

FACTORS CONNECTED WITH FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANXIETY AND STRATEGIES USED TO REDUCE IT: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF EFL LEARNERS IN BUKAVU/DR CONGO

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Abstract: The aims of this paper are to find out the factors and the symptoms that Bukavu learners and teachers of English associate with foreign language anxiety. It also examines the strategies proposed by both learners and teachers to reduce foreign language anxiety in Bukavu English classrooms. For the data collection, I organized some semi-structured interviews with the learners and a focus group discussion with teachers of English. The findings reveal that Bukavu foreign language anxiety mainly stems from: Shame and Fear of making mistakes in speaking in public, low command of the English language, lack of tolerance from peers, harsh correction from teachers, perfectionism, lack of self-confidence. It also originates from teachers' negative attitudes, pupils' wrong beliefs about language learning, pupils' lack of motivation and lack of friendly learning environment. Bukavu teachers and learners think that the followings signs can be considered as symptoms of foreign language anxiety in a pupil: clacking of fingers, trembling, having palpitations, forgetting things one knew very well, stammering, panicking, losing concentration, especially when delivering a presentation. Teachers and pupils provided some strategies on how to reduce foreign language anxiety in Bukavu pupils. Based on the findings of the present study some pedagogical implications and recommendations were made. It appears important to train teachers on how to address pupils with anxious behaviors. Teachers should be aware of the debilitating and negative impact of foreign language anxiety. They should be able to detect its symptoms so as to be apt to help their anxious pupils reduce their levels of foreign language anxiety and become better learners and users of English.

Keywords: foreign language anxiety, symptoms, reduction of FLA, learners, Bukavu

Introduction

MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) mentioned that anxiety is one of the best predictors of success in the second language. Several studies (Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Trembaly, and Masgoret, 1997) found high correlation between anxiety and proficiency. That is, learners with low language anxiety will succeed in their second language learning.

Learners with high anxiety on the other hand, will not. Foreign language anxiety has been studied with increasing frequency in recent years because of the influence it has on foreign language learning, performance and ultimate achievement. Myself, I became interested in the studies on anxiety and its effects when I started reading about it. This is what pushed me to start examining some pupils' behaviors while I was supervising my trainees. I was surprised to discover that many secondary school pupils in Bukavu developed some signs of foreign language anxiety like trembling, scratching one's head while making presentations, clacking their fingers and the like. When I discovered such foreign language anxiety symptoms, I got more interested in investigating deeply into the factors that connected with their foreign language anxiety, its symptoms and the ways to help high anxious pupils overcome it and become better learners of English.

Foreign language anxiety is a feeling of uneasiness, nervousness, worry and apprehension experienced by non-native speakers when learning or using a foreign language. It is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon (Young, 1991) and can be defined as 'a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an automatic nervous system' (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994).

Foreign language anxiety can be detected in a pupil owing to some symptoms while learning or using it. Here after is a list of some of the anxiety symptoms: fear, worry, dread, trouble concentrating, heart palpitations, sweat, tense, fear to speak aloud, avoidance, nervousness, becoming forgetfulness, anger, blushing, rubbing the palms, transpiration, scratching one's head, staggered voice, reluctance, poor performance in spoken activities, less enthusiasm or willing to speak, less eye-contact, reading the script while giving presentation, reading either too fast or too slow, etc. (Presentation by Sarah Ferguson on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aaL117XpsnI>, retrieved on 1st July 2019).

Since foreign language anxiety is totally different from types of anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986), learners may have the feeling of being unable to express their ideas in a classroom where anxiety emerges. In fact, foreign language anxiety not only affects learners' attitudes and language learning but is also considered to have more debilitating effects than facilitating ones, an investigation and detailed analysis of this kind of anxiety is necessary and significant.

The aims of this paper were to find the factors that are connected with anxiety, its symptoms and the strategies that teachers and learners propose to overcome it. On the basis of the study objectives, this study aimed to explore the research questions as follows:

- 1) What are the factors that are connected with Bukavu learners' anxiety?
- 2) What types of pupils' behavior are associated with FLA symptoms?

- 3) Which strategies have teachers and learners of English proposed for the reduction of foreign language anxiety?

1. Methods and materials

Psycholinguists have developed different instruments to investigate the specificity of anxious learners are (Young, 1991). The instruments collect quantitative and qualitative data about anxiety. According to Tashkkori and Teddlie (1998), researchers can employ several methods to collect data. They propose four general categories of data collection procedures namely: a) asking individuals for information or experiences; b) seeing what individuals do, recording what they do or making inferences; c) asking people about their relationships with others; d) using data collected or documented by others. Since language anxiety is a personal experience that might not be accurately inferred by behavior, asking individuals for self-reports is the most convenient way to explore language anxiety. Data collection of this study I interviewed 30 pupils from the 5th and sixth forms at secondary schools in Bukavu-DR Congo. I also organized a focus group discussion with 12 experienced teachers.

1.1. *Semi-structured interviews*

A semi-structured face-to-face interview technique was elected as it was essential to ensure that the researcher was “in a position of being able to access the degree of the interviewee’s interest and involvement” (Robson, 2000). It was also appropriate because of “its flexibility balanced by structure and the quality of the data so obtained” (Gillham 2005).

