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THE INFLUENCE OF AFFECT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: A FOCUS ON ANXIETY

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Resumo: Devido à prevalência da Ansiedade de como uma das variáveis afetivas mais influentes no processo de aprendizagem de língua estrangeira, este estudo teve como objetivo mapear, analisar e discutir os fatores geradores da Ansiedade em Língua Estrangeira (Horwitz et al, 1991) experimentada por um grupo de estudantes brasileiros de inglês. A investigação foi conduzida em uma escola de idiomas localizada na cidade de São Carlos, estado de São Paulo, Brasil. Os sujeitos foram vinte e nove alunos de nível básico e pré intermediário. A abordagem metodológica utilizada foi o estudo de caso e os instrumentos de pesquisa foram uma escala, diários e entrevistas semi-estruturados. As autoras identificaram os três fatores constituidores do construto Ansiedade em Língua Estrangeira, a apreensão em situações de comunicação, o medo da avaliação negativa e a ansiedade causada por testes como os elementos predominantes na geração da ansiedade diagnosticada no grupo pesquisado. Devido à interdependência destes fatores ansiogênicos, foi concluído que sua identificação e mapeamento podem ser relevantes na orientação de novas pesquisas neste campo e de professores de línguas que desejem abordar e superar o problema da ansiedade de seus alunos.

Abstract: Due to the prevalence of affective variables in the foreign language learning process, this study aims at mapping out, analyzing and discussing the generating factors of the Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al, 1991) experienced by a group of Brazilian students learning English. The investigation was carried out in an English language school located in São Carlos, state of São Paulo, Brazil and the subjects were twenty-nine elementary and low intermediate level students. The methodological approach was the case study and the research instruments used were a scale, diaries and semi-structured interviews. The authors identified the constituent factors of the Foreign Language Anxiety, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety as prominent in the generation of the anxiety experienced by the subjects of this study. Because of the interdependency of these anxiety factors, it was concluded that their identification might be relevant so as to orientate new research and also to guide language teachers who may face this problem with their students.

Keywords: language, learning, anxiety, Brazilian, students.

This article is the final result of a research project aimed at mapping out the several factors which may contribute to the failure of adult Brazilian students of English in their learning process. Based on extensive research concerning the relationship between affective variables and language learning (Krashen, 1982; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1994a, 1994b; Scovel 1978; Shumann, 1975), we realized the importance of such variables in this process. According to the aforementioned authors, such variables may hinder or foster learning in its three phases, intake, processing and output. The main affective variables studied so far in this literature are self-esteem, attitude, tolerance to ambiguity, risk taking, motivation and anxiety.

Deepening our studies in this field, we found a construct which helped us to identify which affective variable was influencing the group of students we were planning to study. This construct was elaborated by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991), and it was named Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA). The construct was defined by its authors as a particular kind of anxiety related to the peculiarities of foreign and second language learning situations. According to them, there are three constituent factors of the FLA. The first one is a sort of apprehension felt in situations in which individuals have to perform communication tasks, the communication apprehension. The second one is a kind of anguish felt by individuals when taking tests, the test anxiety, which is seen by Horwitz et al as the most general of the constructs, linked to individuals' former educational experiences. Thirdly, there is the *fear of negative evaluation*, felt by individuals in relation to their peers and teachers.

The reason for this study was related to the importance of the English language as the main international language in almost every field of human knowledge, such as science, technology, art and economy. We recognized that this importance of English is linked to the economic, political and social role that English speaking countries have been playing in the world in the last three hundred years. In this context, English became gradually an essential instrument of communication. Also, due to globalization, this position taken by the English language has been reinforced in the last two decades. In this way, this language became absolutely necessary to many professionals, even the ones who are not dedicated to highly educated careers.

In addition to this reality, we have to consider the growing importance of the computers and their technology in our society. This fact increases the necessity felt by the majority of the educated population of learning English.

We can match to these external pressures to learn English an educational aspect. This is related to the fact that English is also a school subject integrated to the Brazilian curricula. The fact that most people do not learn English efficiently at school is one more argument in favor of this study.

Therefore, we justified this study stating that besides not learning English well at school, students seem to face many difficulties in learning it in language schools. This problem is incremented by the urgent necessity most of the adult educated Brazilian population have to learn English.

As a result, we thought that investigating an affective variable, anxiety, which seemed a hindering factor to proper learning in a group of adult students of English, would be a valuable contribution to the a better understanding of the problems related to language learning in Brazil.

Having the conceptual framework of the FLA in mind and knowing the context of English as a second language learning in Brazil, we defined the objectives of the research. These were investigating the presence of the communication apprehension, the test anxiety and the fear of negative evaluation, in the anxiety experienced by a group of adult Brazilian students of English, departing from the assumption that this anxiety is a hampering element for proper learning. We also chose the context of the research, an English Language Teaching school located in São Carlos, Brazil, having as subjects twenty-nine adult students from elementary to low intermediate levels, during six weeks of an intensive course held during the months of January and February of 1999. Besides these basic definitions, we elaborated the central hypothesis of this study, which was that the FLA experienced by the subjects investigated would have its origin and intensity regulated by the three FLA main constructs.

