Appendix 7.4

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### **Results of Factor Analysis Section A**

## FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR SECTION A OF STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Factor	Label	Eigen Value	Variance	Cumulative Variance
Factor 1	Anxiety	3.999	36.355	36.355
Factor 2	Tests	2.05	18.636	54.991

### Items loading onto Factor 1

Item	Loading
E1 I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French class	.728
E3 I keep thinking the other students are better at French than I am	.785
E4 In French class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know	.716
E5 It embarrasses me to speak French in class	.837
E6 I feel very self-conscious about speaking French in front of other students	.497
E7 I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class	.518
E8 I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak French	.651
E9 I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting	.541

### Items loading onto Factor 2

Item	Loading
E2 Tests help me to show what I know	.514
E10 Tests help me to learn how to spell	.537
E11 Tests make me study	.496

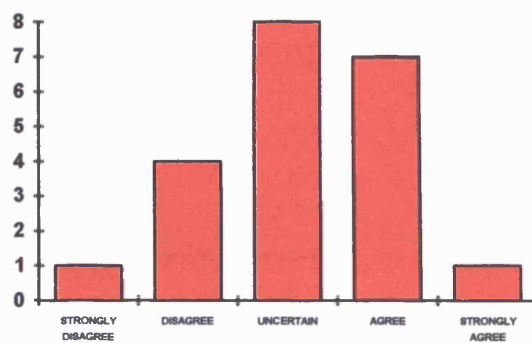
## Appendix 7.5

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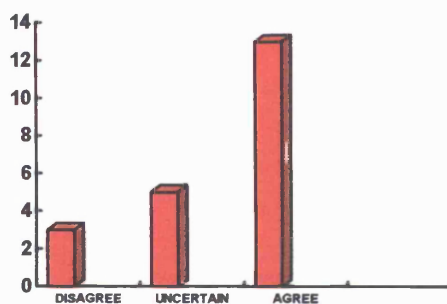
### **Results of Questionnaire Section A Teacher Version**


## RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SECTION A IN THE FORM IN WHICH THEY WERE SHARED WITH THE TEACHER

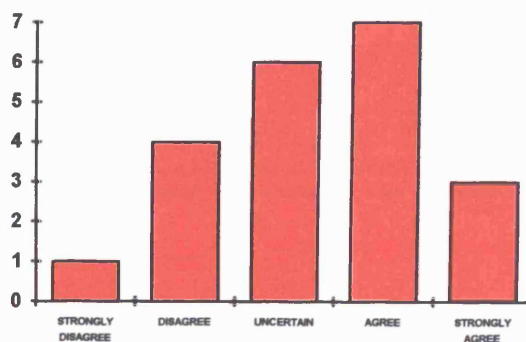
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French class



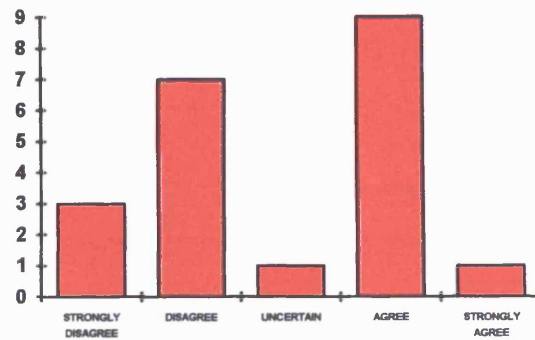
2. Tests help me to show what I know



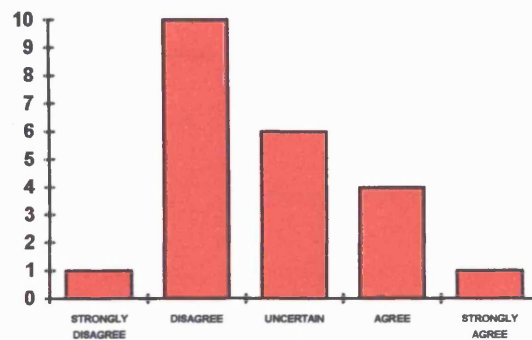
3. I keep thinking the other students are better at French than I am



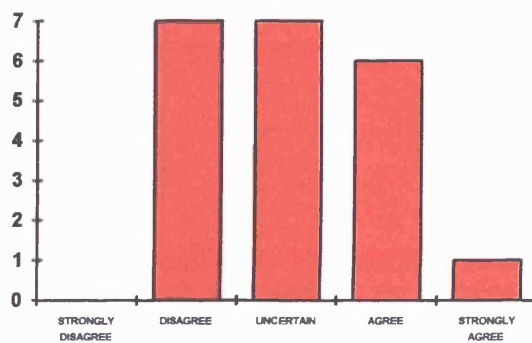
4. In French class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know



