



Investigating Foreign Language Anxiety in the Swedish English as Foreign Language Classroom

A quantitative study on the effects of FLA in the Swedish EFL upper secondary school context

Max Skeppstedt
Ämneslärarprogrammet



Degree essay: 15 hp
Course: LGEN2A
Level: Advanced level
Term/year: VT 2022
Supervisor: Joanna Nykiel
Examiner: Pia Köhlmyr

Keywords: Foreign Language Anxiety, Swedish EFL Context, Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale, Swedish upper secondary school

Abstract

Anxiety as an affective variable has been studied since the middle of the 20th century. Research on anxiety in the language learning context was unified in the 1980s when Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) published their article on the construct of Foreign Language Anxiety. Alongside their definition, they created a method of measurement, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). Since then, the instrument has become a standard in this research field and it has been used in many studies. Many language students seem to be affected by FLA to some degree, causing their language learning to suffer in one way or another. How and why are two questions this study attempted to answer in its review of the current research literature. Secondly, this present study used a modified version of the FLCAS to investigate FLA in a Swedish upper secondary school context. Participants answered a questionnaire, and the data was compiled from their self-reports. This study found that Swedish upper secondary school English as a Foreign Language students experienced moderate levels of general anxiety somewhat frequently. No particular language skill was reported as the most anxiety-inducing. The findings were supported by previous research, and it was suggested that the Swedish EFL context is comparable with other contexts in FLA research. Finally, in relation to the curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) and the EFL syllabus (Skolverket, 2020), implications were argued.

Table of Contents

| | | |
|----------|--|-----------|
| 1 | Introduction | 3 |
| 2 | Theoretical Background | 4 |
| 2.1 | The Foreign Language Anxiety Construct | 4 |
| 2.2 | The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale | 6 |
| 2.3 | FLA: cause or effect?..... | 7 |
| 3 | Previous Research | 8 |
| 3.1 | Potential Predictors of Anxiety | 8 |
| 3.2 | Anxiety and the language skills | 10 |
| 3.2.1 | Foreign Language Reading Anxiety | 10 |
| 3.2.2 | Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety | 11 |
| 3.2.3 | Foreign Language Listening Anxiety | 12 |
| 3.2.4 | Foreign Language Writing Anxiety | 12 |
| 3.3 | Reducing Foreign Language Anxiety | 12 |
| 3.3.1 | The role of the language learner | 13 |
| 3.3.2 | The role of the language teacher | 14 |
| 3.3.3 | Foreign Language Enjoyment | 15 |
| 3.4 | Foreign Language Anxiety in a Swedish upper secondary school context | 16 |
| 3.4.1 | Swedish students of English as a Foreign Language | 17 |
| 3.4.2 | Swedish teachers of English as a Foreign Language..... | 18 |
| 4 | Method | 19 |
| 4.1 | Participants | 20 |
| 4.2 | The questionnaire..... | 21 |
| 5 | Results | 22 |
| 5.1 | General questions..... | 22 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 5.2 | The language skills | 24 |
| 5.3 | Language skills and gender | 25 |
| 5.4 | Language skills and education program | 27 |
| 5.5 | Language skills and self-perceived proficiency | 28 |
| 5.6 | Open-ended questions..... | 31 |
| 6 | Discussion..... | 32 |
| 7 | Conclusion..... | 35 |
| | References | 37 |
| | Appendix A. The inverted U relation between anxiety and performance | |
| | Appendix B. The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) | |
| | Appendix C. The recursive relations between anxiety, cognition, and behavior | |
| | Appendix D. The survey, in Swedish | |
| | Appendix E. The survey, in English | |
| | Appendix F. The unrepresented data from the original data collection..... | |

1 Introduction

Anxiety in language-learning situations has been explored since the middle of the 20th century. From the outset, studies investigated anxiety as a trait, but since the 1980s, research in this field has more or less flourished. The turning point came in 1986, when Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) published an article where they did not only define the construct of foreign language anxiety (FLA), but also constructed a trusted method for measuring it, the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). For close to 40 years now, their scale has become a standard in this research field to survey an anxiety specific to the foreign language learning context, and subsequent attempts to observe language skill specific anxieties. However, to observe the FLA phenomenon empirically is difficult, as all expressions of anxiety might not be observable. Instead, Horwitz et al.'s (1986) scale rely on self-reports.

Regardless of research difficulties, the Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school clearly states that teachers are responsible for adapting their teaching methods to accommodate students' different proficiency levels, prior knowledge, and individual needs (Skolverket, 2011). The classroom teaching must also be adapted to allow students to develop their abilities, in line with their different preconditions (Skolverket, 2011). In the Swedish syllabus for English as a Foreign Language, the teaching should aim to help students develop their abilities so that they are able, and dare, to use English in different situations and for different purposes (Skolverket, 2020). Put emphasis on dare, and it might be clear why anxiety could be troublesome for EFL learners.

Because of the sparse availability of studies on FLA conducted in a Swedish upper secondary EFL context, the present study attempts to explore whether or not Swedish upper secondary students of English experience any FLA. From such a foundation, this study seeks to identify which language skill Swedish students feel the most anxious about. Ultimately, participants are asked to share their thoughts on FLA, what they believe might be the cause for it, and what the duties of the learner, the peer, and the teacher, are in relation to FLA. All in all, one of the goals of this study is to establish whether or not research on FLA in other contexts can be corroborated by the experiences students have in upper secondary schools in Sweden. Considering that there are but a few studies in the Swedish context, this connection has not been fully developed yet.

Previous research on FLA indicates that the construct is language-independent (Horwitz et al., 1986), yet other studies conclude that FLA is at least partially connected with

the cultural context of the learning situation (Lu & Liu, 2015; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2022; Woodrow, 2006). Another aim of this study is then to pinpoint whether the Swedish context is an outlier or not, in terms of FLA. The research questions then, are as follows,

1. a) do Swedish upper secondary students of English experience any FLA?
b) if so, which of the four language skills do they feel the most anxious about?
2. what do Swedish students of English think is the reason behind FLA?
3. a) what do Swedish students of English think they can personally do about it?
b) what do Swedish students of English think their teacher can do about it?

Hopefully, from the results presented in this study, the presence of FLA in a Swedish upper secondary school context can be established. If a presence can be proven, it will be compared to reports from previous literature, in order to corroborate the findings. From that, the need for more awareness regarding FLA and methods of reducing it could be argued.

2 Theoretical Background

To begin with, the following three sections explain the FLA construct and its history. Next, the FLCAS is highlighted and discussed, followed by a discussion of potentially differing views on the causality of language anxiety.

2.1 The Foreign Language Anxiety Construct

FLA, as defined by Horwitz et al. (1986), suggests that FLA is a unique experience, exclusive to the environment of a foreign language classroom. It is one of several affective factors (motivation and attitude towards the language being two other noteworthy variables) that could, as a plethora of research infers, potentially impair the acquisition of a new language.

While anxiety can be considered both facilitating and debilitating (Alpert & Haber, 1960; Chastain, 1975; Kleinmann, 1977; Liebert & Morris, 1967), it is widely regarded as something that is debilitating rather than facilitating in past language research (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). The relationship is, however, not entirely black-and-white (MacIntyre, 1995a; see Appendix A), or as Chastain (1975) describes the heart of this dilemma: “[p]erhaps some concern about a test is a plus while too much anxiety can produce negative results” (p. 160). Horwitz et al. (1986) investigated foreign language anxiety as a debilitating factor and research since have taken a similar approach. This present study follows in the same footsteps.

Prior to the endeavor set out by Horwitz et al. (1986), research in the field examined the idea of FLA primarily from the perspective of anxiety as a personality trait, and not as something that is specific to the foreign language classroom situation (MacIntyre, 2007; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991). Such studies often yielded inconclusive results and recorded little to no correlation between the anxious learner and their foreign language achievement (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Scovel, 1978; Young, 1991). Thus, Horwitz et al. (1986) set out to redefine FLA as a situation-specific anxiety, unique to the foreign language learning context. In their attempt to redefine the concept of FLA, Horwitz et al. (1986) showcase the relationship between FLA and three similar concepts; communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation (p. 127).

Communication apprehension typically refers to a fear of communicating with other people, no matter the constellation (Horwitz et al., 1986). Students often hold no control over the extent to which they have to communicate in the language classroom, which only increases the negative experience (Horwitz et al., 1986). When one starts to learn a foreign language, one might realize the hardship of expressing oneself and understanding others in a language that is not one's mother tongue (Horwitz et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989; 1991). Early on in the language learning process, this might frustrate the learner, yet MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) insist that "such frustration may even be considered part of the learning process" (p. 104). However, some students seem unable to get to the other end of this apprehension.

For learners, test anxiety manifests itself as a tendency to put pressure on themselves which they are unable to meet, especially in terms of results and grades in more formal language settings in the classroom (Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). However, as Gordon and Sarason (1955) conclude, test anxiety is only partly linked with a more general type of anxiety as "[it] does not account for most of the variance" (p. 321). Considering this, Horwitz et al. (1986) imply that test anxiety is merely one part of the complex FLA construct, just as formal testing situations are only one part of the foreign language learning situation.

Lastly, fear of negative evaluation has less to do with official assessment and has more to do with instances where the student can be negatively evaluated by their peers based on their proficiency and their performance (Horwitz, et al., 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner 1991).

These three concepts only provide an outline for the FLA construct. As Horwitz et al. (1986) emphasize, FLA is something distinctive because learning a foreign language comes

with its own intricacies. Just like how the different language skills are used in tandem, these apprehensions do not appear solitary either.

Something else that Horwitz et al. (1986) stress, is the fact that FLA is language-independent, in other words, the phenomenon is occurring in all languages in the learning context. While each language naturally comes with its own distinct problems, the FLA construct does not distinguish between them.

2.2 The Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale

Anxiety research faces an entirely different difficulty also, namely the methodology. As suggested by Scovel (1978), anxiety can be measured in three distinctive fashions; by observing the behavior of a subject, via self-reported testimony, or through physiological testing (pp. 134-135). Because the feeling of anxiety is often particular to the individual who experiences it, naturally, it is something that is arduous to empirically investigate. Research in the field has concentrated on using self-reports as its bedrock for analysis. Conversely, as the study by MacIntyre, Noels & Clément (1997) suggests, anxious language learners often inaccurately assess their own proficiency level as compared to nonanxious learners. This begs the question regarding the accuracy of students' self-reports. Generally, it seems that anxiety affects students' ratings of themselves, most likely subconsciously and unintentionally. This raises concerns about the validity of students' answers (Oller & Perkins, 1978a). Still, there is no reason to reject self-reports entirely because "regardless of how problematic self-reports may be [...] they are about the only way we have of determining if someone is, really, say, "anxious"" (Oller & Perkins, 1978b, p. 417). Instead, Oller and Perkins (1978b) stress the importance of self-reports coupled with an observational method to triangulate and verify the results.

In their attempt to measure this newly designated foreign language anxiety, Horwitz et al. (1986) also created the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS). Since its inception close to 40 years ago, the FLCAS (or a modified version of it) has become a standard in this particular research field. The FLCAS itself is a 33-item questionnaire, where respondents answer statements (e.g. "I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make") by marking one alternative out of five total, in a typical Likert scale manner (see Appendix B). The options range from *Strongly Agree*, *Agree*, *Neither Agree Nor Disagree*, *Disagree*, and *Strongly Disagree*.