1. Methodology

Samimy & Rardin (1994) elaborated a state of art paper which reviewed more than one hundred empirical studies about the relationship between affective variables and language learning. They found out that this body of research was divided into two basic paradigm's referring to their empirical methodologies of investigation and data organization and discussion. The most significant in number is the quantitative and statistical paradigm, represented mainly by McIntyre and Gardner and their research associates who have been studying this and related issues through an experimental and quantitative perspective for the last forty years.

On the other hand, Samimy & Rardin recognized a relatively new trend to approach the role of some affective variables, mainly attitude, motivation, anxiety and self-esteem, through a qualitative paradigm. Taking into consideration the two options, the qualitative and the quantitative paradigm, we decided to gather some quantitative data through a scale, in order to obtain a preliminary view of the influence of the three factors in the generation of the FLA in the subjects. This first phase would then be followed by the collection of qualitative data through instruments such as diaries and interviews. All these procedures would be taken inside the framework of the case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), due to the fact that the project was restricted to a particular educational context.

1.1 The Development of this Study

We conducted this case study in a three phased cyclical data collection approach. We established the first basic definitions. These were the institution in which the research would be carried out

and the subjects who would take part in the study. We also established the testing and refining of the empirical instruments, as well as the proceedings in a preliminary phase which we called the exploratory stage. Having these basic decisions taken, we decided which instruments, subjects and setting as well as the theoretical framework in which the study would be structured. Afterwards, we initiated the third phase, the analysis of the data and the report writing. It is essential to emphasize the cyclical and non linear aspect of this approach. The researchers moved from one stage to another, revisiting empirical data and theoretical background, discussing and redefining concepts and constructs according and throughout the analysis process.

1.2 The Subjects

Fourteen of the twenty-nine subjects were undergraduate university students from the two public universities located in the city of São Carlos, Brazil. There were also two high school students, two university lecturers, a dentist, two secretaries, a dental prosthesis specialist, two Portuguese language teachers, a sociologist, a law student, two engineers and an insurance broker. Twenty-two subjects were between twenty and thirty years old, two were in their late teens and five were between thirty and forty years old. All of them had attended state schools up to secondary level.

The level of proficiency of these subjects was accessed by the entrance and end-of-term tests given by the institution where the study took place.

So, students who entered at the Basic one level were tested before they were registered for this group. The entrance test consisted of an oral interview and a written test in which grammar, vocabulary and writing skills were accessed. If a student proved he/she could attend a higher level, he/she would be placed in it. After being integrated in the course framework, the progress of the students in the levels was checked through diagnostic tests within the levels and a final test, which had the same elements of the entrance test.

1.3 Instruments and Procedures

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992) one of the most suitable instruments for educational qualitative research is the semi-structured interviews. Referring more specifically to investigations about the FLA, Samimy & Rardin (1994), Bailey (1983) and Hilleson (1996) used diaries written by their research subjects in order to investigate the influences of this type of anxiety in their learning process. Cunha (1997) elaborated a scale based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz et al, 1986) to investigate English language learners' anxieties when engaged in oral activities in the classroom. Taking into account the evidence presented by the aforementioned authors that interviews, diaries and scales were efficient instruments and procedures to collect data regarding the FLA, and, the peculiarities of this research context, we chose to adapt these instruments and procedures in order to make them congruent to the aims of this study.

1.4 The Scale

The scale used in this research was a kind of Likert Scale, an adaptation of the one elaborated by Horwitz et al. (1991). The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale was developed to be a standard investigation instrument to obtain data about this variety of anxiety. The original instrument, elaborated by Horwitz et al, aimed only at validating the three FLA factors, Communication Apprehension, Test Anxiety and Fear of Negative Evaluation.

The adapted scale used in this study was comprised of thirty-one statements. This scale included not only statements to collect data on the three main FLA factors, but also had statements which were there to find out institutional, interactive and contextual factors which could be considered important to the anxious state experienced by the subjects of the research.

The adapted scale was written in Portuguese. So it is shown in the appendix at the end of this article in its original form, in the way it was presented to the subjects. It was added a qualitative question at its end in order to give the subjects opportunity to clarify and/or add any information they might have found relevant. The subjects answered it during the first week of the investigation. The aim of this procedure was to obtain a preliminary perspective of the FLA generating factors. (Appendix)

Since the aim of this article was to focus on the three main FLA factors, in this study, The discussion of the results presented here only the scale statements specifically related to these factors will be presented.