In the semi-structured interviews, all the interviewed pupils answered the same questions, receive the same explanations from the interviewer and the interview is done under the quite the same circumstances. Although, conducting interviews may require more financial means, more time and can appear to be boring to the researcher especially when he/she comes across the same answers, it was opted for owing to the following advantages:

- It allows the researcher to deepen his/her understanding of the subject he/she is researching on, and
- It allows direct meeting with the respondent, (Mundala, 2016)

Thirty pupils were chosen at random from 7 secondary schools in Bukavu so that they could participate to this study. Pupils from those schools were individually interviewed within the period of one weeks. The interviewees were met at their respective school after I had got the consent to talk to them from their headmaster. The

interview lasted approximately 15-20 minutes depending on the way an interviewee was giving answers to my questions. All the interviews were conducted in French and were recorded by my mobile phone with the interviewee's permission. Initially, they were asked open-ended questions to establish a rapport with the subjects. Later, a semi-structured question format was used as a guideline to ask questions and to encourage the interviewees to talk in their own way.

The interviews contained a balance of open and closed questions, the latter asserting the control of the interviewer, the former offering the interviewees a wide range of choice within a question.

1.2. Focus Group Interviews

The group interview technique in the form of focus group discussion was also used to lend breadth and richness to the data. Its implication was that "group interviews can provide different kinds of data from individual interviews" (Gillham, 2005). Instead of asking questions to each person in turn, "participants are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each others' experiences and views, and thus generating data through interaction" (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1999). To keep the discussion on track, a group leader moderates the discussion.

Twelve EFL practitioners were invited for focus group discussion and they all participated. The focus group discussion was held on 27 February 2022 and lasted about 70 minutes on questions provided beforehand. These questions were generated following the informal discussion with ESL/EFL students, teachers and practitioners. The discussion proved very fruitful as the participants were experienced teachers (referred to as practitioners here) members of Class (Congolese Language Supporter's Society = the Congolese association of Teachers of English).

The discussion was chaired by myself as a co-participant and an attempt was made to ensure "an even participation" by encouraging the hesitant participants "to make contribution, as well as managing those who seek to dominate the proceedings".

1.3. Data Analysis

The interview and focus group data were analyzed and interpreted following the grounded theory data analysis techniques and procedures. This approach is a qualitative research method that "uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Davidson, 2002: 1, accessed from http://az.essortment.com/groundedtheory_rmnf.htm, 11/03/2022). Its primary objective is "to expand upon an explanation of a phenomenon (Foreign language anxiety) by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context and process of the experiment". The audio-recorded interviews, were listened and transcribed, which

itself is a process of data analysis and interpretation" (Gillham 2005). The data was transcribed comprehensively and the comments of the subjects were written down in the relevant section. The analysis followed a pattern of giving answers to the questions. The questions were kept in order and the summary of answers was provided. This eased the readability of the data I collected made from the qualitative approach.

2. Results and discussion

In this study, the interview protocol had 10 questions whose answers are presented hereafter.

Question 1: How long have you been learning English and how do you feel about it ?

The years the interviewed pupils have been learning English vary between 3 and 12. Some had started learning since their first year at primary school and others only started learning from the first year (or former 3rd year) at high school. About their experience some pupils mentioned that learning English is very good and important. For these pupils, if someone is able to speak or to express themselves in English, they feel very comfortable and have the feeling to be more superior to their colleagues who have difficulties using the English language. Some feel proud of learning English and using it. For these pupils learning the English language is very interesting. Some other pupils could just comment that they had not seen any improvement in their use of the English language. Some feel discouraged since despite their efforts to perform well in English, they are still unable to understand their teachers or to speak English well.

For other pupils learning the English language is very difficult especially when dealing with the English correspondence and dialogues.

Question 2: What disturbs you most when it comes to speaking and learning English? And why?

The second question aimed to discover the situations that disturb the learners about learning and speaking English. The first thing that was mentioned was that some pupils are disturbed when they are asked to perform dialogues in front of the class. Their feeling of uneasiness increases when they realize that they did not prepare their presentations very well.

For some other pupils' disturbance arises when they do not understand teachers' instructions or explanations. They have a listening problem due to lack of appropriate vocabulary. Some other pupils are disturbed when they are asked by the teacher to

look words in the dictionary or when they are asked to analyze texts especially if those texts contain new words.

There was another group of our informants who said: 'nothing can disturb us since we love the English language. We have the ambition to know English the same way we know French. We will do all our best to reach that goal and we know that this requires some extra effort from us.'

Another group of informants mentioned that they experience disturbance when they are asked to make a presentation and they make mistakes while presenting. That is so depressing because their peers laugh at them and that puts them in a very uncomfortable situation.

Question 3: Do you think learning and speaking English as a Foreign language is difficult? What kind of difficulties or problems do you come across when speaking English?

For some pupils learning English is not difficult and for some others it is very difficult. For those who said that 'learning English is not difficult', they commented English lessons are relaxing and enjoyable and they succeed without much problems. These were mainly pupils who started learning English earlier (at primary school) learning is not difficult.

For some of our informants learning English as a Foreign language is indeed very difficult. They mentioned that the environment is not favorable for the English practice since they only listen, write, read or speak English during hours devoted to the learning of the English. Apart from those hours they do not get such opportunities.

Another group said that, they encounter difficulties because they are reluctant and do not concentrate enough so as to learn in a better way. For these pupils motivation may be their major problem. They do not like learning English.

Concerning the problems they have in learning English, some pupils mentioned that they have difficulties dealing with pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, etc.

Question 4: What makes you feel stressful and anxious?

All the participants agreed that speaking in front of the whole class or in public caused anxiety for most of the learners. They said that when they are asked to make an oral presentation, they feel very anxious. They testified that when they make their oral presentations and if it happens that they make mistakes or errors, their classmates laugh at them or ridicule them. Some are afraid by the look of their peers even when their classmates do not laugh at them. They are only afraid to be face the look of others while they are presenting. Others think that their peers will judge them and if it

happens that they make mistakes or errors, most of the time those mistakes or errors become their nicknames. In this vein a pupil said the following:

'When people look at me, I lose my temper and I become anxious. Sometimes I forget the things that I had prepared very well at home with peers or groupmates. I become more anxious when my classmates start laughing when I make a mistake. (one of the participants)

Another situation that triggers Bukavu pupils' anxiety is when they are asked to give an answer orally yet they were not prepared for it. When they feel that they are unprepared, they feel unease and start panicking.