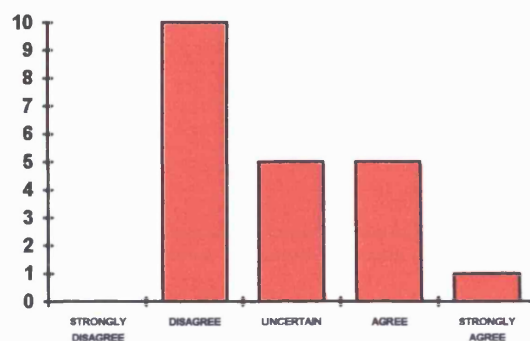
5. It embarrasses me to speak French in class



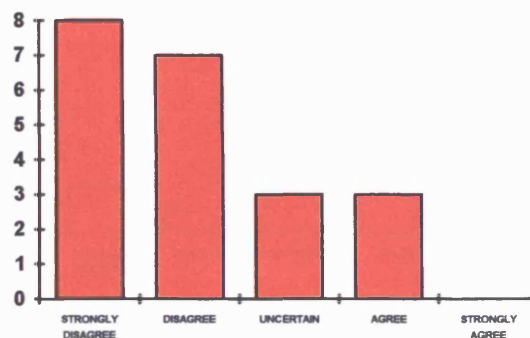
7. I feel very self-conscious about speaking French in front of other students



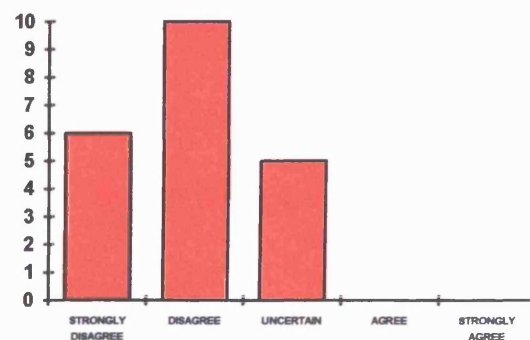
7. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class



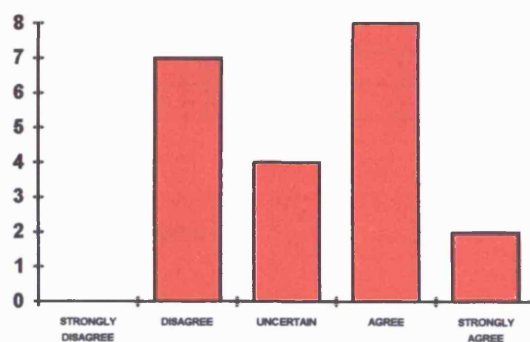
8. I am afraid the other students will laugh at me when I speak French



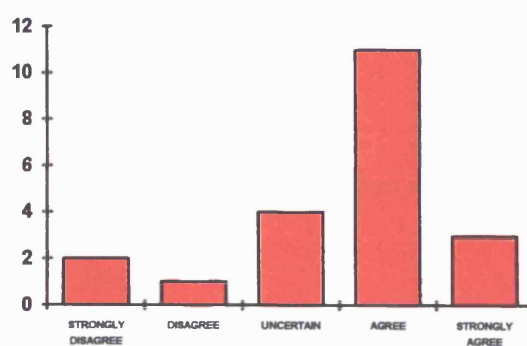
9. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting



## 10. Tests help me learn how to spell



## 11. Tests make me study





When I know the answer I put my hand up:

always	usually	sometimes	never
1	5	10	2

In French class, I wish we did more of:

*Learning strategies*

learning things with methods that make them stick in your mind  
worksheets to work at our own pace

*Classroom organisation*

more in small groups  
more group activities (x2)  
pair work (x2)

*Classroom activities*

funny activities like directions on a cartoon map  
fun things / games  
more games and written work  
set exercises from Etoiles  
posters, games  
French games (x 2)  
work out of a book e.g. Etoiles  
activities

*Content / Skills*

learn more sentences  
listening work  
listening to tapes  
reading  
learning to pronounce words  
more talking  
more speaking  
French speaking  
more oral work  
work in our grammar books  
more grammar (x 2)

*Other*

worksheets for homework

In French class, I wish we did less of:

Tests ( I think the end of unit tests come too often even though I find the spelling tests quite useful)

less tests

the tests so close together

tests ( we do small topics and lots of tests

*Activities*

Copying out of the book

Answering questions in class ( x 2)

Set exercises from Etoiles

asking pupils the answer (but still do some asking)