1.5 The Diaries

The literature on the relationship between affective variables and language learning indicates diaries as valuable instruments for research in this field (Samimy & Rardin:1994, Ehrman and Oxford: 1995 and Bailey: 1983). According to these authors, diaries are very useful because they suffer almost no influence from the researchers. To Allwright & Bailey (1991) learners' diaries have the potential to reveal aspects of their classroom experiences which could not be obtained by instruments such as observations and scales. Diaries might aid researchers to see beyond students' external behavior, helping investigators to penetrate in their subjects' views of their cognitive, social and affective processes that are components of the foreign language learning reality.

In this research, there were no specific questions to be answered by the subjects in their diaries, they were simply asked to write about their language learning experiences and about how they perceived the language learning situation they were engaged in at that moment.

1.6 The Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to deepen the data collected though the scale and the diaries, we decided to make interviews with each of the twenty-nine students who participated in this study. The kind of interview chosen was the semi-structured one. According to Price (1991) the semi-structured interview would be the one in which the researcher starts asking some basic questions, based on theory and on the

This apprehension seemed to be related also to the subjects' former learning experiences. In this way, the ones who revealed to be particularly anxious about their oral production in the classroom related this discomfort to anxiety provoking experiences which they had lived in other contexts. In addition, the apprehension related to communication appeared to be linked to their learning expectations. When these expectations were too high, they feared not to be able to have an adequate oral performance.

research hypothesis. Such questions would unfold into new queries, which might appear through the interviewees' answers to the first questioning. This approach should lead the investigator to the discovery of the subjects' perspective of the studied situation. All the subjects involved in this investigation were interviewed during the last two weeks of the English language course they were taking.

2. The Results

The results of this investigation are presented here in a integrative way. Therefore, we selected in the scale the statements which referred to the three component factors of the FLA. Each statement of the scale displayed an agreement variation of four items, completely agree (CA), agree (A), disagree (D), completely disagree (CD). Each statement and its agreement degree is shown in a bar chart. Following the statement and the chart there is the discussion of the results displayed. This discussion integrates the quantitative data collected by the scale and the qualitative data from the diaries and semi-structured interviews.

2.1 Communication Apprehension

The apprehension felt by the subjects of this research when engaged in communicative activities in their learning environment was related to the other two FLA factors, the fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety. Due to their hesitations and mistakes, students were afraid of the judgements their peers and teachers could make about them.

I never feel quite secure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
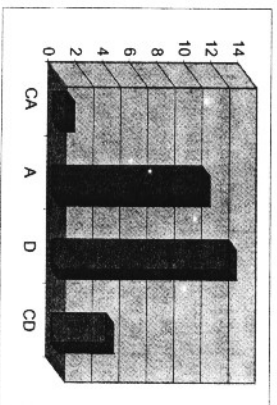

Figure 1. Insecurity when speaking in the classroom.

The aim of this statement was to check the intensity of the apprehension of the subjects related to communication in English in the classroom.

As it is shown in the chart, the positive and negative answers are divided almost by half and half. Most of the students who answered positively to the statement confirmed their apprehension in the semi-structured

interviews. According to McCroskey (1977), people who have this kind of apprehension try to avoid situations where oral communication is essential, because of the anxiety this kind of circumstances raise on them. The student who completely agreed with the statement, expressed her feelings regarding speaking in the classroom in the following way:

If the teacher asks one of us to read a text aloud, even if I know how to do it, I never volunteer. I always prefer someone else to do it. Even when she asks us to memorize dialogues at home, I do not volunteer. I feel ashamed, I am afraid of any blunders I might commit when speaking in the classroom.

To McCroskey (1977), this sort of apprehension is not a personality feature, but an absorbed trait imposed to the individual by society. Negative feedback towards oral communication given by school or family may be behind this negative feeling. So, for instance, it is very common in Brazilian schools students to be encouraged to remain silent. In fact, quiet students are quite valued in our school system. Uneducated families may also foster their children's silence, not only in their mother tongue, but also in a foreign language. An extract from one of the subjects, who was from a poor rural environment, clearly proves this point:

Although I was good at English in elementary and high school, I never liked it. I never used English for anything, so I saw no point in studying it. I did not intend to go to college, my parents have almost no education, so I could not understand why I should study English.

When I have to communicate orally in the classroom I must be able to formulate my speech at such a speed that the other students do not sleep when

Only after getting into University I realized the importance of English to my future.

Therefore, we can conclude that if a student is educated in a way that refrains him from opportunities of developing his oral skills, the path for the development of the communication apprehension is open. When these individuals find themselves in the situation of learning a foreign language, they might feel anguished because of the conflict between their tendency to keep quiet and the communicative demands of this new environment.