Another situation that was mentioned by our informants is that some pupils feel anxious when they talk to someone who knows better than themselves. A pupil said for example that he trembles when he sees his teacher in the street and as he knows that his teacher knows better and will judge or correct his English even in the street, he usually decides to escape his teacher and does not want to greet him.

Question 5 : How does stress affect you? And what do you think about such situation?

The pupils gave the following things that happen to them when they are in a stressful situation while speaking English:

- Some pupils clack their fingers and tremble. One pupil testified that it can sometimes happen that she cries or has tears in her eyes. Some have palpitations and sweat a lot and start stammering,
- Some forget what they know very well only because they are in a stressful situation,
- Some are unable to concentrate because they usually panic and make more mistakes when they are under stressful situations,
- Other only stop speaking or switch their speech in French or just use gestures,

These results seem to indicate that language teachers can accurately and credibly decode the symptoms of anxious behavior in the language class and can deal with them accordingly. Young (1992) presented a few suggestions to language teachers in this respect:

- a) be sensitive to the signal pupils provide,
- b) recognize the behaviors for what they are,
- c) trust your perceptions, and
- d) work to reduce foreign language anxiety.

Question 6: What do you think are the reasons for this nervousness or anxiety?

For the interviewees of this study, the reasons behind their anxiety are numerous and can be summarized in their following way:

- Perfectionism,
- Lack of self-confidence,
- Shame and fear to be ridicule,
- The fact that your peers are more concentrated on one's mistakes than on one's good performance. Some pupils said that some pupils and sometimes some teachers do not praise them when they perform well and wait until they make a mistake so as to rebuke them and correct them afterwards,
- When you are not strong in English,
- Lack of tolerance from peers,
- Harsh correction from the teacher.

Question 7: When do you feel less anxious when speaking English?

Our informants do not feel any anxiety when they sing in English, talk with their friends at home, and when they read texts silently. They also do not feel any stress when they talk with people who tolerate them and understand that they are still learning. Or when they talk to people at the airport who do not judge them but aim at getting their message. Also when they feel confident in speaking about a topic they know very well and when they talk to people who know less than themselves.

Some do not feel stressed when they write exams and when they know they will not speak. But also when they discuss in an English club. A pupil said the following:

‘I think the idea of creating English clubs can help pupils be less anxious. Myself I feel at ease when discussing in the English club. There no one corrects you and club leaders try to help you whenever you make mistakes. No one laughs at you but people tolerate you. In the English club we are like in a family. This is not the case with the classroom environment.’(one of the participants)

Question 8: Are you afraid of making errors while speaking English and how do you think people will react if you make mistakes?

To this question some pupils responded by ‘yes’ and others by ‘no’. For those who said ‘yes’, they argued by saying that they were afraid of making mistakes since they knew that they would be ridiculed by their peers. Another pupil said ‘I’m a perfectionist and I don’t tolerate people to laugh at me or to nickname me because of the mistakes I can make, that’s why I’m afraid of making them. Another one said the following:

‘I’m afraid of making mistakes because I don’t want to be ridicule. Whenever I make mistakes, my colleagues laugh at me. They tell

me: 'how come your mother is a teacher of English but you make so many mistakes in English?' This frustrates me and sometimes I feel like quitting school or just remain silent as a way for me to avoid making mistakes. (One of the participants).

Despite the fact that the majority of our informants are afraid of making mistakes in fear that their peers would laugh at them, some pupils said that they are not afraid of making mistakes since they know that learning a language takes time and they have to go on until they will be making less mistakes and become fluent. These pupils recognize that making mistakes is part of the learning process. If they stop learning or speaking because they are afraid to make mistakes, they will never become fluent in English in their lives.

Question 9: Do you think your language teacher plays a role in creating or reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom?

With this question the informants had to tell how they understood the role that the language teacher plays in creating or reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom. For this question, all the participants mentioned that language teachers play a very important role in creating or reducing the feeling of anxiety in the classroom. Language teachers increase or create anxiety when they correct their pupils in an inappropriate way, when they give too much homework, by being too authoritative, when they give zero to pupils who are not strong in English.

But some pupils recognized that some language teachers play a great role in reducing the feeling of anxiety. Teachers who reduce foreign language anxiety usually use humor and jokes in class, encourages their weak pupils showing them that learning a language is a long process and that they should do some efforts to speak English without considering the mistakes they make. Mistakes are another step in the learning process. Some teachers encourage their pupils by asking them to be confident and have self-confidence in themselves. All the strategies mentioned above help pupils reduce their anxiety.

Question 10: What would you like to suggest in order to reduce language anxiety in the learners?

In this study, participants provided some suggestions to both teachers and pupils for the reduction of foreign language anxiety. For our informants teachers should encourage their pupils, prepare their pupils mentally that making mistakes is not the end of the world. What matters is communication. They should put a cool atmosphere in the classroom and punish their pupils who laugh at their classmates who make mistakes in English. They should also care about their pupils by facilitating their understanding, they should be using French sometimes in their lessons so as to allow

comprehension on the part of their learners, create and assist the pupils in their club's activities and give more time to pupils for the preparation of their oral presentations,

Pupils also have a role to play for the reduction of foreign language anxiety. They should find someone with whom to talk and with whom to practice the English language, they should not laugh at their classmates who make mistakes. They should be more tolerant towards their classmates. They should also be determined and motivated to learn and be confident in themselves, and they should revise and practice their dialogues at home so as to be familiar with it.