Naturally, the FLCAS is not without fault. A majority of the items (~60%) in the FLCAS regard speaking anxiety, which questions what the scale is actually measuring (Aida, 1994; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; 2007). Horwitz (1986) further explains that the FLCAS was constructed with input from anxious foreign language students, counselors who work with anxious learners, and Horwitz's own experiences dealing with anxious students as a foreign language teacher. Most students might find the situation in which they have to speak a foreign language the most daunting and anxiety-inducing, which would explain why a majority of the items in the FLCAS deal with speaking the target language specifically (Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Horwitz, 1986; 2001; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1990). However, in the years since Horwitz et al. (1986) created the FLCAS, many studies have been conducted which investigate anxiety and each of the skills; reading (e.g. Lu & Liu, 2015; Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999), speaking (e.g. Hewitt & Stephenson, 2012; Mak, 2011; Phillips, 1992; Woodrow, 2006; Young, 1986; 1990; Zhang & Liu, 2013), listening (e.g. Elkhafaifi, 2005; Liu, 2016; Zhang, 2013), and writing (e.g. Cheng et al., 1999; Jebreil, Azizifar & Gowhary, 2015), or at least two of them in tandem (e.g. Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Liu & Yuan, 2021), with results suggesting that FLA is not only experienced exclusively with the speaking skill, but also with the other language skills to a certain degree.

2.3 FLA: cause or effect?

While the fact that FLA is a specific type of anxiety exclusive to the language learning situation is quite undisputed, a debate has arisen regarding the causality of such anxiety. Since Horwitz et al.'s (1986) study, there has been some contention regarding the relationship between FLA and other, non-affective, learning difficulties.

Sparks and Ganschow (1991) seem to reject the idea of affective variables (which not only includes anxiety, but also motivation and attitudes) as an explanatory factor for poor language performance, and instead propose their own hypothesis, the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH). Linguistic coding, as described by Sparks, Ganschow, and Pohlman (1989), consists of three different components: a phonological, a syntactic, and a semantic component. Sparks and Ganschow (1991) suggest that a deficit in this area would reveal itself in both the native language and the foreign language, resulting in poor language achievement. This poor achievement, in turn, would be the reason why students feel anxious, suggesting that FLA and other affective variables are only symptoms or "behavioral manifestations" (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991, p. 6) of a deeper-rooted issue, namely a coding

deficit. This conjecture is further supported by other studies (e.g. Argaman & Abu-Rabia, 2002; Chen & Chang, 2008; Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorshy, Skinner & Patton, 1994; Sparks & Ganschow, 1993a; 1993b; 2007).

MacIntyre (1995a; 1995b) argues against the LCDH model. He suggests that while the process of encoding is necessary in order to learn a new language, “it is not a sufficient condition” (MacIntyre, 1995b, p. 245). In other words, The LCDH is, according to MacIntyre (1995b), limiting the conception of learning a new language down to but one aspect of it.

While Horwitz (2000) agrees that a cognitive disability might be the cause of anxiety for some learners, Horwitz also argues that the sheer number of students who experience FLA is too large to support the LCDH. According to Horwitz (2000), one-third of American college students experience quite high levels of FLA regularly, and the fact that so many also would suffer from a cognitive disability seems highly inconceivable.

The issue of causality is not black-and-white, as Sparks, Ganschow, and colleagues seem to propose. Instead, the different variables seem to affect each other in a cyclical manner, as MacIntyre (1995a) suggests (see Appendix C). Perhaps it is only feasible that FLA is not only cause or effect, but both, simultaneously.

3 Previous Research

The following sections divulge the previous research conducted in this field. Firstly, potential predictors of anxiety are presented. Then, research on the effect of FLA on each of the language skills are highlighted. From there, methods of reducing students’ FLA, as suggested by research are detailed. Ultimately, the FLA research conducted in a Swedish upper secondary school context are presented and elaborated upon.

3.1 Potential Predictors of Anxiety

As for gender, Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau, and Dewaele (2016) investigated differences between male and female students in their FLA experiences. The results indicated that females experience a wider array of emotions (both positive and negative) in the foreign language classroom (Dewaele et al., 2016). Uniquely, Lu and Liu (2015) found that male Chinese students reported higher levels of reading anxiety, which stands in contrast with previous findings (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Dewaele et al., 2016; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Jebreil et al. (2015) also found that male students of English in Iran were experiencing more writing anxiety than females. Ultimately, as Ekström’s (2013) study has revealed, females and males

experience different levels of anxiety related to each language skill. Male participants reported higher levels of anxiety when it came to writing and listening, while female participants felt more anxious about reading and speaking (Ekström, 2013). It seems that gender functions differently as a predictor of anxiety depending on what type of FLA is being researched, however, why that is, is still fairly unresolved.

Spending time abroad seems to have somewhat of an effect on FLA. Aida (1994) found that learners who have visited Japan before studying the language tended to be less anxious once they started the process of learning that language. Dewaele, Petrides, and Furnham (2008) concluded that participants who had been living abroad, immersed in the target language and target culture, felt less anxious over time. Similarly, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) found that those who spent time in an English-speaking environment also reported that they were more confident, specifically when speaking the target language.

It can and should be discussed whether the cultural context has any effect on language anxiety. From the data, Woodrow (2006) managed to highlight an interesting pattern, where European and Vietnamese participants reported less anxiety in general than the participants of a Chinese, Korean, or Japanese heritage. Woodrow (2006) suggested that it might be due to cultural differences, but such a hypothesis remains inconclusive as little to no research has been conducted to examine such a relationship. Lu and Liu (2015) attributed their findings that male participants in a Chinese context experienced more reading anxiety than their female counterparts to gender stereotypes embedded in Chinese culture, but it should be noted that such an inference is not supported by the data in their study. Toyama and Yamazaki (2022) found that culture had a significantly larger effect on higher education than lower education. Their findings work to further understand the potential influence culture has on all proceedings within a language learning environment (Toyama & Yamazaki, 2022).

Even though Cheng et al. (1999) investigated achievement and its' relationship with FLA, they concluded that achievement was difficult to research. Achievement can be interpreted differently, but most often, historically, it has been measured using final grades (Horwitz, 2001). Still, Cheng et al. (1999) settled on using final grades as a measure of achievement, which could be considered dubious, and it was proven difficult to establish an analogous relationship between achievement and actual proficiency. Despite this, Horwitz's (1986) inquiry suggested that students who had higher levels of FLA, not only expected but also received lower final grades. Horwitz's (1986) results were later corroborated by other studies (Aida, 1994; Onwuegbuzie, Bailey & Daley, 1999; 2000; Saito & Samimy, 1996). However, such results do not necessitate an adverse relationship. Lower final grades do not

automatically correspond to higher levels of anxiety, other variables could have the same effect (see section 2.3).

Because of possible ambiguity in measurement, Steinberg and Horwitz (1986) implored the use of less uncertain methods of measuring achievement. In their study, they found that participants who were not subjected to induced anxiety exhibited a wider range of their proficiency than those who experienced FLA (Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986). Similarly, MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) revealed that students of French who suffered from anxiety had trouble with their performance on a vocabulary task. The more anxious students are, the less likely they are to be risk-taking and to express their range in the target language (Saito & Samimy, 1996). These studies indicate that FLA might affect performance to some extent, yet no conclusions can be drawn on the consistency of such a correlation.

3.2 Anxiety and the language skills

The following four subsections of this study will disclose research into FLA and each of the four language skills, reading, speaking, listening, and writing respectively. The section that immediately follows will indulge research into methods of alleviating general language anxiety, and FLA regarding a particular language skill.

3.2.1 Foreign Language Reading Anxiety

While Lu and Liu (2015) discovered that the majority of the respondents did not feel anxious about reading the target language, one-third still experienced anxiety to some degree.

Saito et al.'s (1999) data managed to reveal that because of their anxiety, students can feel overwhelmed when they are reading a text in a foreign language. This seems to be especially true when students are faced with words or grammar that they are unfamiliar with, as a result of a misconception that they must understand everything that is written in a text (Saito et al., 1999). Surprisingly, a majority of respondents (~66%) reported that they “would be happy just to learn how to speak rather than having to learn how to read” (Saito et al., 1999, p. 215). As the authors speculated, foreign language learners might divide learning a language into two different components, communication and literacy, where communication perhaps plays a bigger part than literacy (Saito et al., 1999).

3.2.2 Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

American university students of French in Phillips' (1992) study answered the FLCAS and then took an oral exam, in order for Phillips to investigate the relationship between FLA and oral performance and exam grades. The findings uncovered a "persistent, moderate negative correlation between foreign language anxiety and [oral] performance" (Phillips, 1992, p. 20). While Phillips (1992) advocated that similar studies should be conducted in different contexts, Hewitt and Stephenson's (2012) replication of Phillips' (1992) study, with Spanish students of English, demonstrated similar results, thus verifying the results from the previous study. The results from both studies also corroborated the results from Young's (1986) study, which examined the relationship between students' anxiety and the, at the time, newly developed Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). Young (1986) found that even in an interview setting, participants' oral proficiency decreased as their anxiety levels heightened. Furthermore, Zhang and Liu (2013) presented that anxiety affected low-proficiency students to a larger degree than their high-proficiency peers. Low-proficiency students tended to use fewer strategies during oral tests, seemingly only increasing their anxiety in turn (Zhang & Liu, 2013).

Young (1990) also questioned American students of Spanish about which classroom activities they deemed to be the most anxiety-inducing and the results point toward speaking the language. Based on the results, Young (1990) suggested that students seem less anxious about speaking the language but instead more anxious when speaking *to* others. Interestingly, this seems to be more true the bigger the audience is, as students' anxiety levels waned in a pair or small-group setting (Young, 1990). Furthermore, in Woodrow's (2006) study, students of English as a foreign language in Australia identified speaking in front of the class as the most stressful and anxiety-inducing classroom activity. The results from both of these studies strengthen Horwitz et al.'s (1986) earlier claim that communication apprehension is an intrinsic part of FLA.

Additionally, Young (1990) believes that students' negative reactions to error correction act as a sign that students fear being negatively evaluated in foreign language classes. This is also one of the reasons for anxiety among Chinese learners of English in Hong Kong, as found by Mak (2011). Again, this lends support to Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLA construct.

Liu and Yuan (2021) found that anxiety levels rose dramatically as studies moved to an online learning platform as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. This was

something Liu and Yuan (2021) attributed to the lack of interaction between the teacher and the students, and the students among themselves.

3.2.3 Foreign Language Listening Anxiety

Even though Elkhafaifi (2005) investigated listening anxiety as something distinct from FLA, the results depicted a significant correlation between FLA and listening anxiety among learners of Arabic. The higher levels of FLA, the higher the levels of listening anxiety would be for the participants.

Over time, respondents in Elkhafaifi's (2005) study reported that their anxiety levels decreased the further into the language learning process they were. In other words, third-year students of Arabic were less affected by their anxiety than first- and second-year students (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Zhang's (2013) longitudinal study demonstrated that Chinese students of English, whose listening anxiety levels decreased between phases one and two of the study, generally performed better on a listening test the second time around. However, in the online learning environment, levels of listening anxiety were not only higher than in a traditional classroom setting but also remained fairly constant during the course of an entire semester (Liu & Yuan, 2021). Additionally, students who were less proficient were also more anxious than their more proficient peers (Liu, 2016).

3.2.4 Foreign Language Writing Anxiety

Cheng et al. (1999) found that the less confident Taiwanese students of English were in their own ability, the more anxiety they also reported. By consistently underestimating themselves, students also build their own negative expectations of learning a foreign language and in turn expect less of themselves as well (Cheng et al., 1999). Jebreil et al. (2015) noticed that among Iranian students, males reported higher levels of anxiety than females did in regard to writing in English.