We should consider that adults might feel uncomfortable when placed in a learning situation which is natural to children. According to Scovel (1978), this sort of infantile situation is quite common in adult language learning. This author explains that, in the majority of language learning situations, students should be able to use the target language as the lingua franca in the classroom. He states that when students are forced to use a language they are still learning, they might feel they are not representing themselves appropriately, showing only a part of their real personality and intelligence. This sort of situation may raise students' anxieties both when communicating in and out of the classroom environment, which deprives these students of opportunities of practising the target language for real communication, decreasing in this way, their learning possibilities.

incorporation might have raised the subjects' anxieties.

I am talking. When I listen to them I have to be able to decipher their speaking quite fast as well, if not, how can I elaborate a prompt answer? So it is very hard if you are a grown adult, a PHD student, and you can not communicate properly either in the classroom or out of it.

What I can't stand in learning English is this childish matter of having to carry around books, notebooks, and dictionaries and having to use all of them to do homework as a school child does. I would rather do anything at home but English homework.

Following Scovel's rationale, we may infer that foreign language learning situations at basic levels might lead some students to feel they are in elementary school again. This feeling can make them create a resistance to this kind of learning. This fact is illustrated by the second student's speech, in which he clearly resents the language learning activities that are part of the course syllabus. Gaining further information about these students, we discovered that he had failed a term before, mainly because he was frequently absent. Shortly after the interview the investigators obtained the information that he had given up the course.

To some of the subjects investigated, a source of speaking related anxiety was the fact that communicating in a foreign language meant to them to assume a sort of new personality and/or perceptions of the world. While to some students it was not so difficult to adapt to this situation, there were the ones who, mainly due to cultural reasons, either appreciated this situation or completely rejected it. In both cases, this cultural

I don't want only to learn English, I want to be English. I want native speakers to think I'm one of them. However, this anxiety to be a perfect speaker of English is disturbing me, it makes me weak. The self-demands are so strong that I'm not being able to see my own limits. I know that if I take it easy I will learn even faster, but anxiety reigns, one doesn't have much control over it, If I could control it, I would not be anxious.

To tell you the truth I have nothing against American or British people. In fact I'm traditionally a left wing supporter. Although I always knew I would need to learn English to proceed in my academic career, I did not feel the necessity of responding to this demand until now.

When students withdraw from speaking in the classroom because of FLA, they may be compromising their future as speakers of the target language. To Daly (1991), this is a kind of vicious circle, which starts with anxious individuals avoiding oral communication situations, could hinder their development in the oral skills because of the lack of practice in them. Therefore, when such individuals have to communicate orally in the target language, they tend to have a low performance, below other individuals. This low performance leads students to feelings of inadequacy and inappropriateness, which might breed their communication apprehension, influencing them to avoid situations in which the oral communication in the target language is mandatory. This circle would be one of the reasons why we should consider FLA as one of the main

causes to students' failure and withdrawal in the English learning context investigated.

Sometimes I get so nervous in the classroom that I forget things that I already know.
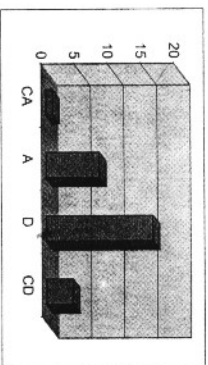

CA: 1 A: 8 D: 1 D: 4

Figure 2. Forgetfulness caused by apprehension in the classroom.

To Young (1992) this kind of forgetfulness may be considered a FLA indicator, a fact that was confirmed by some of the subjects in their interviews.

The anxiety I feel hinders my attempts to perform well in the classroom. It makes me produce at least fifty per cent less than I actually could.

According to Jersild (1978), besides resisting to the learning experience itself, anxious students might choose to flee from such situations. One of the subjects clearly stated her wish of escaping what she saw as an anxiety raising situation:

I wanted to come back to the previous stage when I started this one. I even talked to my teacher about doing it again, because I was not being able to cope with the lessons at this stage. I kept telling myself "I'm going to quit this course. I'm going to look for an easier school".

On the other hand, Jersild emphasizes that some students tend to study desperately not only to learn, but also to overcome their anxieties, instead of seeking for ways to deal with them.

I studied night and day to be able to do the final test. I asked my friends to help me, I wrote many study lists because I knew the test was important and I needed to pass it.

I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
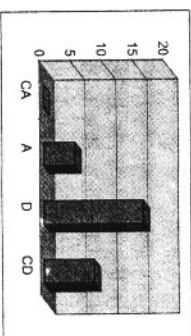CA:0 A:5 D:16 CA:8

Figure 3. Panicking at having to speak in the classroom.

The three students who agreed with the statement were in Basic 1 and Basic 2 levels, results which might be considered as a piece of evidence of what McIntyre and Gardner (1991 a, b) called Novelty Anxiety. These authors had proved that FLA is strongly linked to Novelty Anxiety, which would be anxiety generated by a novel situation. MacIntyre and Gardner characterize the anxious student as an

"Individual who perceives the second language as an uncomfortable experience, who withdraws from voluntary participation, who feels social pressures not to make mistakes, and who is less willing to try uncertain or novel linguistic forms" (1991a, p.112).