2.1. Results from the Focus group with Bukavu teachers of English

The intention of this focus group discussion was to seek the feedback of Bukavu teachers of English and identify their opinions and views towards the strategies that address foreign language anxiety. Having that aim, a focus group agenda was created with 7 guiding questions to facilitate the discussion. The opinions collected from the teachers are presented in this section.

Q1: What are the psychological factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners while learning and speaking English?

Teachers mentioned a lot of psychological factors that can cause language anxiety for EFL learners while learning or speaking English. The summary of their reactions is developed hereafter. First of all, teachers said that teacher's attitudes towards the pupils impacts a lot on the learning situation and cause foreign language anxiety. One of the teachers during focus group discussions commented in this way:

' I have noticed that the way teachers behave during classroom activities can facilitate or block the learning process and increase foreign language anxiety. When the teachers' attitude is negative towards a given pupil, that pupil may become anxious and develop a kind of disgust towards the learning of the English language. Such pupils have the tendency of dropping classes because of their teachers' attitude.'(one of the participants)

The second thing that teachers mentioned is the fact of asking pupils to speak in front of the class. This brings more anxiety to pupils since they are afraid of being ridicule in making mistakes in front of their peers who may start laughing at them and in this way make their peers feel ashamed and ridicule. During lessons like dialogue or conversation performance pupils are asked to speak in front of the class. Unfortunately, when they make a given mistake, their peers start laughing at them.

The third factor that can bring anxiety is lack of self-confidence. Some are never sure that they know something and are able to do something in English. When they are asked to speak in front of people, they are so ashamed that they lose their temper and start panicking or trembling instead of speaking.

The fourth factor that causes foreign language anxiety in Bukavu pupils is their wrong belief according which English is difficult and not every one is able to speak it. Pupils bring in class wrong beliefs due to their own experience with the English language or due to what their elder brothers or sisters had told them.

The fifth factor that cause foreign language anxiety is that some teachers insult pupils when these ones make mistakes. This pushes the pupils who were insulted not to volunteer anymore in providing answers when the teacher asks the class to do so. This also pushes weak pupils to keep quiet during English classes so as to avoid being ridicule among their peers.

Teacher's monitoring system during group or pairworks is another factor that causes anxiety. Some teachers put pupils in different groups for discussion, but their monitoring system is bad. A teacher can easily come and stay in one group trying to detect the mistakes that pupils make and sometimes he/she comments about the mistake in a harsh way. This pushes weak pupils to keep quiet whenever they notice that their teacher is closer to their group. If the monitoring during classroom discussions is done in a bad way, it can increase anxiety in weak pupils. And this can push the pupils to avoid speaking.

Teachers also mentioned that 'a teacher's own stress can be a factor that causes foreign language anxiety. A teacher who is stressed brings stress with them in their classroom. When they teach with stress, this can have a negative impact on the learners.

Boastful teachers can cause anxiety in their pupils. When a teacher shows that they know a lot and boast about that and neglect their pupils, that has a negative impact on the pupils. Some tend to dislike such teachers and other admire them and try to imitate them. When those who try to imitate them find themselves unable to reach their teacher's level, this creates a kind of frustration which result into foreign language anxiety.

Teachers' frustration or irritation, tiredness are factors that cause foreign language anxiety. Teachers are most of the time frustrated because of their poor salaries and the problems they face on a daily life. They are also frustrated to see that they have many things to do such as preparation their lessons, correcting pupils' copies, giving reports...sometimes they bring that frustration in class and the victims of the teacher's frustrations are pupils. When a teacher is doing his/her job being frustrated, irritated or tired, whatever he/she can do will not be well done and when the teacher finds himself/herself in such a situation he/she can frustrate their learners and increase their level of foreign language anxiety.

Some teachers have very high expectation from their learners and when the pupils are unable to perform as expected by their teachers or by themselves this brings anxiety.

Lack of motivation is another source of anxiety. Some pupils are not motivated for the English lessons, no matter the methodology and ways the teacher can do to teach they do not seem to be interested and do not participate because they do not like learning English. No matter the reasons that pushed them to dislike learning English, they get anxious whenever they see the English teacher. They develop communication apprehension and test anxiety.

Q2: What are the linguistic factors that cause language anxiety for EFL learners?

The linguistic factors that cause foreign language anxiety for EFL learners, it was mentioned that learning sounds and pronunciation are the major ones. Learning grammar can also causes anxiety to pupils.

Q3: What is the difference between first and second language acquisition environment that causes language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners?

Concerning the differences between first and foreign language acquisition environments that can cause language anxiety, teachers started by saying that the acquisition of the first is totally different from the one of the foreign language. First language is acquired automatically whereas foreign language is acquired through effort. Also learning a new language requires motivation which is not the case for the first language. Many pupils consider English as something that has been imposed to them. In L1, the speaker is confident because he/she has a good command of the vocabulary and grammar, unfortunately this is not the case for L2 where the command is very limited. L1 is automatic whereas for L2 you have to make some effort to learn and acquire the language. L1 is natural but L2 is not. The other problem it is not always possible to find the right translation from L1 to L2.

Teachers mentioned other problems like the following:

1. L1 and L2 pronunciations are different,
2. Grammar and structures are different from the one of the learner's first language
3. Vocabulary is different and one word can have different meanings in English. This brings confusion to the pupils,
4. Learning in L1 is free and stressless whereas learning L2 is very stressful. In learning L1 people do not correct you all the time but for L2 you expect correction whenever you speak and this is very embarrassing and this brings fear to speak.