3.3 Reducing Foreign Language Anxiety

As the previous four sections of this paper suggest, FLA is a complex construct, which has major implications, albeit to different extents, for all language skills. The next subsections inspect methods found in the literature which might alleviate feelings of anxiety in the classroom. They are divided into two different sections, firstly what the role of the learner is,

and secondly what the role of the teacher is. Ultimately, another theory to reduce the effect of negative affective variables is presented.

3.3.1 The role of the language learner

Exposure to the target language is vital to learning a new language. Using the target language in situations outside the classroom decreased levels of anxiety in the classroom as reported by participants in Dewaele et al.'s (2008) study. When asked what they can do to reduce their language anxiety, Saudi students of English reported that they could read more books, watch more movies, and consume English content on social media as ways they could get more input from the target language (Rafada & Madini, 2017). The participants also mentioned traveling abroad and talking to native speakers of English as methods of producing more output in English (Rafada & Madini, 2017). This is in line with previous research (e.g. Aida, 1994; Dewaele et al., 2008; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004).

Motivation might also be a big learner variable. Saito et al. (1999) found that students of French had higher levels of general FLA than students of Japanese and Russian. One factor they attributed to this was the fact that the majority of French students had to fill a language requirement, while the majority of the students of Japanese and Russian took their classes as electives (Saito et al., 1999). The reason students of Japanese and Russian reported lower levels of anxiety might be that they are more motivated to study the language, compared to the students of French, who instead were prone to anxiety because of their lack of motivation (Saito et al., 1999). Liu and Huang (2011) managed to find similar results with data from Chinese undergraduate students.

Healthy study habits might lead to less anxiety in the foreign language classroom. According to Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, and Daley (2000), participants who reported higher levels of anxiety also reported less effective habits related to their learning. These included but were not limited to, sleep deprivation, trouble focusing and starting to study, and poor time management (Bailey et al., 2000).

Using effective strategies is also key, and teachers need to help students find learning strategies that work for them and build their metacognitive awareness. Students with low proficiency tended to employ different and less effective listening strategies compared to participants with higher proficiency according to Liu's (2016) study. Male participants in Lu and Liu's (2015) study seemed to use fewer reading strategies than their female counterparts,

despite their anxiety levels. Effective learning strategies might help reduce the effects of language anxiety.

Students also use coping strategies to cope with their anxiety. Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) identified five strategies for coping with FLA from students' reports. These include preparation (e.g. turning studying English into a habit), relaxation (e.g. taking deep breaths), positive thinking (think of something positive), peer seeking (talking with others), and resignation (giving up) (Kondo & Ying-Ling, 2004).

Similarly, students might try perseverance as a coping mechanism. One participant in Woodrow's (2006) study mentioned that they consciously try to persevere alongside relaxation, to cope with their FLA. Furthermore, Woodrow (2006) distinguishes between skills deficit anxiety and retrieval interference anxiety, where the first group needs help with instructions and learning strategies, while the latter needs help focusing, either through relaxation techniques or positive thinking/self-talk (e.g. "I can do this").

3.3.2 The role of the language teacher

In their study, Dewaele and Dewaele (2020) explored the teacher variable when it comes to FLA. Participants' feelings towards two different teachers were compared. One of the teachers was the participants' main teacher while the other was a substitute teacher. The results highlighted that FLA itself has little to do with the teacher, as levels of anxiety remained fairly similar for both teachers, suggesting that FLA has less to do with the teacher and more with individual internal variables instead (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020). Neither does the gender of the teacher seem to correlate with students' levels of FLA, as only a minuscule difference was found between participants' reports regarding a female or male teacher (Dewaele, Franco Magdalena & Saito, 2019).

However, teachers are able to alleviate anxiety by adapting their teaching. According to Young (1990), participants reported that they would feel better if they practiced more, something Gregersen, MacIntyre, and Meza (2014) also suggested. Furthermore, Young's (1990) results indicated that students prefer to not be the only one answering a question and that they prefer to voluntarily raise their hand rather than being called on in class. When asked what their teacher does to decrease their anxiety, many students stated that they believed group work and practice speaking to be helpful methods their teacher employs (Young, 1990, p. 549). Working in groups or pairs is mentioned across a plethora of studies in this field, but Matsuda and Gobel (2004) insisted that this might not be to every student's preference, and

instead they suggested that a variety of activities is beneficial. Their suggestions included not only working in smaller groups but also games and role-playing (Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Drama, as a means to reduce speaking anxiety in the classroom, seems highly effective (Atas, 2015). Through the use of drama, participating students in Atas' (2015) study, reported that they were less afraid to speak in the classroom as a result.

Creating a positive classroom environment is vital to reducing students' FLA (Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017). To do so, a friendly and helpful attitude on the teachers' behalf is key (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Alrabai, 2015; Young, 1990). Zarrinabadi, Mantou Lou and Darvishnezhad (2021) found that praising students' effort, rather than their intelligence, decreased their levels of anxiety. Sharing experiences amongst each other might be helpful as well (Phillips, 1992; Kalsoom, Soomro & Pathan, 2020). As a teacher, detailing the hardships of learning a new language and the mistakes along the way seem to have a positive effect on students (Phillips, 1992; Kalsoom et al., 2020).

Additionally, Horwitz (1988) documented students' language learning beliefs and found surprising ideas in the heads of many participants. This included, but was not limited to, that making mistakes was considered bad, or fluency in a matter of two years or less. As a result, a genuine discussion with one's students is advisable, to avoid pressure or anxiety from students' own expectations which are irrational and illogical (Horwitz, 1988). Furthermore, Matsuda and Gobel (2004) highlighted the importance of getting the students' perspective, suggesting that teachers could either video-record their lessons and review the footage or participate in another teacher's class to get insight into the classroom environment.

3.3.3 Foreign Language Enjoyment

More recently, with a growing interest in positive psychology, research into the effects of positive emotions on foreign language learning has increased significantly (MacIntyre, 2016; MacIntyre & Mercer, 2014; MacIntyre, Gregersen & Mercer, 2019). At the forefront of this newer strand of research are Dewaele and MacIntyre and their colleagues, leading the change of focus from negative to positive emotions.

The enjoyment of foreign language class (FLE) is somewhat linked with FLA, according to several studies (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, Witney, Saito & Dewaele, 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019). Lower levels of FLA correlated with higher levels of FLE, yet significantly high levels of FLE are almost exclusively reported by students with higher proficiency in the target language (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018).

Conversely, those students who reported a lower language level also reported higher levels of FLA (Dewaele et al., 2018). The same pattern was found for the variable of students' attitudes towards the foreign language (Dewaele et al., 2018).

Dewaele et al. (2018) concluded, from their results, that teachers' potential pursuit to decrease levels of FLA does not necessarily increase students' levels of FLE, because they are two different dimensions of emotion. FLE and FLA are not opposite ends of the same spectrum (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2017; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018). Instead, teachers should focus on being positive, well organized and attempt to be a bit humorous in class. Several studies suggested that these are factors that have a reported effect on students' enjoyment of class (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2019). A sense of unpredictability is also a positive factor, as it helps to break the monotony of learning a language (Dewaele et al., 2018). Another significant influence on enjoyment is recognition, not only from the teacher but also from the moment when students realize they have achieved a certain goal in their learning, as a result of hard work (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) also found that activities that empower students and encourage student choice and autonomy were reported as the most enjoyable episode of learning a foreign language.

Dewaele et al. (2018) suggested that while FLA is more student-related, FLE is decisively more related to the teacher and their practice. This is corroborated by Dewaele and Dewaele's (2020) study, which found that levels of FLE were significantly higher with participating students' main teacher, rather than a substitute teacher.

3.4 Foreign Language Anxiety in a Swedish upper secondary school context

As Phillips (1992) proposed, studies in different contexts are needed to further understand the circumstances in which anxiety affects language learning. Research in this field has predominantly been conducted in the US and the Eastern hemisphere, with only a handful of studies measuring FLA in a Swedish context (e.g. Bergström, 2017; Ekström, 2013; Eriksson, 2020; Landström, 2016; Nessler, 2018). As mentioned, the curriculum states that teachers must be aware and flexible about students' different preconditions (Skolverket, 2011). This should include less-explored variables such as FLA, especially if teachers should try to stay up to date with recent research (Skolverket, 2011). However, it is still somewhat unclear whether data in this field is generalizable across contexts, as some studies have found tangible

results in terms of cultural differences, but only when it comes to why students experience anxiety. More research in a Swedish context is encouraged, to renounce the possibility of the Swedish context as an anomaly when it comes to FLA.

3.4.1 Swedish students of English as a Foreign Language

Bergström's (2017) study examined whether there is a correlation between students' experiences with FLA and English course level, specifically regarding oral proficiency. Participants reported quite low levels of anxiety, regardless of the course level. These results are in somewhat contrast to previous findings, especially the fact that anxiety seems to decrease the more advanced the language learning becomes (cf. Elkhafafi, 2005; Zhang, 2013). Instead, Bergström's (2017) results displayed that anxiety remains fairly constant across course levels, yet this data should perhaps be taken with a grain of salt, as the study is not longitudinal. The study only accounts for two groups at a single point in time, rather than one group at several points in time (Bergström, 2017). Still, the main exception found between the course levels was that students in English 5 (a mandatory course for first-year students) were more concerned about being around native speakers of English, while students in English 7 (a voluntary course for third-year students) were significantly more concerned regarding in-class situations, such as volunteering an answer or being called on by the teacher (Bergström, 2017).

Results from Ekström's (2013) study clearly illustrated that Swedish students consider speaking English the most anxiety-inducing skill. In the study, students were able to fill in questions across ten levels, where 1 was the lowest and 10 the highest (Ekström, 2013). While the other skills followed a similar, steadily declining pattern where the number of replies decreased for each level reported, the replies for the speaking skill differed slightly. Anxiety reports related to speaking followed a different distribution of replies, where the replies peaked again on levels 8 and 10 (Ekström, 2013). The ultimate level for speaking had a fairly significant amount of replies, 6%, a total of 5% more than the second-highest, writing (see figure 6, in Ekström, 2013, p. 22).

Both Bergström (2017) and Ekström (2013) found that, in general, Swedish female students of English reported higher levels of anxiety than their male counterparts, which is in line with the majority of previous research (cf. Dewaele et al., 2016; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Additionally, because Ekström (2013) researched all four language skills, the results

also indicated that males find writing and listening more anxiety-inducing, while reading and speaking were overrepresented among female participants.

Landström's (2016) results suggested that the feeling of having a not-as-great English proficiency as one's peers was the most common type of anxiety for students in Sweden. Naturally, they also expressed a fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates, a typical example of fear of negative evaluation (Landström, 2016). Interestingly, however, was the fact that the third most anxiety-inducing situation came directly from the teacher. Being called on in class and not fully understanding what the teacher is saying are just two examples of this fear (Landström, 2016). A small number of participants were also afraid to tell their teacher that they thought that the teaching was moving too quickly for them (Landström, 2016).

3.4.2 Swedish teachers of English as a Foreign Language

The teachers interviewed by Eriksson (2020) and Nessler (2018) gave an interesting insight into the habits of anxious learners, from a different perspective. In both studies, the focus lies on the performance aspect of learning English. Perhaps because, when it comes to speaking, students exhibit more discernible behaviors, which are, in turn, easier to notice. One respondent testified that their students can outright try to avoid being called on, by trying to make themselves invisible to the teacher, or simply by leaving the classroom entirely (Nessler, 2018). Another teacher revealed that their students started to cry when their anxiety was provoked (Nessler, 2018). However, these are but two physiological aspects of FLA. Often, as one teacher recalled, students' perceptions of themselves and their English proficiency are skewed, and how they define a "good English speaker" ultimately puts high expectations for themselves (Nessler, 2018).