The cause for the prevalence of Novelty Anxiety in Basic level students may be related to the fact that in the language teaching context studied such levels are meant to false beginners. So, since the very first day, students were taught according to two assumptions: the first one was that all of them had an elementary knowledge of English and the second one was that the classes should be completely delivered in the target language.

During the interviews, we discovered that some of the subjects investigated were not false beginners but real ones, therefore, they had almost no knowledge of English. These were the subjects who agreed to the aforementioned statement. Probably these students had some knowledge of English, due to the fact that all the researched individuals had seen some English in secondary and high school. However, the strangeness and novelty presented by the learning environment may have made these students become unaware of their rudimentary knowledge of the English language.

MacIntyre et al. (1997) found out that besides negatively influencing the actual linguistic competence of certain individuals, anxiety may lead learners to underestimate their existing abilities. Distrusting themselves, anxious students try to flee from activities to which they see themselves ill prepared for, offering to themselves fewer opportunities to learn and practice the second language.

It has been very hard. I thought the course would be meant to beginners who knew no English. When the classes began I felt that I was expected to know some of the language, otherwise you

couldn't cope with the course. The teacher speaks only English in the classroom, and it is very hard to understand what she says.

Novelty Anxiety may have several sources to the subjects investigated, such as the "strangeness" of the learning situation and the learners' perceptions of their own proficiency level. The subjects' expectation degree when beginning their EFL instruction should also be taken into consideration. High expectations may be one of the generating factors of Novelty Anxiety.

I never thought I would be financially and intellectually able to study English. I think that is why I had the idea that the course would be so difficult that I would not be able to cope with it.

I feel confident when I speak in the foreign language class.
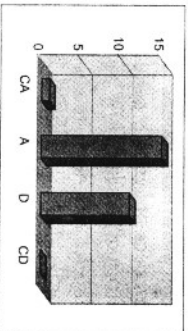
CA: 1 A: 15 D: 11 CD: 0

Figure 4. Self -Confidence when speaking in the classroom.

The subjects' self-confidence when speaking in the classroom seemed to be linked to positive personal interactions. The relaxed atmosphere promoted by the teachers of the researched groups and the friendship among the learners are pointed out by themselves as the source of their well being when engaged in oral work.

If you are among friends, you don't worry so much about your mistakes. If you say something wrong, you are not afraid that everyone might laugh at you. The climate was very fun and friendly too. If the climate was not good, I'm sure we would not be able to speak freely in the classroom.

2. 2 Fear of Negative Evaluation

According to Aida (1994), the fear of negative evaluation is both, an aspect of communication apprehension and an independent component of FLA. The evidence produced by this study showed that the fear of negative evaluation may also display elements of test anxiety, due to the subjects' perspectives of being constantly judged and evaluated by their peers and teachers in the classroom. Remarkably related to classroom interactions, the fear of negative evaluation main manifestation in the group studied was the fear of making mistakes and the necessity of having them immediately corrected by the instructor. The roots of this anguish seemed to come from former learning experiences of the students who participated in this investigation.

In spite of Novelty Anxiety experimented by the group investigated, the positive classroom atmosphere promoted by the teachers had contributed to the decline of this initial tension. According to Krashen (1982), a Low Affective Filter enhances the acquisition of a second language. To this author, students who possess low anxiety levels tend to be more successful in their attempts of speaking the target language. Such learners have Low Affective Filters, in other words, due to positive emotional conditions, they absorb input much easier than students who, due to negative emotional conditions, possess High Affective Filters.

Therefore, this investigation has proved that communication apprehension, which can originate from both, internal and external factors to the classroom environment, is expressed by the subjects researched by their fears and tensions related to speaking the target language in the classroom.

According to Daly (1986), some learning situations which are part of the Communicative Approach to language teaching may increase the communication apprehension. These situations would arise aspects of evaluation, novelty and ambiguity which were seen by some of the students investigated as a threat to their self-identity as learners. Besides these

Sometimes I'm afraid of speaking English; maybe I'm afraid of making mistakes. My first experience with English was in 5th grade. I say that it was a terrible experience because we just studied verbs, and we had to memorize those verbs and to take a test on them too.

I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
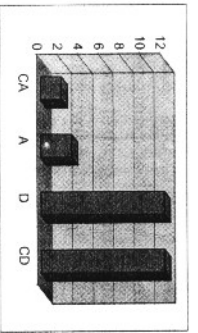
CA: 2 A: 3 D: 12 CD: 12

Figure 5. Fear of appearing ridiculous in the classroom.