5. In L1 there are no tests, no quizzes, no exams to measure one's abilities in the mastery of the language. This is not the case for L2,
6. L1 does not require the speaker to spend money so as to learn it whereas in L2 you have to pay to learn. The fear to lose your money brings more anxiety. There is also fear of being rebuked by one's parent if one happens to fail,

All the participants agreed that all these differences between first and second/foreign language acquisition environments can cause language anxiety for ESL/EFL learners.

Q4: What are the socio-cultural factors that cause anxiety in EFL learners?

About the socio-cultural factors that cause anxiety for EFL learners teachers said that one should first of all consider the society in which we live and our cultural habits. The origin of the learner can influence their behavior. For example, a pupil who comes from a rich family may have a different way of behaving compared to the pupil from a poor family. A pupil who comes from a family in which talking to elders is not a problem will find it easy to talk to their teacher without much difficulties. A pupil from a family where they have the possibility to watch English movies or travel abroad may experience a low level of anxiety than a pupil from an environment in which such facilities do not exist.

The other problem is that in the Congolese society people do not have access to the English language all the time. When someone English in a given area yet people know that that person can speak local languages or French, people think that he/she is boastful and wants to identify himself to white people showing that they know English. Such a person may even lose friends in the area since he/she is considered as being boastful. This cultural consideration frustrates some pupils because when they try to speak English people start criticizing them and they become anxious. Some pupils with a weak personality only decide to stop speaking English when they are not at school avoiding such cultural cliché from their community. As a consequence, they give themselves less opportunities to practice the English language, yet it is known that 'practice makes perfect'. Without much practice it is difficult to improve one's performance in a foreign language.

Another problem is that in Bukavu, there is a big socio-cultural distance between teachers and their pupils. It is for example very strange to see a teacher joking with their pupils. That distance causes the pupils to not feel at ease while talking to their teachers. One of the teachers said this:

'Teachers are sometimes taken/considered as kings and people who are unapproachable, especially the teacher who is considered as an expert who knows everything. There is too much distance between teachers and their pupils. There is no friendship relationship between learners and

their teachers. Teachers have too much power on their pupils and that social blockage creates a kind of anxiety when the pupil is asked to talk to their teacher.' (One of the participants).

Socio-culturally speaking, teachers mentioned that there is another problem that creates anxiety among the learners. It is a kind of complex developed by a group of pupils towards their peers. For example, mature pupils do not like to learn with the younger ones. They feel ridicule in the society to make mistakes while being with the younger ones. They prefer to keep quiet. Pupils from the village have a complex of inferiority in front of their colleagues who are in the city. When they come to the city, they tend to keep silent so as to avoid exposing their shortcomings and lack of English language mastery. They suffer from an inferiority complex

Anxiety arises also when a pupil talks with a native speaker. Some pupils have the feeling of uneasiness when they happen to talk to native speakers. While talking, learners ask themselves whether they are being understood by the interlocutor. They also wonder if they fully understand what the native speaker is saying. That situation creates anxiety and the learner wishes he/she were left alone. It creates a kind of communication apprehension and the learner tends to keep silent or go away.

Q5: What are the situations that are anxiety producing for the EFL learners both in the classroom procedure and outside of class in the social context?

For this question teachers gave answers about classroom and outside of class procedures that can create anxiety. Concerning classroom procedures that can increase anxiety, there is the fact most pupils become anxious when they are asked to make an oral presentation especially when they had not prepared it very well. Also in the classroom, when a pupil feels like their friend is stronger than themselves, they tend to think that the strong would comment on their mistakes and they avoid talking in the presence of the strong pupil. In the classroom some pupils nickname their classmates when they make mistakes. Another procedure that brings anxiety in classroom procedure is the fact that some teachers do not master the names of all their pupils and this creates a kind of anxiety in pupils who are not known by the teacher. Pupils feel at ease when they know that the teacher cares about them by citing their names when dealing with them in or out of the classroom.

Another classroom procedure that creates anxiety concerns the way a teacher corrects their pupils. A harsh correction to inhibit pupils' willingness to learn.

Outside the classroom context pupils avoid greeting their teachers of English since they are afraid to talk in English, a language they do not master very well. A teacher said the following concerning that point: 'Outside class sessions only 5% of pupils are able to engage in a friendly conversation or dialogue with the teachers, however this depends on the techniques used by the teachers'.

Q6: How is anxiety manifested in the learner?

The following manifestations were linked to foreign language anxiety by Bukavu teachers of English: shivering or trembling when making a presentation, losing one's voice, escaping classes the day of oral presentation, refusing to answer a teacher's answer, hiding behind other classmates, stammering, avoiding to speak to people who know English very well, avoiding to greet the English teachers, keeping quiet when the teacher is present, the fact of disliking the teacher of English, handing in blank sheet during English tests, exercises or exams.

The fact that teachers are able to identify some behavior associated with foreign language anxiety is a good sign. This means they can be able to care about anxious pupils and help them reduce their level of anxiety.

Q7: Which strategies can be used to successfully cope with language anxiety?

To successfully cope with foreign language anxiety teachers provided some recommendations/suggestions to be applied by the teachers, the learners and the government.