*Skills*

Writing work (x 4)

Listening to stories in our Etoiles book

less talking in class ( as one whole group)

reading work (because sometimes I don't understand)

reading

speaking (x2)

## Appendix 7.6

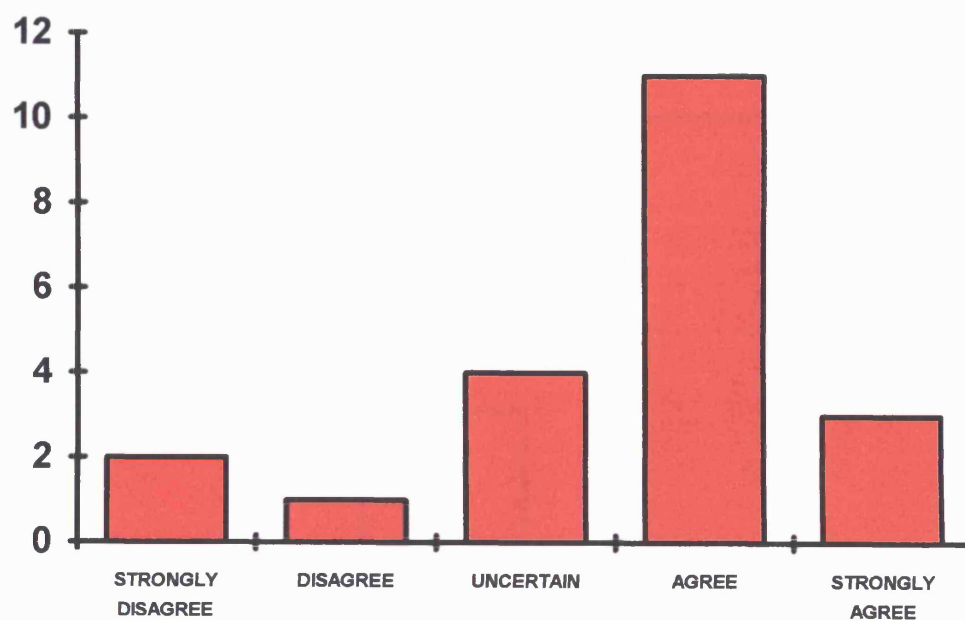
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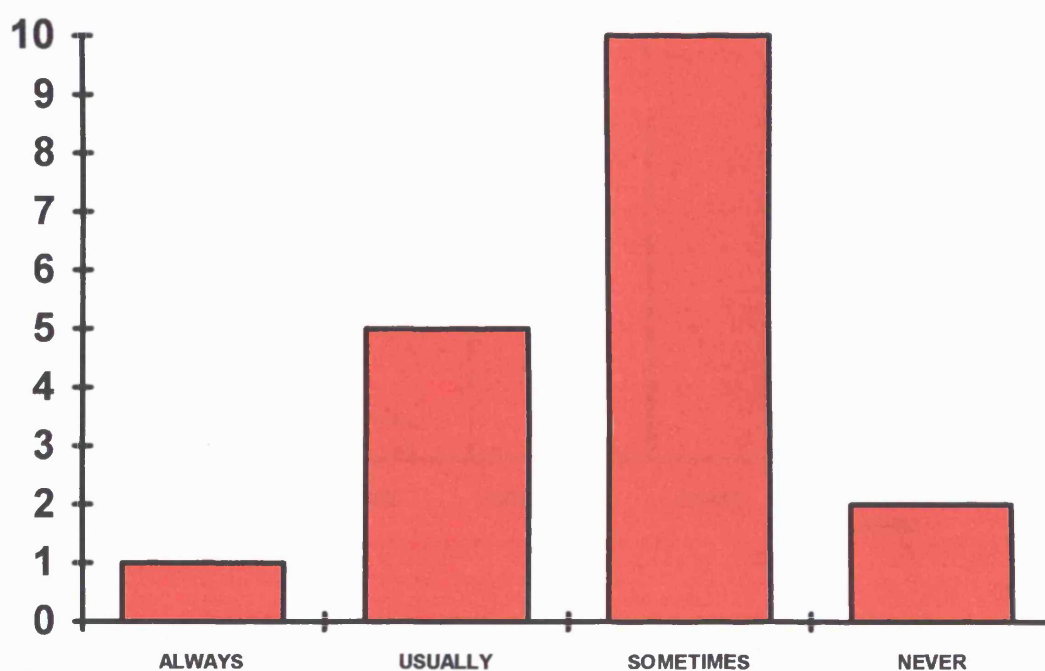
**Sample OHTs used in whole class discussion**