Another manifestation of the fear of negative evaluation was the subjects' concern of losing face in the presence of their colleagues and teachers, of having their failures judged by their peers. Although just the minority of the students (five) agreed with the statement, in the interviews these students clearly confirmed their anguish in relation to their self-exposition:

At the beginning I was really ashamed of speaking in the classroom. When the teacher asked me something, I immediately blushed. And this kind of discomfort never happened to me in other subject classes. I was afraid to speak in English lessons because I thought that all the students knew more than I did. I had the impression that I was the worst student in the group. Everybody understood everything except me. People talked to each to other in the classroom, but not I.

In this way, it can be said that the fear of negative evaluation is quite an interactive construct. Even individuals with no predisposition to FLA, might fear to be negatively evaluated in the foreign language classroom if the group interaction is not a positive one. On the other hand, the perception of the climate of friendship within each of the

CA: 1 A: 8 D: 25 CD: 5

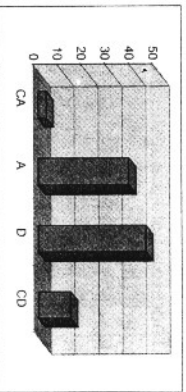

Figure 6. Worrying about making mistakes in language class.

I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

The majority of the subjects studied demonstrated to be substantially concerned about their mistakes and their correction. They stated their preference for immediate correction, though their diaries and semi-structured interviews. It was also found that the more students were familiarized with the learning environment, the more they were relaxed about error correction.

researched groups, Basic one, Basic two and Pre-Intermediate groups, helped to relieve this state of emotional discomfort.

Another relieving aspect to the subjects was that they realized that their levels of proficiency were similar to the levels of the other people in their class. The perception that the students of the same class had the same difficulties helped the more fearful students to have their tension decreased throughout the six weeks of the course.

In the beginning of the course I was really afflict, because I thought my friends knew more than I did. Now I'm calmer, I'm still afraid of making mistakes but I'm feeling more comfortable with my classmates because I know that they have as many doubts as me.

I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.

One of the reasons why the researched subjects were anguished in relation to the correction of their errors was the fact that they did not want to have their weaknesses exposed to the whole group. They were afraid that the "others", represented by their classmates and teacher, would see them as a kind of less capable person, diminishing, in this way, their self-esteem.

CA: 14 A: 14 D: 0 CD: 0

Figure 7. Emotional discomfort regarding error correction.

I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.

These results are linked to learning experiences in traditional educational contexts, such as regular primary and secondary school and/or university, in which it is quite common that the teacher corrects the students promptly, as soon as errors occur. Thus, students wanted to be corrected, because they were used to it. In spite of this fact, some students may have felt uncomfortable about error correction due to negative learning experiences.

I quitted English at University because the teacher forced us to speak with her pronunciation. If one couldn't speak as well as her, she would despise him/her. In the beginning I liked going to the English lessons, and then I started disliking them. In the end, it was a real torture; I did not want to go anymore, because the teacher wanted us to speak in a way that was impossible for us. She forced you and you could not do it, and she insisted, again and again. Then, the whole group watched your defeat. I think no student likes this kind of situation.

The way I have had my errors corrected in this course does not cause me any kind of discomfort.
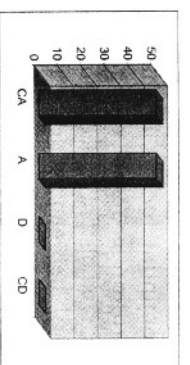
The answers to this statement reflect the approval of the students of the error correction techniques used by the teachers of the institution investigated. These techniques consisted of immediate or delayed oral correction, or even general or individual correction, according to the kind of mistake done and its frequency. The results displayed on the bar chart show also that these students valued error correction. Even so, four students might have felt anxious about error correction, wishing to have their errors corrected immediately after they occurred, as it was explicit in their interview extracts:

The teacher in the beginning of the course said she would not correct on the spot. The majority of students said that they thought that the correction should be made shortly after their mistakes. Because I really do not care. I am here to learn and to be corrected.

Teachers should demand accuracy from the students. Otherwise how can one learn properly? If one says ten words and nine are wrong, the teacher has the obligation of correcting all nine.

The results of this research confirmed the two perspectives pointed out by the specialized literature about the

fear of negative evaluation. The first one is that this construct is one of the predominant factors in the FLA generation process, due to the subjects' emotional conflict created by the clash between their deep rooted beliefs concerning errors and their fear of being negatively evaluated by peers and teachers.

The second one is the perspective of seeing the fear of the negative evaluation as a sort of synthesis of the other two FLA main elements, test anxiety and communication apprehension. The fear of being evaluated by their teachers as less capable people, of having their mistakes and difficulties exposed and judged by the whole group, made some of the researched subjects feel apprehensive when expressing themselves orally in the classroom. This tension must have affected their oral performance in some way. In addition, the link between fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety was shown by the subjects' perspective that they were being tested in their oral abilities in the classroom, which may have generated a considerable level of anxiety in them.