1) Teachers should:

- ✓ Increase motivation by telling the pupils that the English language is used like an international lingua franca. It is a very important tool for communication. In order to boost their pupils' motivation, they should pay attention to the way they correct pupils' mistakes,
- ✓ Avoid explaining too much in English in class. They can sometimes use some French in their English classes so as to favor the understanding of their pupils. For example, very long instructions could easily be translated in French. Translanguaging can be one of the solutions towards a less anxious class,
- ✓ Create time of meeting with former pupils to discuss some problems they had so as to improve their teaching practices,
- ✓ Teach tolerance to their pupils. They can also punish the pupils who try to mock or ridicule their peers who make mistakes in class and encourage their learners to speak despite the mistakes they may make.
- ✓ Be more collaborative. This means that teachers should consider their pupils as their friends not as their enemies. Teachers should focus on the learning and should not try to impress their pupils by using unknown words or structures to impress their learners. Teachers should do their best to reduce their social distance with their pupils. They should be more friendly with them and avoid being too authoritative. Teachers should make their classrooms as friendly as possible. They should be humble. Their humility can favor a friendly environment and reduce anxiety level in their pupils,
- ✓ Encourage their pupils to speak event though they make mistakes. He/she should tell them that he/she would help them when they have a problem with a given word or structure or when they do not remember a word.

- He/she should help them in finding the word or in using a structure properly,
- ✓ Control their monitoring system and leave a little space for their pupils to practice their English without too much control during classroom group works,
 - ✓ Use humor. That can help decrease the level of anxiety of their pupils,
 - ✓ Encourage the creation of English clubs. English clubs can help pupils develop their speaking skills,
 - ✓ Have a private talk with the anxious pupils so as to detect their problem and help them properly,
 - ✓ Avoid giving wrong expectation when they come to your class. For example, don't tell them that they are going to know English or they will be at your level in three months.
- 2) The learners should do their best to increase their command of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation skills by reading their notes, doing exercises in class, having time to practice English by attending the English clubs for example.
- 3) The government should change or level up the English curriculum. The government can for example change the way English is assessed during the state exam sessions. It can include some oral practice the way it is done in French.

3. Discussion

It is known that learners may have the feeling of being unable to express their ideas in a foreign language classroom where anxiety emerges (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986) only because foreign language anxiety has more debilitating effects than facilitating ones. Looking into the factors that trigger foreign language anxiety, its manifestations or symptoms and ways to reduce is very important if we want to have a less anxious English classroom.

Thanks to the interviews and focus group discussion that was organized, I got answers to my three research questions.

Research question 1: What are the factors that are connected with Bukavu learners' foreign language anxiety?

It comes from learners' fear of making mistakes in using a foreign language or fear of being embarrassed in the classroom. Some students described the teacher's role in affecting their feelings when answering questions in class.

Fear of negative evaluation can also be observed when foreign language learners feel incapable of making the proper social impression. It is an apprehension towards evaluations by others and avoidance of evaluative situations. I discovered that Bukavu foreign language learners experience the fear of negative judgments of others and would not like to leave unfavorable impressions on others. The fear of making verbal

and spelling mistakes, fear of shortcomings noted and the faults found by others and the fear of disapproval by others are other sources causing fear of negative evaluation.

These above cited fears are triggered by the teacher as a fluent speaker and the classmates. Some pupils are so perfectionists that they think that if they do not attain their teacher and classmates' performance, that means they do not master the language. The fears may also be a consequence of teachers' correcting system. A harsh correcting system may bring in the fear of negative evaluation.

Foreign language anxiety stems from pupils' low command of the English language. This is seen most when they are given a certain task to perform in English in the classroom. This creates a kind of fear on the side of the pupils and results in pupils' test anxiety. They fear do poorly in tests which could have as a consequence the fact of getting bad grade for the course. To be more specific, anxiety concerning the type of tests, listening, reading, and grammar tests was reported. Both high and low anxiety students reported feeling stressed while taking a listening quiz and complained that they could not understand the words of a native speaker. Reading test presented another perspective on anxiety. Some pupils worried about taking tests in which many pages of unseen passages and a lot of unfamiliar words were included. In some speaking tests, pupils could fear that the teacher could correct every mistake they could make and this increased their level of anxiety.

For this question teachers gave answers about classroom and outside of class procedures that can create anxiety. Concerning classroom procedures that can increase anxiety, there is the fact most pupils become anxious when they are asked to make an oral presentation especially when they had not prepared it very well. Also in the classroom, when a pupil feels like their friend is stronger than themselves, they tend to think that the strong would comment on their mistakes and they avoid talking in the presence of the strong pupil. In the classroom some pupils nickname their classmates when they make mistakes. Another procedure that brings anxiety in classroom procedure is the fact that some teachers do not master the names of all their pupils and this creates a kind of anxiety in pupils who are not known by the teacher. Pupils feel at ease when they know that the teacher cares about them by citing their names when dealing with them in or out of the classroom.

Another classroom procedure that creates anxiety concerns the way a teacher corrects their pupils. A harsh correction to inhibit pupils' willingness to learn.

Outside the classroom context pupils avoid greeting their teachers of English since they are afraid to talk in English, a language they do not master very well. A teacher said the following concerning that point: 'Outside class sessions only 5% of pupils are able to engage in a friendly conversation or dialogue with the teachers, however this depends on the techniques used by the teachers'.

In this study, I discovered that some pupils and teachers had wrong beliefs about language learning. This was mainly discovered thanks to interviews and to the focus group discussions. It was discovered that some pupils even before joining their first English classes knew that English was a very difficult subject. Some complained about the pronunciation of some English words. Some other pupils believe that in order to speak one has to have a native speaker's pronunciation or accent. Some brought the wrong belief according which learning the English language could take only a few months. All these cited wrong beliefs caused them to feel anxious in English classes.