## Sample OHT used in whole class discussion

Tests make me study

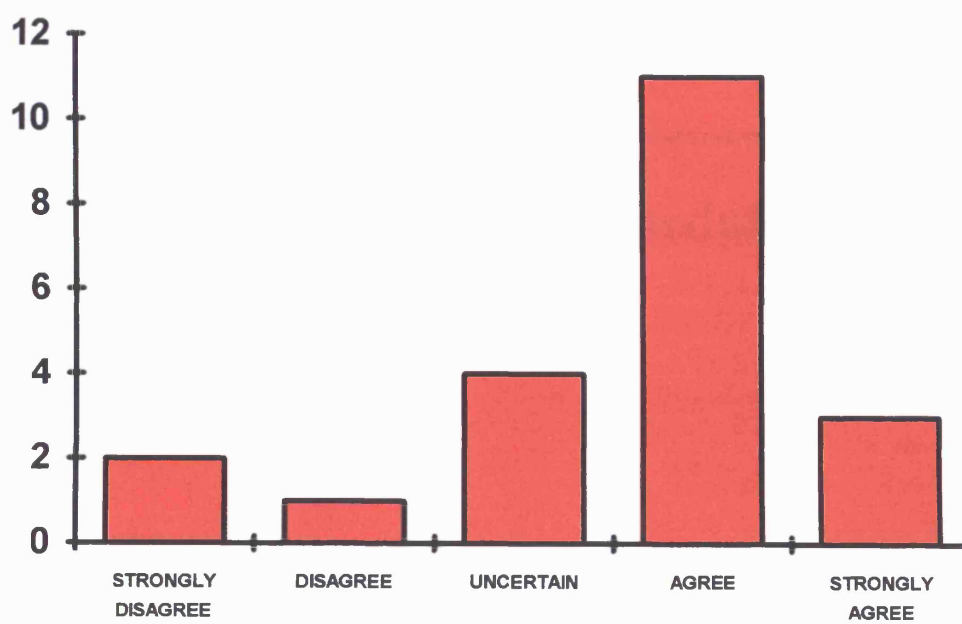


When I know the answer I put my hand up:



## Sample OHT used in whole class discussion

Tests make me study

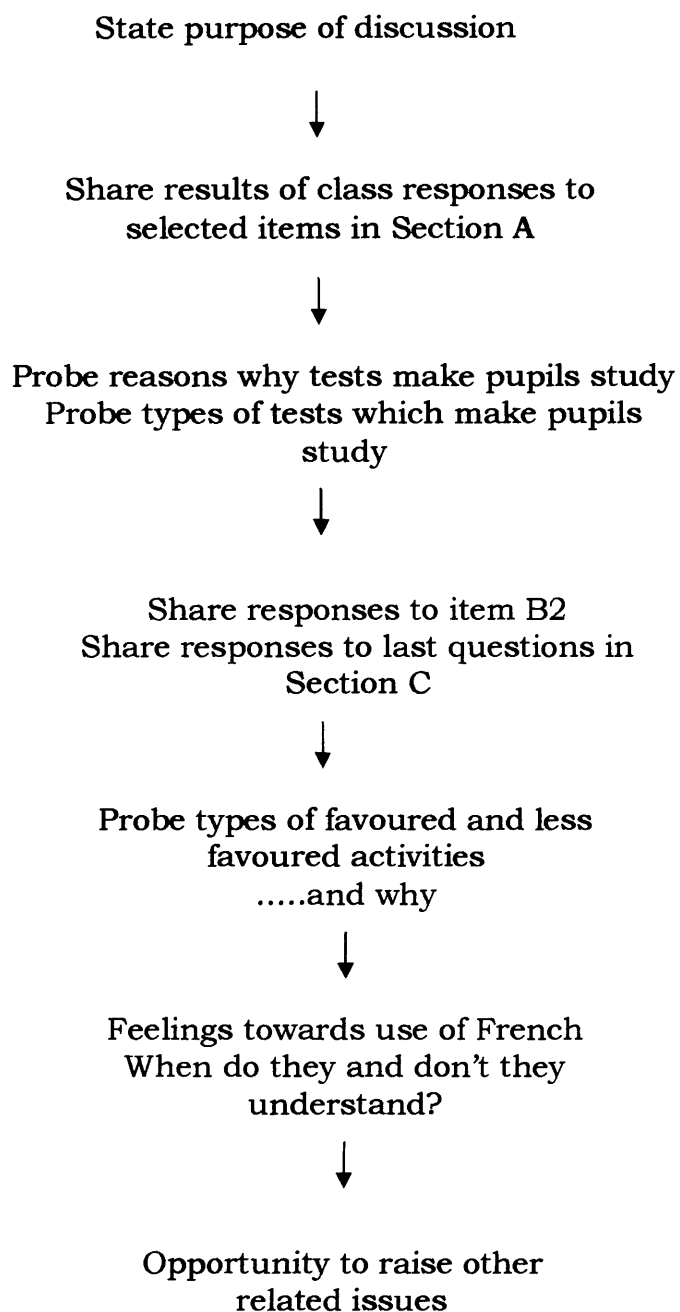


## Appendix 7.7

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### **Class discussion schedule**