What seems to cause the most stress for students according to the respondents was the performance aspect of learning English according to language teachers (Eriksson, 2020; Nessler, 2018). One teacher suggested that their students have no difficulties when it comes to input of the target language, but as soon as they are to produce any English, especially spoken, they get anxious (Nessler, 2018). Especially if their production is to be assessed, according to another respondent (Nessler, 2018). Two of the teachers interviewed by Eriksson (2020) inferred that the performance itself contributes to student anxiety, while the rest of the respondents believe it to be a consequence of perfectionism, which once again questions the causal relationship between language proficiency and language anxiety (see section 2.3).

When asked about factors behind FLA, different ideas were presented by the respondents, such as earlier experiences, classroom environment, and self-perception. One teacher proposed that a lot of their students had a poor history with learning English, where they rarely communicated with others in the language, nor had the same teacher for very long (Nessler, 2018). Another teacher stated that they had talked to some students about this, who all responded that they were afraid of what the other students might say or do and that they often compared themselves with their peers (Nessler, 2018).

All respondents stressed the importance of a good learning environment to alleviate language anxiety. Such an environment would lead to more successful learning and in turn, less anxiety. This would include a positive relationship between all students, as one teacher stated that their students became less anxious over time, as they got to know their teacher and their peers (Nessler, 2018), similar to previous findings on the effects of anxiety over time (Elkhafaifi, 2005). Another teacher reported that their class had a positive classroom climate, where students were helping each other, and making a mistake was not seen as detrimental, which this teacher believed was helpful in alleviating FLA (Nessler, 2018).

In order to find out more about the respondents' ideas on the teacher's responsibility regarding FLA, Nessler (2018) inquired about what they believe the teacher's role is, in relation to FLA. An emphasis was placed on being perceptive and kindhearted (Nessler, 2018). By being aware, and open to the different prerequisites and challenges students have, teachers can try and help their students face their anxieties (Nessler, 2018), similar to suggestions made earlier (Abu-Rabia, 2004; Alrabai, 2015; Kalsoom et al., 2020; Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1990). The respondents described their different methods for achieving that goal, such as; working in smaller groups when presenting, recording podcasts as an oral proficiency test instead of presentations, and letting students listen to their own oral performances as practice (Nessler, 2018). This is also in line with several previous studies (Gregersen et al., 2014; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004; Young, 1990). Still, whether or not the methods declared in Nessler's (2018) study prove to be effective is left unsaid.

4 Method

This study uses a quantitative method, more specifically a questionnaire. This type of method was chosen initially because of its prevalence in the research field, and because it seemed effective in answering research question 1a and 1b. The questionnaire used here was inspired

by the FLCAS, and uses a similar structure in its first part (i.e. closed questions). Certain research problems related to the FLCAS and FLA have already been discussed (see section 2.2). Furthermore, among the disadvantages listed by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), it must be assumed that certain biases are in play which affects the reliability (e.g. unmotivated respondents) and validity (e.g. respondents reporting what they think the researcher wants) of the questionnaire.

To answer research questions 2, 3a, and 3b, open-ended questions were needed instead. While questionnaires should attempt to stay quantitative in their construction, open-ended questions “still have merits” (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010, p. 36). Open-ended questions can provide greater and more illustrative detail, in addition to the quantitative data found in closed questions. In essence, such is the ambition of this study, to paint a wider picture of the FLA problem in the Swedish upper secondary school context. The two following sections further details the students who participated in this study and the questionnaire itself.

4.1 Participants

Participants in this study ($n = 50$) came from two different EFL classes at the same upper secondary school in the western region of Sweden. The questionnaire was given to the students in Swedish, and the questionnaire was administered in Swedish as well, to make sure that everyone, regardless of proficiency level in the target language, could understand and fill in the answers that most correctly correspond to the student’s individual experience. The administration of the questionnaire took place during the first quarter of a normal English class. The questionnaire was filled in online and students’ used their computers (or mobile phones) to submit their answers. All students present were informed that participation was voluntary and that they were free to opt-out at any time if they wanted. Due to the potentially sensitive nature of the research problem, participants were also informed that their replies were completely anonymous, and no individual reply could be linked with any respondent, not even by the administrator. Because no personal information was gathered in the questionnaire, anonymity could be guaranteed (Görman, 2017; Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). By handing in a reply, participants were informed that they consented to having their replies compiled, analyzed, and presented in this study and in turn be read by others.

Out of all the participants, 22 participants (44%) were in their first year at upper secondary, studying a trade and administrative education program, while the other 38 participants (56%) go to a civic and social studies program in their second year, both of these

programs are so-called higher education preparatory programs, as opposed to vocational programs. Roughly three out of four of the participants identified themselves as female, and the remaining 26% identified themselves as male. The majority of the participants rated their own proficiency as moderate or higher, whereas only 4 (8%) participants perceived themselves as having low proficiency in English.

4.2 The questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study (see Appendix D & E) takes inspiration from the foreign language classroom anxiety scale (FLCAS) as devised by Horwitz et al. (1986). To begin with, students filled in questions regarding their gender identity, their education program, the year they were in at the time of filling in, and their self-perceived level of English. These answers were then cross-referenced with the answers in the other segments.

Several significant changes have been made in this study to the original FLCAS. Firstly, some statements were, more or less, lifted from the FLCAS (e.g. statements 3, 4 and 29, 7 and 23 in Appendix B) while other statements in this study's questionnaire were cautiously homebrewed. The statements were categorized in the questionnaire and the first segment investigated general feelings of foreign language anxiety in the English classroom, in order to answer research question 1a. The four following segments of the questionnaire specifically asked about the different language skills; speaking, reading, listening, and writing respectively to be able to answer research question 1b.

Secondly, another major difference from the original FLCAS questionnaire was that I decided to use (while retaining a five-point Likert scale) answers which would account for both the degree of anxiety experienced and the frequency of how often participants experience it. Participants filled in their answers from the five options of *Never* (I have never felt this way), *Rarely* (Once or twice I have felt this way), *Sometimes* (I have felt this way more than twice, but not regularly), *Quite often* (I have felt this way almost every week), and *Often* (I have felt this way almost every lesson). In the original FLCAS (and in studies using the FLCAS), participants only answered for the degree to which they agree with the statement, which omits any knowledge of how often participants actually experience FLA. Thus, I decided to make the previously stipulated changes.

At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to elaborate on their thoughts. Firstly, they were asked about their opinions on why someone (themselves or their peers) might experience FLA. Then they were asked about their opinions on what they, as an

English student, can do about the experience of FLA, both for themselves and their peers. Lastly, they were asked about what they think the teacher can or should do about FLA. These questions were intended to give answers to research questions 2, 3a, and 3b.

5 Results

The following section highlights some of the data gathered in this study. However, not all data gathered is presented here, but for the sake of transparency, those results can be found in Appendix F. This data includes respondents' habits related to each language skill, amongst other things. These questions were excluded because of their irrelevance to the research project and construct issues with the survey itself.

Firstly, replies to the general questions, dealing with general FLA, are presented. Following that, replies to questions regarding each of the four language skills are shown. Thirdly, data regarding the skills cross-referenced with the variables gathered in the beginning of the survey, is highlighted. These variables include gender, education program, and self-perceived English proficiency. At the very end, the answers to the concluding, open-ended questions, where respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their thoughts, are presented.

As for the presentation of the results, I have taken the raw stats for those who replied *Never*, but added the replies together for *Rarely* and *Sometimes* into the group "Lower levels of and less Frequent Anxiety" (LF-ANX) and I have done the same for *Quite often* and *Often* into the group "High levels of, and Frequent Anxiety" (HF-ANX). The questions in the tables are also coded, and the key is G = general questions, R = reading, S = speaking, L = listening, W = writing, and C = concluding questions.

5.1 General questions

The first part of the survey asked questions about students' general levels of FLA. These questions are less about specific skills or instances in the EFL classroom, and more about the three general constructs of communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation, as stipulated by Horwitz et al. (1986).

Table 1. General questions

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| G1 “I feel unsure when I don’t understand what the teacher is saying in English” | 11 (22%) | 34 (68%) | 5 (10%) |
| G2 “I keep thinking about how everyone else is better at English than I am” | 20 (40%) | 22 (44%) | 8 (16%) |
| G3 “In English class I forget things that I know that I know because of how nervous I get” | 6 (12%) | 35 (70%) | 9 (18%) |
| G4 “Even though I am well prepared, I always get nervous in English class” | 12 (24%) | 30 (60%) | 8 (16%) |
| G5 “I fear raising my hand to answer a question in class” | 13 (26%) | 22 (44%) | 15 (30%) |
| G6 “I find it difficult to stay calm during tests in English, no matter how much I have prepared” | 9 (18%) | 27 (54%) | 14 (28%) |
| G8 “I am more nervous in English class than I am in other subjects in school” | 30 (60%) | 12 (24%) | 8 (16%) |
| G9 “I fear that I won’t get a passing grade in English class” | 31 (62%) | 12 (24%) | 7 (14%) |
| G10 “I am hesitant to admit when I can’t keep up in English class” | 19 (38%) | 21 (42%) | 10 (20%) |

While the HF-ANX group never spikes above 30%, the LF-ANX group remains the majority for almost all of the general questions. One exception is G8, which might be difficult to interpret, as it asks the participants to compare levels of anxiety in English class with that of other classes, but the data tells us nothing about the classes the participant is comparing with. The levels of anxiety the participants feel in other classes are vital to understanding those reports. The other exception is G9, which might have less to do with FLA, and more to do with other affective variables, or other factors entirely. However, even when certain survey questions are disregarded, the remaining data manages to support the idea that, in broad terms, a majority of Swedish upper secondary students in this study experience at least lower levels of FLA.

5.2 The language skills

Each skill was given a small part of the survey used in this study, as opposed to the original FLCAS, where all questions are bundled together (see Appendix B). The questions used here were lifted from the original questionnaire by Horwitz et al. (1986) meaning that, in other words, this study used no skill-specific scale to measure anxiety levels related to each skill, as other studies have done.

Table 2. The language skills

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| R1 “I feel stressed when I don’t understand every word in a text” | 12 (24%) | 27 (54%) | 11 (22%) |
| R2 “I get stressed whenever I have to read under time pressure” | 12 (24%) | 22 (44%) | 16 (32%) |
| S1 “I panic when I have to speak in class with no preparation” | 14 (28%) | 29 (58%) | 7 (14%) |
| S2 “I get nervous when the teacher calls on me in class” | 11 (22%) | 29 (58%) | 10 (20%) |
| S4 “I fear that other students will laugh at me when I speak English” | 23 (46%) | 23 (46%) | 4 (8%) |
| L1 “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word I am hearing” | 19 (38%) | 27 (54%) | 4 (8%) |
| L2 “I compare myself to other people’s accents and pronunciation” | 12 (24%) | 26 (52%) | 12 (24%) |
| W1 “I get frustrated with how many rules I have to learn to be able to write in English” | 14 (28%) | 27 (54%) | 9 (18%) |
| W2 “When I write in English, I have to stop and think about language rules and grammar, in order to produce a perfect text” | 4 (8%) | 30 (60%) | 16 (32%) |

Looking at the individual language skills, levels are surprisingly fairly consistent across all four skills. According to the results, there is not one specific skill which Swedish upper secondary students experience the most anxiety towards. The main exception is W2, which has the least amount of participants in the NEVER group. Conversely, S4 and L1 have the least amount of participants fall into the HF-ANX category. However, the results regarding

each skill are quite consistent with the results from the general questions, where the majority of respondents fall into the LF-ANX category.