2. 3 Test Anxiety

In order to interpret adequately the answers given by the researched subjects to the statements related to test anxiety it is necessary to clarify the test structure of the educational setting where this study took place. The tests administered by this institution assess the skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading and three major linguistic aspects, which are vocabulary, grammar and phonetics. There are also, short written diagnostic tests, administered twice a term, and entrance tests for newcomers.

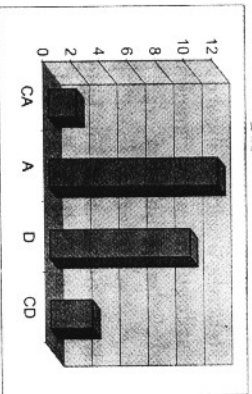I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
CA: 2 A: 12 D: 10 CD: 3

Figure 8. Calmness during language tests.

The equilibrium between negative and positive answers to this statement shows how general and pervasive the test anxiety construct is. The students who answered positively to this statement demonstrated to be very self-demanding and to possess a kind of idealized performance perspective, very rarely achieved. In this way, the language learning context studied might have become quite anxiety provoking, due to the fact that to assess the progress and difficulties of the students, there should be oral and written evaluations quite frequently.

I get nervous when taking any kind of test. I worry a lot. It can be the easiest test. I am still nervous. These feelings are even worse when I have to take an oral test. I feel like saying things that I am not prepared to say yet. This situation makes me feel even more nervous.

This student's words show the link between test anxiety and communication apprehension regarding oral tests. The fear demonstrated by the learner related to any test situation is incremented by the fact of he is not feeling secure of expressing himself adequately in the target language. According to Speilberger, Gonzales and Fletcher (1979), people who suffer from test anxiety may feel so tense when taking tests that such nervousness interferes in their attention span, diminishing it significantly. This emotional state makes students waste their energy trying to manage their anxiety level instead of using this energy in the test itself. So, it can be said that people who possess a certain degree of test anxiety tend to have an inferior test performance than people who do not have this problem.

The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
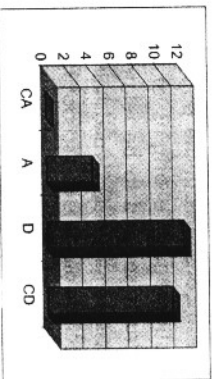CA: 0 A: 4 D: 12 CD: 11

Figure 9. Anxiety influence on test preparation.

This is one of the statements which better characterizes the FLA, due to the fact that it expresses the anxiety's influence in language learning in its three basic phases, input, processing and production.

This should be the reason why just four students agreed with it. Referring to this result, it can be assumed that anxiety may create a barrier to a learner's proper absorption of what is given to him/her in the classroom. One of the researched subjects clearly stated how anxiety interfered when she was studying for language tests.

I don't know, I'm just very much afraid of taking the final test I think I'll fail. I do everything the teacher asks me to do at home, but when the issue is studying for tests, it becomes very complicated for me.

I feel tense and worried before the final tests, mainly before the oral one.
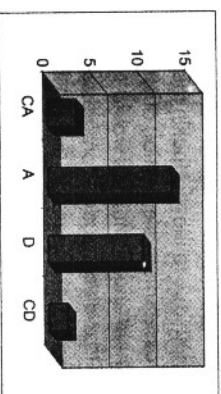CA: 3 A: 13 D: 10 CD: 2

Figure 10. Previous tension felt before taking tests.

We introduced this statement when adapting the Horwitz et al. (1991) scale to the purposes of this investigation in order to measure learners' anxiety regarding the final written and oral tests. Learning about the part of oral tests in the subjects' FLA fostering is relevant mainly because of the great emphasis given in recent years to the development of speaking competence in the field of English language teaching and also to the huge importance the subjects themselves placed in their growth regarding speaking skills. In such a context, any barrier found by students in their way to this goal, an oral test, for instance, may become particularly anxiety raising. This should happen because in oral tests, test anxiety has

its negative effects increased by the influence of the other two FLA main constructs, communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation. This seems to be the case of this student:

I'm trying not to think about the oral test tomorrow. I'm sure I'm going to block myself with this nervousness. I am sure I'm not going to be well evaluated, but I'm still trying not to think about this problem.

The peculiarities of foreign language teaching contexts feed the test anxiety problem due to the fact that in this area oral assessment is essential, otherwise, teachers and institutions would not be able to evaluate students progresses and weaknesses' regarding oral skills. In most other subject areas, such as mathematics, science or social studies this kind of assessment simply does not exist. Therefore, most Brazilian students face oral tests only when engaged in foreign language learning situations. Phillips (1992) adds to this picture the perspective that even worse than test anxiety in itself are the students' beliefs about the influence of anxiety in their oral performance in the classroom and in other social contexts as well.

I felt particularly pressed when I took the oral test. One feels nervous when taking this kind of tests. You feel you are not well evaluated because you study so many things and just a small amount of them is assessed. It is like in real life, you never know what is really going to happen.