## Appendix 7.8

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### **Analysis of Teacher Talk Case Study**

### Amount of English and French spoken by the Teacher by Set

	No of Words Spoken in English	No of Words Spoken in French
Set 1	244 (14%)	1478 (86%)
Set 2	384 (24%)	1201 (76%)
Set 3	310 (16%)	1604 (84%)

### Percentage of Teacher Versus Student Talking Time By Set

	English	French
Set 1	244 (85%)	1478 (15%)
Set 2	384 (24%)	1201 (76%)
Set 3	310 (16%)	1604 (84%)

### Mean Length of Utterance in Words by Students by Gender by Set

	Male	Female
Set 1	1.9	1.8
Set 2	2.1	2.2
Set 3	6	4.2

### Number of single length utterances by set

	No of single words spoken in French	No of single words spoken in English
<b>Set 1</b>		
<b>Teacher</b>	15	3
<b>Students</b>	45	6
<b>Set 2</b>		
<b>Teacher</b>	18	8
<b>Students</b>	56	8
<b>Set 3</b>		
<b>Teacher</b>	33	4
<b>Students</b>	22	10

## Appendix 7.9

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### **Teacher Feedback by Set Case Study**

**TEACHER FEEDBACK BY SET**

	EXTREMELY POSITIVE	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
Set 1	12	12	4
Set 2	10	11	5
Set 3	18	6	0

## Appendix 7.10

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### **Pupils observation form Case Study**

SET 1 / 2 / 3

Name.....

Time	Task	Classroom Organisation		

## Appendix 7.11

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### **Results of text analysis**



PRINCIPAL FOCUS	TEXT TYPE (Activity)	No. of instances	Percentage of total tasks
Listening	Story	25	11.8%
	Song	8	3.8%
	Interview	8	3.8%
	Conversation	5	2.4%
	Short sentences (listening for specific information)	5	2.4%
	Puzzle (and problem solve)	4	1.9%
	Recipe	1	0.5%
	Instructions	1	0.5%
Speaking	Personal likes	7	3.3%
	Personal information	4	1.9%
	Personal opinion	4	1.9%
	(Pattern practice)	2	0.9%
	(Sentence completion)	2	0.9%
	Numbers	1	0.5%
	Question and answer (guessing game)	1	0.5%
	Giving instructions	1	0.5%
Reading	Cartoon	41	19.3%
	Information / mock article	12	5.7%
	Picture Story	9	4.25%
	Letters	9	4.25%
	<i>Advertisements / TV schedule (read and complete)</i>	3	1.41%
	<i>Sentences (read and complete)</i>	3	1.41%
	<i>Form (read and complete)</i>	2	0.9%
	<i>Sentences (read and match)</i>	15	7.08%
	<i>Sentences (and select)</i>	2	0.9%
	<i>Factual text (and answer questions)</i>	2	0.9%
	<i>Factual text (and true / false questions)</i>	1	0.5%
	<i>Puzzle (and problem solve)</i>	7	3.3%
	<i>Quiz (and answer quiz)<sup>1</sup></i>	7	3.3%
	Instructions (and draw)	1	0.5%
Writing	Dialogue	1	0.5%
Grammar	Explanation	14	11.79%
Vocabulary	Matching	2	0.9%
	Find the word	2	0.9%

<sup>1</sup> The tasks in this section could either be done as reading and writing or reading and speaking activities. It was not specified which

## Appendix 7.12

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### **Interview Schedule Case Study**

## SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduce self  
State purpose of interview and how long it will  
take  
Reassure about confidentiality and say how  
responses will be used  
Explain in general terms why person was  
chosen for interview

Can you tell me something about how you have felt during your language classes?

What do you like best about your language classes?

What bothers you most about your language classes?

You say here in your form that you [Question C1/C2]

Why is that?

You say in your form here that..... [Question Ca, b, c]

Can you tell me a bit more about what happened?

You say in your form here that Question Cd, Ce

Why is that?

Would you say that you were more or less stressed in French than in other subjects?

Why?

Do you have any ideas of what might make you feel less stressed?

Thanks

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