5.3 Language skills and gender

The following tables show the data collected for each skill (represented by one question each) cross-referenced with the gender variable. The number of male and female participants differ significantly within this sample size. Note also that these tables include percentages which have been rounded up or down as appropriate.

Table 3. Replies on R1, divided by gender

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| R1 “I feel stressed when I don’t understand every word in a text” | | | |
| Male (<i>n</i> = 13) | 6 (46%) | 7 (54%) | 0 (0%) |
| Female (<i>n</i> = 37) | 6 (16%) | 20 (54%) | 11 (30%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 12 (24%) | 27 (54%) | 11 (22%) |

Table 4. Replies on S2, divided by gender

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S2 “I get nervous when the teacher calls on me in class” | | | |
| Male (<i>n</i> = 13) | 6 (46%) | 6 (46%) | 1 (8%) |
| Female (<i>n</i> = 37) | 5 (13%) | 23 (62%) | 9 (25%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 11 (22%) | 29 (58%) | 10 (20%) |

Table 5. Replies on L1, divided by gender

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|------------|
| L1 “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word I am hearing” | | | |
| Male (<i>n</i> = 13) | 7 (54%) | 6 (46%) | 0 (0%) |
| Female (<i>n</i> = 37) | 12 (32%) | 21 (57%) | 4 (11%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 19 (38%) | 27 (54%) | 4 (8%) |

Table 6. Replies on W2, divided by gender

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|------------|-------------|-------------|
| W2 “When I write in English I have to stop and think about language rules and grammar, in order to produce a perfect text” | | | |
| Male (<i>n</i> = 13) | 0 (0%) | 9 (69%) | 4 (31%) |
| Female (<i>n</i> = 37) | 4 (11%) | 21 (57%) | 12 (32%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 4 (8%) | 30 (60%) | 16 (32%) |

Across all four skills, male participants seem to report lower levels anxiety. Even when it comes to writing, the skill that male participants reported the highest levels of anxiety in, their levels are lower than female participants’ replies, percentage-wise.

Female participants had a more consistent pattern overall, where the majority were in the LF-ANX category, consistent with the patterns presented in Table 1 and 2. The only deviant from said pattern for females were the reports regarding listening, where roughly twice as many females replied with NEVER to the question. Male participants were instead quite evenly distributed between the NEVER and LF-ANX categorical groups. For them, the outlier was the writing skill, where instead no one replied with NEVER.

5.4 Language skills and education program

Participants came from two different classes, as mentioned, one trade and administrative group in their first year of upper secondary (Trade/Y1), and a civics and social studies group in their second year (Civics/Y2). The following tables serve a double-edged purpose, as they highlight both the relationship between anxiety and education program, but also with age/course level. And again, percentages are rounded up or down, as appropriate.

Table 7. Replies on R1, divided by education program

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| R1 “I feel stressed when I don’t understand every word in a text” | | | |
| Trade/Y1 (<i>n</i> = 22) | 5 (23%) | 13 (59%) | 4 (18%) |
| Civics/Y2 (<i>n</i> = 28) | 7 (25%) | 14 (50%) | 7 (25%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 12 (24%) | 27 (54%) | 11 (22%) |

Table 8. Replies on S2, divided by education program

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S2 “I get nervous when the teacher calls on me in class” | | | |
| Trade/Y1 (<i>n</i> = 22) | 6 (27%) | 12 (55%) | 4 (18%) |
| Civics/Y2 (<i>n</i> = 28) | 5 (18%) | 17 (61%) | 6 (21%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 11 (22%) | 29 (58%) | 10 (20%) |

Table 9. Replies on L1, divided by education program

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|
| L1 “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word I am hearing” | | | |
| Trade/Y1 (<i>n</i> = 22) | 9 (41%) | 11 (50%) | 2 (9%) |
| Civics/Y2 (<i>n</i> = 28) | 10 (36%) | 16 (57%) | 2 (7%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 19 (38%) | 27 (54%) | 4 (8%) |

Table 10. Replies on W2, divided by education program

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| W2 “When I write in English, I have to stop and think about language rules and grammar, in order to produce a perfect text” | | | |
| Trade/Y1 (<i>n</i> = 22) | 1 (5%) | 12 (55%) | 9 (40%) |
| Civics/Y2 (<i>n</i> = 28) | 3 (11%) | 18 (64%) | 7 (25%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 4 (8%) | 30 (60%) | 16 (32%) |

Across the two groups, the pattern remains fairly similar for all four skills. The only difference between them is on question W2, where the Trade/Y1 group reported significantly higher and more frequent levels of anxiety. For both groups, this was also the skill which received the highest reports in general.

5.5 Language skills and self-perceived proficiency

As part of the survey, participants were asked to rate their own English proficiency, on a scale of *Very low*, *Low*, *Moderate*, *High*, to *Very high*. Percentages are rounded up or down, as appropriate.

Table 11. Replies on R1, divided by self-perceived proficiency

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| R1 “I feel stressed when I don’t understand every word in a text” | | | |
| Very low (<i>n</i> = 1) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| Low (<i>n</i> = 3) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (100%) |
| Moderate (<i>n</i> = 13) | 2 (15%) | 7 (54%) | 4 (31%) |
| High (<i>n</i> = 16) | 1 (6%) | 12 (75%) | 3 (19%) |
| Very high (<i>n</i> = 17) | 9 (53%) | 8 (47%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 12 (24%) | 27 (54%) | 11 (22%) |

Table 12. Replies on S2, divided by self-perceived proficiency

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| S2 “I get nervous when the teacher calls on me in class” | | | |
| Very low (<i>n</i> = 1) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| Low (<i>n</i> = 3) | 0 (0%) | 2 (67%) | 1 (33%) |
| Moderate (<i>n</i> = 13) | 1 (8%) | 5 (38%) | 7 (54%) |
| High (<i>n</i> = 16) | 3 (19%) | 12 (75%) | 1 (6%) |
| Very high (<i>n</i> = 17) | 7 (41%) | 10 (59%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 11 (22%) | 29 (58%) | 10 (20%) |

Table 13. Replies on L1, divided by self-perceived proficiency

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| L1 “I get nervous when I don’t understand every word I am hearing” | | | |
| Very low (<i>n</i> = 1) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| Low (<i>n</i> = 3) | 0 (0%) | 2 (67%) | 1 (33%) |
| Moderate (<i>n</i> = 13) | 3 (23%) | 10 (77%) | 0 (0%) |
| High (<i>n</i> = 16) | 6 (38%) | 8 (50%) | 2 (12%) |
| Very high (<i>n</i> = 17) | 10 (59%) | 7 (41%) | 0 (0%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 19 (38%) | 27 (54%) | 4 (8%) |

Table 14. Replies on W2, divided by self-perceived proficiency

| Question | NEVER | LF-ANX | HF-ANX |
|---|------------|-------------|-------------|
| W2 “When I write in English, I have to stop and think about language rules and grammar, in order to produce a perfect text” | | | |
| Very low (<i>n</i> = 1) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| Low (<i>n</i> = 3) | 0 (0%) | 2 (67%) | 1 (33%) |
| Moderate (<i>n</i> = 13) | 0 (0%) | 5 (38%) | 8 (62%) |
| High (<i>n</i> = 16) | 2 (12%) | 11 (69%) | 3 (19%) |
| Very high (<i>n</i> = 17) | 2 (12%) | 13 (76%) | 2 (12%) |
| Total (<i>n</i> = 50) | 4 (8%) | 30 (60%) | 16 (32%) |

The participants who perceived their own proficiency levels as low, also reported high levels of anxiety for each of the language skills. Conversely, those who marked their proficiency as very high, if they reported anxiety, only reported lower levels of it. This pattern is consistent across all four language skills and also emerges as one of the most consistent results of this study. The only significant difference is with question W2, where fewer participants fall into the NEVER grouping, especially between those who rated themselves as moderately to very highly proficient.

5.6 Open-ended questions

The first question asked where participants could elaborate on their thoughts further was C1 (“What do you think might be the reason you, or others, experience FLA?”). Respondents were asked to share their ideas even if they reported no, or close to no, levels of anxiety. Most commonly, participants reported intrapersonal factors as a potential reason for FLA. The answers ranged from not preparing enough beforehand to their own fears and insecurities. Some respondents mentioned their own perceived ability as something they are anxious about. Others suggested that some sort of innate variable makes it difficult for them, be it personality (e.g. introversion) or learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia). Many participants also pointed out their fear of failure and making mistakes as a result of pressure put on themselves, by themselves. Such high expectations could also come from, most notably, parents or teachers. Other interpersonal factors reported by the participants include embarrassment, constant assessment, and making unhealthy comparisons to peers or other speakers of the target language.

The second concluding, open-ended question was C2 (“what do you think that you, as a student, can do about FLA?”). Most respondents’ answers highlighted their own anxiety and suggested many different things. Firstly, some participants believed that they can work more on their English outside the classroom, by increasing their exposure to the target language and by studying by themselves more. Other responses implied that an attitudinal change was necessary, toward the learning situation itself, and that asking for help from the teacher or peers was not a sign of weakness. Also mentioned are accepting the fact that English is not one’s first language therefore comparisons are unnecessary, and that mistakes are teaching moments.

Lastly, participants were asked to answer question C3 (“what do you think the teacher can/should do about FLA?”). The majority of answers indicated that the teacher should try to

create a positive classroom environment that encourages and motivates students, which emphasizes respect, and shows that mistakes are a part of the language learning process. As for less abstract methods, participants wanted alternatives to examinations that comply with their anxiety. Furthermore, one respondent suggested that the teacher should aim to never call on somebody in class to answer a question, as it puts that student in an awkward situation regardless of whether they know the answer or not.

6 Discussion

Research problems related to anxiety research, in general, have been highlighted in previous parts of this study (for even further discussion on the topic, I suggest Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Sudina, 2021). There are several limitations that relate specifically to this study and its data. Firstly, the questionnaire itself bites off more than it can chew. This is inherent to the construction itself, as some questions are not as relevant to this project as it stands now (again, these are found in Appendix F). This is in part due to the working sequence, where I constructed the questionnaire prior to working with the presentation of the data. Instead of being able to synthesize initial survey ideas and existing research, the survey was created in a vacuum, based on my own ideas of what would be interesting to research in this context. Luckily, a few things managed to work, while some did not make the cut. Furthermore, the questionnaire, as mentioned in section 4.2, attempts to do something different than the FLCAS. This study, by altering the alternatives respondents are presented with, also (to a small degree) measures the frequency of students' anxiety. This might have implications for the results, compared to other studies.

Secondly, the number of participants in this study is relatively small. At times, the data not collected in this study holds more answers than the data presented. This is certainly true for the education program variable. There are plenty of education programs for Swedish upper secondary schools, yet only two of them are represented here. Those two are also fairly similar as they are both higher education preparatory. It is therefore difficult to both include and exclude this variable in the bigger, anxiety research, picture. Further research into this could be worthwhile, but could simultaneously yield less than interesting results. Comparing different education programs (higher education preparatory ones and vocational ones) could potentially be interesting, for example.

However, from the data collected, a few things can be suggested. The study attempts to answer research question 1a ("do Swedish upper secondary students of English experience

any FLA?") by asking respondents about their general feelings of anxiety in and around the EFL classroom. The results indicate that Swedish EFL students at the very least experience lower levels of general feelings of anxiety, somewhat frequently. In terms of specific language skills, participants' reports are fairly consistent across all four skills. The only outlier was question W2, which had the least amount of respondents in the NEVER category out of all questions. Still, the results are not strong enough to support an inference that Swedish upper secondary students are more anxious regarding any language skill in particular (research question 1b; "if so which of the four language skills do they feel most anxious about?").