Still according to Phillips, if test anxiety gets too intense, it can make learners withdraw from foreign language learning because of the emotional discomfort generated by it. On the other hand, the fact that the researched subjects could take oral tests in pairs, and that they were not evaluated by their own instructor seemed to have eased their test anxiety.

Conclusion

In this study, we departed from the assumption that the FLA constituted a hampering factor for successful English language learning in a group of Brazilian adult learners. We made the research which supported this article in order to understand the role of the three main constructs of the FLA, communication apprehension, fear of negative evaluation and test anxiety in the generation of this kind of anxiety.

We were able to confirm the influence of these constructs in the population investigated. The origins of these constructs seemed to be related the subjects' early life histories and their social interactions at home and school. Former negative language learning experiences appeared as the main source of their emotional distress in the context studied. Such negative feelings were incremented by the great expectations the subjects brought with themselves about language learning. They felt a strong pressure to learn English as fast and efficiently as possible, which made their FLA level increase considerably. In addition, the cultural resistance to English presented by some of the subjects seemed to have fostered this uneasiness.

Some specific teaching procedures, related to the Communicative Approach, such as immediate oral production, constant assessment and error correction strategies were seen by the subjects as tension raising aspects. On the other hand, the relaxed classroom atmosphere fomented by the teachers and enhanced by the positive interaction among the students researched were perceived as anxiety relieving factors.

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ESCALA

NOME:
PROFISSÃO:
IDADE:
FONE:
NÍVEL/PROFESSOR:
FAÇA UM "X" NO ESPAÇO MAIS APROPRIADO DE ACORDO COM SUA OPINIÃO:
CONCORDO PLENAMENTE (CP)
CONCORDO (C)
DISCORDO (D)
DISCORDO COMPLETAMENTE (DC)

	CP	C	D	DC
1.Eu nunca me sinto seguro de mim mesmo quando estou falando na aula de inglês.				
2.Eu não me preocupo com os meus erros em sala de aula.				
3.Eu tremo quando eu sei que terei de responder uma pergunta individualmente, oralmente, feita pelo professor na sala de aula.				
4.Eu fico assustado quando não consigo entender o que o professor está falando na sala de aula.				
5.Eu sempre acho que os outros alunos sabem mais do que eu.				
6.Eu me sinto calmo durante os "diagnostic tests".				
7.Eu me sinto em pânico quando tenho de falar de improviso na sala de aula.				
8.Eu temo as conseqüências de não ser bem sucedido no meu aprendizado de inglês.				
9. Às vezes eu fico tão nervoso na sala de aula que eu esqueço coisas que eu já sei.				
10.Freqüentemente, eu não sinto vontade de vir às aulas de inglês.				
11.Eu me sinto confiante ao falar na aula de inglês.				
12.Eu temo que meu professor esteja sempre pronto a corrigir os meus erros.				
13.Eu sinto meu coração bater forte quando o professor fala comigo na sala de aula.				
14.Quanto mais eu estudo para as provas, mais confuso eu fico.				

	CP	C	D	DC
15.Eu me sinto tenso e preocupado antes dos testes finais, principalmente antes do teste oral.				
16.As vezes a aula tem um ritmo tão acelerado que eu temo ficar para trás.				
17.Eu me sinto mais nervoso e tenso na aula de inglês do que em outras aulas.				
18.Eu fico nervoso e confuso quando eu estou falando na sala de aula.				
19.Eu me sinto preocupado com o número de regras que tenho que aprender para me expressar bem em inglês.				
20.Eu temo que os outros alunos possam rir de mim quando estou falando inglês.				
21.Eu tenho tido minhas expectativas de aprendizagem de inglês atendidas nesse curso.				
22.Eu me sinto tenso quando vou fazer um exercício de "listening".				
23.O fato de não entender tudo o que é dito nos "listenings" e vídeos me causa apreensão.				
24.A maneira pela qual tenho tido meus erros corrigidos nesse curso não me causa nenhum tipo de desconforto.				
25.Eu prefiro fazer atividades em pequenos grupos ou em pares do que em grandes grupos ou individualmente.				
26.Eu me sinto confortável em relação à obrigação de fazer "homework".				
27.Antes de entrar nesta escola eu pensava que aprender inglês não fora significativos.				
28. Eu aprendo inglês apenas por necessidade profissional.				
29. Eu gosto muito de inglês.				
30. Minhas experiências anteriores de aprendizagem de inglês não foram significativas, isto é, não me fizeram nem bem nem mal.				
31. O fato das aulas serem ministradas completamente em inglês nesse curso não me causa nenhum tipo de nervosismo.				
32. Faça um balanço da sua aprendizagem de inglês. Como você se sentiu no começo do curso e como você está se sentindo agora?				

HORIZONTES
DE LINGUÍSTICA APLICADA