I discovered that some wrong beliefs were brought in classes by some teachers. Some teachers frighten their learners telling them that learning and being performant in English could be very difficult. Some discourage their pupils showing them that some people are gifted to know English, assuming that there are people who are not born not gifted for that language. This discourages weak pupils who feel like they should not be in that teacher's class. Some teachers believe that teaching English means teaching too many grammar rules. Others believe that teaching English mean explanation and speaking all the time. Such teachers spend all their teaching allotted time explaining words and giving rules to their pupils. This brings in foreign language anxiety since pupils do not feel involved in the lesson they are learning.

The social environment was identified by the respondents as being one of the anxiety triggers. It was discovered the social origin of the pupil whether they are from rich or poor, from the village from the city, or whether in their families it is allowed to talk to adults or not.

The other social problem identified was the distance that some teachers establish between themselves and their learners creates foreign language anxiety.

However, most of the interviewed pupils mentioned that there are some social environments in which they feel at ease and do not have any feelings of anxiety. For example, they feel at ease when they sing alone in English, when they talk to people who do not judge them or laugh at them when they make mistakes, also when they discuss in English clubs.

Socially speaking, the acquisition environments of L1 and L2 are different. For example, L2 acquisition requires motivation, effort...which is not the case of L1. And many pupils have the feeling that English has been imposed to them. When they find themselves learning English, they feel anxious because they have decided to learn it.

As for the access to the target language, I can mention that Bukavu learners of English have a very limited access to the English language. Most of them have access to English only in the classroom and does not favor their mastery of the English language.

Lack of motivation is another source of anxiety. Some pupils are not motivated for the English lessons, no matter the methodology and ways the teacher can do to teach they do not seem to be interested and do not participate because they do not like learning English. No matter the reasons that pushed them to dislike learning English, they get

anxious whenever they see the English teacher. They develop communication apprehension and test anxiety.

Research question 2: What types of pupils' behavior are associated with FLA symptoms?

Bukavu pupils consider the following behaviors as sign of high level of anxiety in a pupil: clacking of fingers, trembling, having palpitations, forgetting things one knew very well, stammering, panicking, losing concentration, especially when delivering a presentation.

Teachers identify all the signs that pupils mentioned and added even some more. For Bukavu teachers of English foreign language anxiety can manifest itself in a pupil through the following symptoms: constant worry, shyness and withdraw, pupil's refusal to perform in class discussions, debates or presentations, disruptive and defiant behavior in class, feelings of irritability, escaping English classes on days of class presentations. Some pupils can sometimes avoid to speak to people who know English better than themselves.

The cited signs as shown above reveal that Bukavu pupils and teachers are able to identify some anxiety symptoms in pupils. This matches the findings of other researchers who discovered almost the same signs in anxious pupils (Gregersen, 2003; Young, 1991; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002, Gregersen, 2007). The fact of being able to detect anxiety signs and symptoms in pupils is very good since it is a good starting point for teachers and pupils to think about strategies that can be applied to reduce foreign language anxiety in Bukavu secondary English classes.

Research question 3: What are the proposed strategies for reducing stress in foreign language learning?

For this question, answers were provided by both pupils and teachers. I will list first of all present pupils' strategies before I provide the ones given by the teachers.

For pupils, teachers of English should do the following to reduce their pupils' foreign language anxiety:

- ✓ Encourage their pupils
- ✓ Prepare their pupils mentally that making mistakes is not the end of the world. What matters is communication. They should put a cool atmosphere in the classroom and punish their pupils who laugh at their classmates who make mistakes in English,
- ✓ Care about their pupils by facilitating their understanding. They can sometimes mix English and French when giving instructions in their classes,
- ✓ Create and assist the pupils in their club's activities,
- ✓ Give more time to pupils for the preparation of their oral presentations,

For pupils, anxious pupils have a role to play in the reduction of foreign language anxiety. Anxious pupils should:

- ✓ Find someone with whom to talk and with whom to practice the English language,
- ✓ Not mock at their classmates who make mistakes. They should be more tolerant towards their classmates,
- ✓ Not be shy and should rehearse before they make an oral presentation in front of people,
- ✓ Be determined and motivated to learn and be confident.
- ✓ Revise their dialogues at home so as to be familiar with it,
- ✓ Download if possible some English learning applications,

Bukavu teachers of English gave some strategies to teachers, pupils and to the government in order to reduce foreign language anxiety.

4) Teachers should:

- ✓ Increase motivation by telling the pupils that the English language is used like an international lingua franca. It is a very important tool for communication. In order to boost their pupils' motivation, they should pay attention to the way they correct pupils' mistakes,
- ✓ Avoid explaining too much in English in class. They can sometimes use some French in their English classes so as to favor the understanding of their pupils. For example, very long instructions could easily be translated in French. Translanguaging can be one of the solutions towards a less anxious class,
- ✓ Teach tolerance to their pupils. They can also punish the pupils who try to mock or ridicule their peers who make mistakes in class and encourage their learners to speak despite the mistakes they may make.
- ✓ Be more collaborative. This means that teachers should consider their pupils as their friends not as their enemies. Teachers should focus on the learning and should not try to impress their pupils by using unknown words or structures to impress their learners. Teachers should do their best to reduce their social distance with their pupils. They should be more friendly with them and avoid being too authoritative. Teachers should make their classrooms as friendly as possible. They should be humble. Their humility can favor a friendly environment and reduce anxiety level in their pupils,
- ✓ Encourage their pupils to speak even though they make mistakes. He/she should tell them that he/she would help them when they have a problem with a given word or structure or when they do not remember a word. He/she should help them in finding the word or in using a structure properly,