By cross-referencing each language skill with the gender variable, some interesting patterns are highlighted. Male participants tend to report lower levels of anxiety compared to female participants, which is in line with other research (e.g. Bergström, 2017; Dewaele et al., 2016; Ekström, 2013; Matsuda & Gobel, 2004). Writing is also the skill most male participants were anxious about, which is also in agreement with other research (e.g. Jebreil et al., 2015; Ekström, 2013). The pattern among female respondents is much more consistent, with the majority residing in the LF-ANX group. The number of female respondents in the NEVER group increases slightly regarding the listening skill, something that was also found by Ekström (2013).

The most consistent result found in this study is the relationship between anxiety and self-perceived proficiency level. Those who saw themselves as less proficient in English also report high levels of anxiety. The higher the self-rating, the less anxiety was also reported. This pattern remained true for all questions except W2, where a significantly smaller number of respondents fall into the NEVER group despite their high self-ratings. It is also worth mentioning again, what the data from MacIntyre, Noels, and Clément (1997) indicated, namely that anxious students tend to be harsher in their self-ratings, which we can chalk up as yet another variable that poses a problem for anxiety research.

None of the variables researched in this study acted as strong predictors of FLA in the Swedish upper secondary school context. While this is not surprising, given previous research on FLA predictors (see section 3.1), there are plenty of other variables that either impact or correlate directly with FLA other than those researched here. Many of these variables would be interesting to investigate further in the Swedish EFL context, such as motivation and FLE. Naturally, certain things are not represented well by numbers, and I would, as several others before me (Oller & Perkins, 1978b; Phillips, 1992; Steinberg & Horwitz, 1986), advocate for the use of other methods to further examine this phenomenon. The use of qualitative research,

observational, and even longitudinal studies, can uncover much more about this confounding topic.

As a future EFL teacher, I must admit that capturing students' thoughts and perspectives on the issue was imperative to the undertaking of this study. Participants were therefore asked to elaborate on their thoughts in the last part of the survey. These questions (C1, C2, C3) correspond with research questions 2 ("what do Swedish students of English think is the reason behind FLA?"), 3a ("what do Swedish students of English think they can personally do about it?") and 3b ("what do Swedish students of English think their teacher can do about it?").

Initially, students were asked to explain what they thought were the cause of a potential FLA. Answers to C1 were either connected to themselves or to others. Some factors mentioned included a fear of failure and pressure as a result of high expectations. Other respondents mentioned a fear of embarrassing themselves by making mistakes in class. These ideas are congruent with the very things Horwitz et al. (1986) related to test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation in the original FLA construct. These replies also corroborate the findings from Landström (2016).

The second question C2 regarded what they think they can do about their own FLA. Respondents suggested that they could practice more, especially outside the classroom, much like what Rafada and Madini (2017) found. Other participants highlighted a need for a change in attitude towards learning English. Especially in terms of altering expectations and that asking for help is not bad, but necessary. This is something that Horwitz (1988) previously highlighted, and something that Phillips (1992), and Kalsoom et al. (2020) were adamant about.

Question C3 asked participants to share their ideas for what the teacher can do to reduce FLA in the EFL classroom. A majority of the responses indicated that the teacher should aim to create a positive learning environment. The teacher should encourage and motivate their students. These suggestions are in total agreement with previous research (e.g. Abu-Rabia, 2004; Alrabai, 2015; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018; Dewaele et al., 2019; Kasbi & Shirvan, 2017; Kalsoom et al., 2020; Nessler, 2018; Phillips, 1992; Young, 1990; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). These proposals are also congruent with the Swedish curriculum (Skolverket, 2011).

It is important to note, however, that these suggestions have not been tested, neither here, nor in other literature that I have found. Thus, not much can be said about their

effectiveness. Measuring that effectiveness might even be impossible, but any pursuit into such territories could prove to be incredibly useful for practitioners in the future.

7 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the FLA in the Swedish EFL context. As such, it was found that Swedish EFL learners in upper secondary school experienced moderate levels of FLA, quite frequently. Any particular skill that participants found the most anxiety-inducing could not be properly established, however, different variables highlighted interesting patterns within the cohort. Gender differences were evident, male participants reported lower levels of anxiety than their female counterparts. Male participants were also most anxious regarding the writing skill, while female participants' anxiety levels were quite consistent across the language skills, except for listening, which they were significantly less anxious about. By comparing anxiety levels and self-rated proficiency levels, the data clearly shows a connection between proficiency level and FLA. Participants shared interesting thoughts and ideas on the nature of FLA and gave suggestions for how to possibly reduce it.

In general, the results are congruent with previous research, which helps establish FLA, in the Swedish upper secondary school context, as a variable that impacts students' learning experience. I strongly believe that this is something teachers should take into consideration, the everchanging interplay between negative (and positive) emotions and learning a language. Intuitively, such emotions fluctuate over time, and even though the research here is limited, in the sense that it is not longitudinal, there is still enough evidence to support an idea that language teachers should, at the very least, keep the FLA variable (and other affective variables) in mind when teaching their respective languages.

As for anxiety-reducing methods, suggestions from respondents in this study are in line with both the curriculum (Skolverket, 2011) and the syllabus (Skolverket, 2020), which begs the question of whether these methods are 1) effective, or worse, 2) even used by teachers. While more research is needed to answer these questions and scrutinize such methods, the message remains that language teachers need to be flexible and empathetic in their teaching to better help their students. Teachers should also dare to try new things congruent with FLA research, as long as such choices are informed and properly evaluated once tested.

To end on a brighter note, as mentioned, FLE research is in vogue. It might prove to be another important factor in successful language learning and teaching in the future, and it

is a strand of research that I will gladly stay on top of. I do believe, as Dewaele and Li (2022) so adequately put it: “[h]appy learners are more likely to do well both in class and outside of school” (p. 45).

References

- Abu-Rabia, S. (2004). Teachers' Role, Learners' Gender Differences, and FL Anxiety Among Seventh-Grade Students Studying English as a FL. *Educational Psychology, 24*(5), 711-721. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144341042000263006>
- Aida, Y. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope's Construct of Foreign Language Anxiety: The Case of Students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal, 78*(2), 155-168. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329005>
- Alpert, R., & Haber, R. (1960). Anxiety in academic achievement situations. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 61*(2), 207-215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045464>
- Alrabai, F. (2015). The influence of teachers' anxiety-reducing strategies on learners' foreign language anxiety. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching, 9*(2), 163-190. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2014.890203>
- Argaman, O., & Abu-Rabia, S. (2002). The Influence of Language Anxiety on English Reading and Writing Tasks Among Native Hebrew Speakers. *Language Culture and Curriculum, 15*(2), 143-160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07908310208666640>
- Atas, M. (2015). The Reduction of Speaking Anxiety in EFL Learners through Drama Techniques. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 176*, 961-969. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.565>
- Bailey, P., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Daley, C. E. (2000). Study Habits and Anxiety about Learning Foreign Languages. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 90*(3), 1151-1156. <https://doi.org/10.2466%2Fpms.2000.90.3c.1151>
- Bergström, M. (2017). *Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in the Swedish School Context - A Comparative Study of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety and EFL course levels at Swedish Upper Secondary School* [Master's thesis, Linnæus University]. DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1137661&dswid=4037>
- Chastain, K. (1975). Affective and ability factors in second language acquisition. *Language Learning, 25*(1), 153-161. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1975.tb00115.x>
- Chen, T-Y., & Chang, G. B. Y. (2008). The Relationship between Foreign Language Anxiety and Learning Difficulties. *Foreign Language Annals, 37*(2), 279-289. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2004.tb02200.x>
- Cheng, Y., Horwitz, E., & Schallert, D. (1999). Language Anxiety: Differentiating Writing and Speaking Components. *Language Learning, 49*(3), 417-446. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00095>

- Dewaele, J-M., & Dewaele, L. (2017). The dynamic interactions in foreign language classroom anxiety and foreign language enjoyment of pupils aged 12 to 18. A pseudo-longitudinal investigation. *Journal of European Second Language Association*, 1(1), 12-22.
<http://doi.org/10.22599/jesla.6>
- Dewaele, J-M., & Dewaele, L. (2020). Are foreign language learners' enjoyment and anxiety specific to the teacher? An Investigation into the dynamics of learners' classroom emotions. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 10(1), 45-65.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2020.10.1.3>
- Dewaele, J-M., & Li, C. (2022). Foreign Language Enjoyment and Anxiety: Associations With General and Domain Specific English Achievement. *Chinese Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 45(1), 32-48. <https://doi.org/10.1515/CJAL-2022-0104>
- Dewaele, J-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 237-274. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.5>
- Dewaele, J-M., Franco Magdalena, A., & Saito, K. (2019). The Effect of Perception of Teacher Characteristics on Spanish EFL Learners' Anxiety and Enjoyment. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(2), 412-427. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12555>
- Dewaele, J-M., Petrides, K. V., & Furnham, A. (2008). Effects of Trait Emotional Intelligence and Sociobiographical Variables on Communicative Anxiety and Foreign Language Enjoyment Among Adult Multilinguals: A Review and Empirical Investigation. *Language Learning*, 58(4), 911-960. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9922.2008.00482.x>
- Dewaele, J-M., MacIntyre, P. D., Boudreau, C., & Dewaele, L. (2016). Do girls have all the fun? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Theory and Practice of Second Language Acquisition*, 2(1), 41-63.
<http://www.journals.us.edu.pl/index.php/TAPSLA/article/view/3941>
- Dewaele, J-M., Witney, J., Saito, K., & Dewaele, L. (2018). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety: The effect of teacher and learner variables. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(6), 676-697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817692161>
- Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in Second Language Research – Construction, Administration, and Processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Motivation* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

- Ekström, A. (2013). *Foreign language communication anxiety in correlation to the sociolinguistic variables gender, age, performance and multilingual competence - A linguistic pilot study of Swedish students' attitudes* [Bachelor's thesis, Södertörns Högskola]. DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A628075&dswid=-1008>
- Elkhafaifi, H. (2005). Listening comprehension and anxiety in the Arabic language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(2), 206–220. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00275.x>
- Eriksson, D. (2020). *Teachers' perspectives on Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety: A Qualitative Study of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety in a Swedish Upper Secondary School Context* [Master's thesis, Karlstad University]. DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1440576&dswid=3091>
- Ganschow, L., Sparks, R. L., Anderson, R., Javorshy, J., Skinner, S., & Patton, J. (1994). Differences in Language Performance among High-, Average-, and Low-Anxious College Foreign Language Learners. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(1), 41-55. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329251>
- Gordon, E., & Sarason, S. (1955). The Relationship between “Test Anxiety” and “Other Anxieties”. *Journal of Personality*, 23(3), 317-323. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1955.tb01158.x>
- Gregersen, T., MacIntyre, P. D., & Meza, M. D. (2014). The Motion of Emotion: Idiodynamic Case Studies of Learners' Foreign Language Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 98(2), 574-588. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12084>
- Görman, U. (2017). Lathund för etikprovning. [Crib for ethical review]. Retrieved from https://www.ht.lu.se/fileadmin/user_upload/ht/dokument/Fakulteterna/policydok_planer/Lathund_for_etikprovning.pdf
- Hewitt, E., & Stephenson, J. (2012). Foreign Language Anxiety and Oral Exam Performance: A Replication of Phillips's MLJ Study. *The Modern Language Journal*, 96(2), 170-189. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2011.01174.x>
- Horwitz, E. K. (1986). Preliminary Evidence For the Validity and Reliability of a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(3), 559-562. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3586302>
- Horwitz, E. K. (1988). The Beliefs About Language Learning of Beginning University Foreign Language Students. *The Modern Language Journal*, 72(3), 283-294. <https://doi.org/10.2307/327506>
- Horwitz, E. K. (2000). Horwitz Comments: It Ain't over 'til It's over: On Foreign Language Anxiety, First Language Deficits, and the Confounding Variables. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(2), 256-259. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/330491>

- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language Anxiety and Achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112-126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190501000071>
- Horwitz, E. K., Horwitz, M. B., & Cope, J. (1986). Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70(2), 125-132. <https://doi.org/10.2307/327317>
- Jebreil, N., Azizifar, A., & Gowhary, H. (2015). Investigating the Effect of Anxiety of Male and Female Iranian EFL Learners on their Writing Performance. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 185, 190-196. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.03.360>
- Kalsoom, A., Soomro, N. H., & Pathan, Z. H. (2020). How Social Support and Foreign Language Anxiety Impact Willingness to Communicate in English in an EFL Classroom. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 10(2), 80-91. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v10n2p80>
- Kasbi, S., & Shirvan, M. E. (2017). Ecological Understanding of foreign language speaking anxiety: emerging patterns and dynamic systems. *Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education*, 2(2). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40862-017-0026-y>
- Kleinmann, H. H. (1977). Avoidance Behavior in Adult Second Language Acquisition. *Language Learning*, 27(1), 93-107. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1977.tb00294.x>
- Kondo, D. S., & Ying-Ling, Y. (2004). Strategies for coping with language anxiety: the case of students of English in Japan. *ELT Journal*, 58(3), 258-265. <https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/58.3.258>
- Landström, P. (2017). *Foreign language anxiety among Swedish lower and upper secondary school students - A case study* [Master's thesis, Karlstad University]. DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1073009&dswid=-5002>
- Liebert, R. M., & Morris, L. W. (1967). Cognitive and Emotional Components of Test Anxiety: A Distinction and Some Initial Data. *Psychological Reports*, 20, 975-978. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1967.20.3.975>
- Liu, M. (2016). Interrelations Between Foreign Language Listening Anxiety and Strategy Use and Their Predicting Effects on Test Performance of High- and Low-Proficient Chinese University EFL Learners. *Asia-Pacific Edu Res*, 25(4), 647-655. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40299-016-0294-1>
- Liu, M., & Huang, W. (2011). An Exploration of Foreign Language Anxiety and English Learning Motivation. *Education Research International*, 12(5), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2011/493167>
- Liu, M., & Yuan, R. (2021). Changes in and Effects of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Listening Anxiety on Chinese Undergraduate Students' English Proficiency in the COVID-19 Context. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.670824>

- Lu, Z., & Liu, M. (2015). An Investigation of Chinese university EFL learner's foreign language reading anxiety, reading strategy use and reading comprehension performance. *SSLLT* 5(1), 65-85. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2015.5.1.4>
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1995a). How Does Anxiety Affect Second Language Learning? A Reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), 90-99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1995.tb05418.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D. (1995b). On Seeing the Forest and the Trees: A Rejoinder to Sparks and Ganschow. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(2), 245-248. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329623>
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2007). Willingness to Communicate in the Second Language: Understanding the Decision to Speak as a Volitional Process. *The Modern Language Journal*, 91(4), 564-576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00623.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D. (2016). So Far So Good: An Overview of Positive Psychology and Its Contributions to SLA. In D. Gabryś-Barker, & D. Gałajda (Eds.), *Positive Psychology Perspectives on Foreign Language Learning and Teaching* (pp. 3-20). Springer Cham. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-32954-3>
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1989). Anxiety and Second-Language Learning: Toward a Theoretical Clarification. *Language Learning*, 39(2), 251-275. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1989.tb00423.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Gardner, R. C. (1991). Methods and Results in the Study of Anxiety and Language Learning: A Review of the Literature. *Language Learning*, 41(1), 85-117. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1991.tb00677.x>
- MacIntyre, P. D., & Mercer, S. (2014). Introducing Positive Psychology to SLA. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 153-172. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.2>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2019). Setting an Agenda for Positive Psychology in SLA: Theory, Practice, and Research. *The Modern Language Journal*, 103(1), 262-274. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12544>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Noels, K. A., & Clément, R. (1997). Biases in Self-Ratings of Second Language Proficiency: The Role of Language Anxiety. *Language Learning*, 47(2), 265-287. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.81997008>
- Mak, B. (2011). An exploration of speaking-in-class anxiety with Chinese ESL learners. *System*, 39, 202-214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2011.04.002>
- Matsuda, S., & Gobel, P. (2004). Anxiety and predictors of performance in the foreign language classroom. *System*, 32, 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2003.08.002>

- Nessler, N. (2018). *The Speaking Silence: A qualitative study of how Swedish teachers meet and handle the challenges of speaking anxiety among their students in English language education* [Master's thesis, Linnæus University]. DiVA. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1218951&dswid=-759>
- Oller, J. W. Jr., & Perkins, K. (1978a). Intelligence and Language Proficiency as Sources of Variance in Self-Reported Affective Variables. *Language Learning*, 28(1), 85-97. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1978.tb00306.x>
- Oller, J. W. Jr., & Perkins, K. (1978b). A Further Comment on Language Proficiency as a Source of Variance in Certain Affective Measures. *Language Learning*, 28(2), 417-423. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1978.tb00144.x>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (1999). Factors associated with foreign language anxiety. *Applied Psycholinguistics*, 20(2), 217-239. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0142716499002039>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Bailey, P., & Daley, C. E. (2000). Cognitive, Affective, Personality, and Demographic Predictors of Foreign-Language Achievement. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 94(1), 3-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220670009598738>
- Phillips, E. M. (1992). The Effects of Language Anxiety on Students' Oral Test Performance and Attitudes. *The Modern Language Journal*, 76(1), 14-26. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329894>
- Rafada, S. H., & Madini, A. A. (2017). Effective Solutions for Reducing Saudi Learners' Speaking Anxiety in EFL Classrooms. *Arab World English Journal*, 8(2), 308-322. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol8no2.22>
- Saito, Y., & Samimy, K. K. (1996). Foreign Language Anxiety and Language Performance: A Study of Learner Anxiety in Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced-level College Students of Japanese. *Foreign Language Annals*, 29(2), 239-249. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1996.tb02330.x>
- Saito, Y., Horwitz, E. K., & Garza, T. J. (1999). Foreign Language Reading Anxiety. *The Modern Language Journal*, 83(2), 202-218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0026-7902.00016>
- Scovel, T. (1978). The Effect of Affect on Foreign Language Learning: a Review of the Anxiety Research. *Language Learning*, 28(1), 129-142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1978.tb00309.x>
- Skolverket. (2011). *Läroplan för gymnasieskolan.* [Curriculum for upper secondary school]. https://www.skolverket.se/sitevision/proxy/undervisning/gymnasieskolan/laroplan-program-och-amnen-i-gymnasieskolan/laroplan-gy11-for-gymnasieskolan/svid12_6011fe501629fd150a2714f/-996270488/curriculum/GY2011/8/pdf

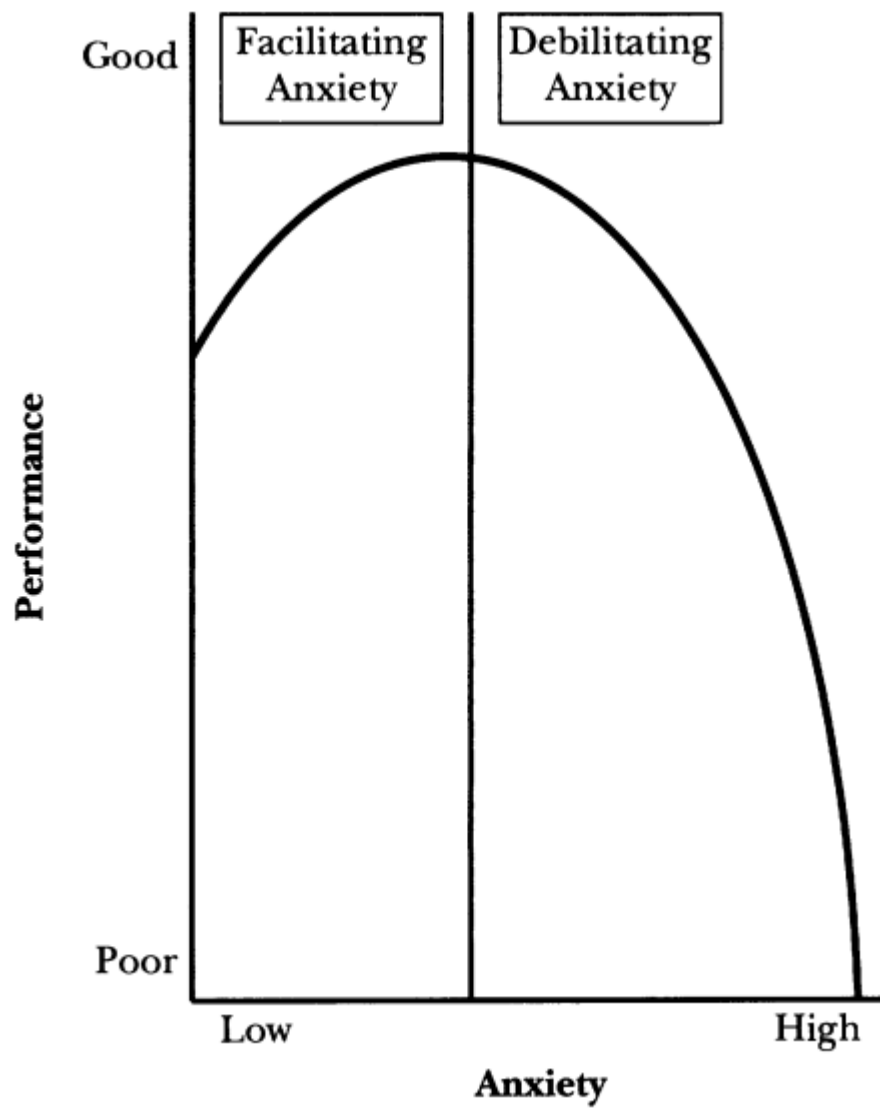
- Skolverket. (2020). *Engelska (Ämnesplan). [English - Syllabus]*.
https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.7f8c152b177d982455e1158/1615808938264/%C3%84mnesplan_engelska.pdf
- Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (1991). Foreign Language Learning Differences: Affective or Native Language Aptitude Differences? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(1), 3-16.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/329830>
- Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (1993a). The Impact of Native Language Learning Problems on Foreign Language Learning: Case Study Illustrations of the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 77(1), 58-74. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329559>
- Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (1993b). Searching for the Cognitive Locus of Foreign Language Learning Difficulties: Linking First and Second Language Learning. *The Modern Language Journal*, 77(3), 289-302. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329098>
- Sparks, R. L., & Ganschow, L. (2007). Is the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale Measuring Anxiety or Language Skill? *Foreign Language Annals*, 40(2), 260-287.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2007.tb03201.x>
- Sparks, R. L., Ganschow, L., & Pohlman, J. (1989). Linguistic Coding Deficits in Foreign Language Learners. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 39, 179-195. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02656908>
- Steinberg, F. S., & Horwitz, E. K. (1986). The Effect of Induced Anxiety on the Denotative and Interpretative Content of Second Language Speech. *TESOL Quarterly*, 20(1), 131-136.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3586395>
- Sudina, E. (2021). Study and Scale Quality in Second Language Survey Research, 2009-2019: The Case of Anxiety and Motivation. *Language Learning*, 71(4), 1149-1193.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12468>
- Toyama, M., & Yamazaki, Y. (2022). Foreign Language Anxiety and Individualism-Collectivism Culture: A Top-Down Approach for a Country/Regional-Level Analysis. *SAGE Open*, 1-17.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211069143>
- Vetenskapsrådet. (2017). God forskningsed. [Good Research Practice]. Retrieved from
<https://www.vr.se/analys/rapporter/vara-rapporter/2017-08-29-god-forskningsed.html>
- Woodrow, L. (2006). Anxiety and Speaking English as a Second Language. *RELC Journal*, 37(3), 308-328. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688206071315>
- Young, D. J. (1986). The Relationship Between Anxiety and Foreign Language Oral Proficiency Ratings. *Foreign Language Annals*, 19(5), 439-445. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1986.tb01032.x>

- Young, D. J. (1990). An Investigation of Students' Perspective on Anxiety and Speaking. *Foreign Language Annals*, 23(6), 539-553. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1990.tb00424.x>
- Young, D. J. (1991). Creating a Low-Anxiety Classroom Environment: What Does Language Anxiety Research Suggest? *The Modern Language Journal*, 75(4), 426-439. <https://doi.org/10.2307/329492>
- Zarrinabadi, N., Mantou Lou, N., & Darvishnezhad, Z. (2021). To praise or not to praise? Examining the effects of ability vs. effort praise on speaking anxiety and willingness to communicate in EFL classrooms. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1938079>
- Zhang, X. (2013). Foreign language listening anxiety and listening performance: Conceptualizations and causal relationships. *System*, 41, 164-177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.01.004>
- Zhang, W. & Liu, M. (2013). Evaluating the Impact of Oral Test Anxiety and Speaking Strategy Use on Oral English Performance. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 10(2), 115-148. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/evaluating-impact-oral-test-anxiety-speaking/docview/2266416360/se-2?accountid=11162>

Appendices

Appendix A

The inverted *U* relation between anxiety and performance



(MacIntyre, 1995a, p. 92)

Appendix B

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS)

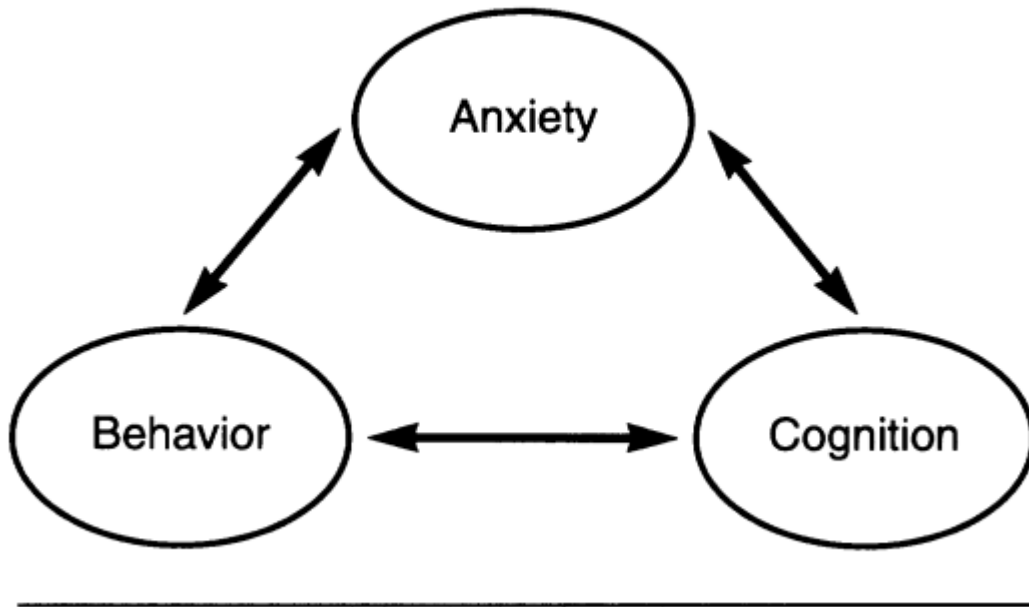
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my foreign language class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in language class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in the foreign language.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more foreign language classes.
6. During language class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my language class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in language class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my foreign language class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over foreign language classes.
12. In language class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my language class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.
16. Even if I am well prepared for language class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my language class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in foreign language class.
19. I am afraid that my language teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class.
21. The more I study for a language test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for language class.

23. I always feel that the other students speak the foreign language better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking the foreign language in front of other students.
25. Language class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my language class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my language class.
28. When I'm on my way to language class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the language teacher says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak a foreign language.
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak the foreign language.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of the foreign language.
33. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.

(Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, pp. 129-130)

Appendix C

The recursive relations among anxiety, cognition, and behavior.



(MacIntyre, 1995a, p. 93)

Appendix D

The survey, in Swedish

1. Vad identifierar du dig som?
 - Man
 - Kvinna
 - Annat
 - Vill inte säga
 2. Vilket gymnasieprogram går du? (Förkortning räcker, ex: HA för handel osv)
-
3. Vilket år går du?
 - Första året
 - Andra året
 - Tredje året
 4. Hur skulle du bedöma din egna nivå av engelska?
 - Mycket svag
 - Svag
 - Helt ok
 - God
 - Mycket god

GENERELLA FRÅGOR

Frågorna hädanefter har svarsalternativen:

- Inte alls (= jag känner aldrig så)
 - Sällan (= någon gång har jag kanske känt så)
 - Ibland (= någon gång har jag återkommande känt så)
 - Ganska ofta (= nästan varje vecka känner jag så)
 - Ofta (= nästan varje lektion känner jag så)
1. Jag blir osäker när jag inte förstår vad läraren säger på engelska
 2. Jag tänker på att alla andra i klassen är bättre på engelska än vad jag är
 3. På engelskalektionen glömmer jag bort saker som jag vet att jag kan eftersom jag blir nervös
 4. Även om jag är väl förberedd inför en lektion i engelska så blir jag nervös
 5. Jag tycker det är jobbigt att frivilligt räcka upp handen för att svara på en fråga inför klassen
 6. Jag har svårt att vara lugn under en provsituation i engelska oavsett hur mycket jag har förberett mig innan

7. På väg till engelskalektionen känner jag mig lugn och avslappnad
8. Jag känner mig mer nervös inför en engelskalektion än en lektion i något av de andra ämnena i skolan
9. Jag oroar mig för att jag inte ska få ett godkänt betyg i engelska
10. Jag är rädd för att säga till att jag inte hänger med under engelskalektionen

READING

1. Jag blir stressad när jag inte förstår vad som står i en text
2. Jag blir stressad när jag måste läsa under tidspress
3. Jag läser engelska på min fritid (ex: böcker, nyheter, undertexter på engelska)

SPEAKING

1. Jag får panik när jag måste prata i klassrummet utan förberedelse
2. Jag blir nervös när läraren ber mig svara på en fråga i helklass
3. Ju mer jag förbereder mig, desto mindre nervös blir jag inför att prata under lektionen
4. Jag är rädd för att mina klasskamrater ska skratta åt mig när jag pratar engelska
5. Jag pratar engelska på min fritid (ex: i direkt/indirekt kommunikation, både på internet och i vardagen)

LISTENING

1. Jag blir nervös när jag inte förstår vad som sägs av andra (inte bara läraren, utan även klasskamrater, modersmålstalande osv)
2. Jag jämför mig med andras uttal och dialekt
3. Jag konsumerar innehåll på talad engelska på min fritid (utan översatt undertext)

WRITING

1. Jag blir frustrerad över hur många regler man måste lära sig när man ska skriva på engelska
2. När jag skriver på engelska behöver jag tänka efter först, så att grammatik och andra språkliga regler blir perfekta
3. På fritiden skriver jag på engelska (både formellt och informellt)

AVSLUTANDE FRÅGOR:

1. Vad tror du själv att en nervositet som denna kan bero på? (även om du inte själv upplever problemet; skriv gärna ner dina tankar ändå.)

2. Vad tror du att DU kan göra åt problemet? (även om du själv inte upplever detta, så skriv vad du tror att du kan göra som klasskamrat åt någon som upplever detta.)

3. Vad tror du att LÄRAREN kan göra åt problemet? (antingen åt dig eller dina klasskamrater som upplever detta.)
-

Appendix E

The survey, in English

1. What do you identify as?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
 - Do not want to say

 2. Which education program do you study? (Abbreviation is enough, e.g. HA)
-

3. What year are you in?
 - Year 1
 - Year 2
 - Year 3

4. How would you rate your own level of English?
 - Very low
 - Low
 - Moderate
 - High
 - Very high

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Questions henceforth include the options of

- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Quite often
 - Often
-
1. I feel unsure when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English
 2. I keep thinking about how everyone else in class is better at English than I am
 3. In English class I forget things I know that I know because of how nervous I get
 4. Even though I am well prepared, I tend to get nervous in English class
 5. I fear raising my hand to answer a question in class
 6. I find it difficult to stay calm during tests in English, no matter how much I have prepared beforehand
 7. On my way to English class I feel relaxed and ready
 8. I am more nervous in English class than I am in other subjects in school

9. I fear that I won't get a passing grade in English class
10. I am hesitant to admit when I can't keep up in English class

READING

1. I feel stressed when I don't understand every word in a text
2. I get stressed whenever I have to read under time pressure
3. I read in English in my spare time (e.g. books, news, subtitles)

SPEAKING

1. I panic when I have to speak in class with no preparation
2. I get nervous when the teacher calls on me in class
3. The more I prepare, the less nervous I get when I have to speak in English class
4. I fear that other students will laugh at me when I speak English
5. I speak English in my spare time (direct/indirect communication, in everyday conversation and/or the internet)

LISTENING

1. I get nervous when I don't understand every word I am hearing
2. I compare myself to other people's accents and pronunciation
3. I consume content in spoken English in my spare time (without translated subtitles)

WRITING

1. I get frustrated with how many rules I have to learn to be able to write in English
2. When I write in English, I have to stop and think about language rules and grammar, in order to produce a perfect text
3. In my spare time, I write in English (both formal and informal)

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think might be the reason that you, or others, experience FLA? (Even if you don't experience it yourself, you might have some ideas as to why your peers do)

2. What do you think that you, as a student, can do about it? (if you don't experience it yourself, what can you do for your peers who might experience FLA?)

3. What do you think the teacher can/should do about it?

Appendix F

The unrepresented data from the original data collection

| Question | Never | Rarely + Sometimes | Quite often + Often |
|---|-------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| G7 “When I am on my way to English class, I feel relaxed and ready” | 0 (0%) | 12 (24%) | 38 (76%) |
| R3 “I read in English in my spare time (e.g. books, news, subtitles)” | 9 (18%) | 19 (38%) | 22 (44%) |
| S3 “The more I prepare, the less nervous I get when I have to speak in English class” | 6 (12%) | 21 (42%) | 23 (56%) |
| S5 “I speak English in my spare time (direct/indirect communication, in everyday conversation and/or the internet)” | 10 (20%) | 23 (46%) | 17 (34%) |
| L3 “I consume content in spoken English in my spare time (without translated subtitles)” | 1 (2%) | 19 (38%) | 30 (60%) |
| W3 “In my spare time, I write in English (both formal and informal)” | 8 (16%) | 25 (50%) | 17 (34%) |