- ✓ Control their monitoring system and leave a little space for their pupils to practice their English without too much control during classroom group works,
- ✓ Use humor. That can help decrease the level of anxiety of their pupils,
- ✓ Encourage the creation of English clubs. English clubs can help pupils develop their speaking skills,
- ✓ Have a private talk with the anxious pupils so as to detect their problem and help them properly,
- ✓ Avoid giving wrong expectation when they come to your class. For example, don't tell them that they are going to know English or they will be at your level in three months.
- ✓ Contact the anxious pupils' parents so as to design some helpful strategies for the reduction of foreign language anxiety in that pupil,
- ✓ Pair the highly anxious pupils with less anxious pupils,

4. Pedagogical Implications

From these findings, it stands important to train Bukavu teachers on foreign language anxiety in workshops. And University or Teacher Training College lecturers in charge of teaching the course in Applied Linguistics should think of the way to integrate at least one more chapter in their lecture notes on foreign language anxiety. That chapter could give some definitions of foreign language anxiety, its manifestations, its debilitating effects on language learning, on performance and on achievement, its sources or factors connected to it and the strategies a teacher could use to reduce it. This may very helpful since I believe that a teacher who is well trained about how to deal with foreign language anxiety may easily and quickly help his/her pupils overcome it and may also develop his/her pupils' performance and achievement.

In addition, the study revealed that Bukavu pupils have communication apprehension. To help them overcome it, teachers should be aware of unfamiliar activities that they ask pupils to do in class, especially activities in which correctness of language is demanded. Another strategy that they can apply is the following. They should inform their pupils of what they are expected to do. This will help them to prepare themselves in advance. Also, before asking pupils to perform publicly, the teacher should make sure that the pupils have practiced enough. For example, the teacher can regularly employ various communicative activities such as role-plays, pair work discussions and group discussions to develop his/her pupils' fluency and confidence in using the English language. The pupils should also be given homework in which they practice speaking and listening by themselves.

Furthermore, the findings showed anxious pupils were worried about the correctness of their language and accents. That worry originates from the fact that they know that

if they happen to make a mistake, they would fail their English class or English presentation and be laughed at by their classmates. Thus, teachers should provide activities that provide good models for their pupils. Pupils' autonomy and self-access study are effective ways to promote language proficiency. Moreover, teachers should teach communicative skills such as compensation strategies (Oxford, 1990) and provide opportunities for their pupils to go outside the class and communicate with people there in English. This can easily function in English clubs. In other words, the implementation of English clubs can be one of the solutions to overcome communication apprehension. This strategy may also help pupils gain more confidence in speaking English.

To overcome stressful situations, teachers should promote a fun and friendly class atmosphere. In addition to giving lectures, teachers should have pupils learn English through entertainment media such as movies, songs and poems. Teachers should also do their best to reduce their social distancing with their pupils. This strategy may increase their interest, motivation and performance and reduce their foreign language anxiety.

Test anxiety was another source of foreign language anxiety explored in this research. Pupils' test anxiety derived from their fear of doing poorly on tests and their fear of getting low grades. To prevent this from happening and as it is known that foreign language teachers have a place in center of test anxiety provoking issues, they have a key role to decrease the level of their pupils' test anxiety. And to reduce their pupils' test anxiety, they should:

- (1) Test what was taught (Young, 1991)
- (2) Use objective scoring methods or objective testing to prevent test anxiety;
- (3) Inform their pupils on the aims of the tests, content, test techniques, number of questions before the administration;
- (4) Establish good communication and feedback before and after the test. This can be beneficial to decrease test anxiety on learners,
- (5) Not use testing as a way to punish their pupils;
- (6) Create a low-stressful language environment to facilitate the acquisition of the English language by allowing pupils to concentrate on communication rather than being distracted by test anxiety. Test should sometimes smile to their pupils before a given test;
- (7) Reduce pupils' fear of making mistakes in front of them. They should emphasize the formative assessment (assessment for learning) and feedback rather than summative assessment (assessment of learning) and feedback.

Finally, foreign language anxiety was found to exist in Bukavu English classes. This was particularly true among pupils with high and moderate levels of anxiety. Therefore, teachers should be aware of the debilitating effect and impact of anxiety, be able to detect its symptoms, and be able to help pupils with anxiety to reduce it. I

believe that the strategies I have provided and the ones given by the participants of this study can help teachers get useful tools for anxiety reduction.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to find the factors that are connected with foreign language anxiety, its symptoms and the strategies that teachers and learners propose to overcome foreign language anxiety. In order to reach the objectives of this study a qualitative approach was used. Based on the findings I discovered that foreign language anxiety exists in Bukavu at a certain extent and teachers and pupils are able to detect some of its symptoms and the factors connected to it. They were also able to propose some strategies on how to reduce foreign language anxiety. I completed the list of strategies given by teachers and pupils.

Despite all the findings of this paper, I have to confess that it has got some limitations that can be completed by other researchers. First of all, the participants of this study were sixth and fifth forms' pupils only. Other researchers could include in their studies more participants. For example, they could include pupils from the first four years of secondary school. They could also replicate the same study on University/Colleges students so as to have a global idea on the phenomenon under study in Bukavu and in the DR Congo and propose solutions for the whole country.

Secondly, I concentrated research questions on the levels of anxiety, factors that are connected to foreign language anxiety, its symptoms and the strategies on how to reduce it. But other researchers could study in the future the interactions between foreign language anxiety and pupils' beliefs, motivation and interests.

Thirdly, from this study it is not clear whether foreign language anxiety is the cause or the result of poor performance. In other words, the concern is to know whether foreign anxiety causes poor performance in Bukavu pupils or poor performance causes foreign language anxiety.

Fourthly, other researchers could study the correlation that exists between foreign language and anxiety-producing factors such as pupils' learning styles or teachers teaching methodologies and practices.

Last but not least, researchers could analyze the correlation that can exist between foreign language anxiety and language proficiency.

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