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Trabajo Fin de Máster

A LITERARY REVIEW ON
LINGUISTIC ANXIETY
IN THE LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Student: Sánchez Meléndez, Ángel

Tutor: Dr. García Ramírez, Paula
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ABSTRACT

When learning a foreign language, students may experience *linguistic anxiety*. The present Master's Dissertation aims to elucidate this phenomenon. Firstly, the relevance of the learner's emotional dimension is highlighted, framing the key concepts, underscoring the contribution of different approaches in this field, and describing a series of individual factors related to affectivity and, consequently, to linguistic anxiety. It then proceeds to focus on the conceptual delimitation of linguistic anxiety to differentiate it from other types of anxiety. Likewise, the main causes and consequences attributed to this type of anxiety are exposed. Finally, it concludes by portraying those strategies that the specialised literature has demonstrated to be effective in the management of this type of anxiety.

KEY WORDS

Linguistic anxiety; foreign language learning; learner.

RESUMEN

En el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera, los estudiantes pueden experimentar ansiedad lingüística. El presente Trabajo Final de Máster persigue dilucidar este fenómeno. En primer lugar, se desataca la relevancia de la dimensión emocional del aprendiz, enmarcando los conceptos clave, subrayando la contribución de diferentes enfoques en este campo, y describiendo una serie de factores individuales relacionados con la afectividad y, consecuentemente, con la ansiedad lingüística. A continuación, nos centramos en focalizar la delimitación conceptual de la ansiedad lingüística para diferenciarla de otros tipos de ansiedad. Asimismo, se exponen las principales causas y consecuencias atribuidas a este tipo de ansiedad. Finalmente, se concluye retratando aquellas estrategias que la literatura especializada ha demostrado efectivas para manejar este tipo de ansiedad.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Ansiedad lingüística; aprendizaje de idiomas; estudiante.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper aims to build knowledge about linguistic anxiety when learning a second language. It explores its presence in educational contexts and analyzes its possible causes, whether internal or external to the student. Then, it strives to understand and deepen what implications this phenomenon has in the process of teaching and learning languages. Finally, it seeks to discover strategies, both for teachers and students, that can be effective to avoid or reduce this type of anxiety in order to achieve a successful learning of the language in the aforementioned environment.

Linguistic anxiety is directly related to the process of learning a second language in the classroom. There is an international consensus that it is a specific anxiety that can negatively interfere with the educational process. This type of anxiety is described as the feeling of fear, stress and nervousness related to learning a second language (Wang, 2005). As Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) point out, linguistic anxiety is closely associated with communicative fear, fear of being negatively evaluated by others and fear of exams. Nevertheless, its causes, due to its multidimensional nature (Dewaele, 2007, p. 392), can be diverse and come from both the student and the learning environment. Since Horwitz et al. (1986) drew attention to linguistic anxiety as a key emotional factor present in language classrooms, it has been one of the most studied variables in the emotional dimension of the learner (Marcos-Llinás and Garau, 2009, p. 94).

The general purpose of this Master's Dissertation is to contribute to the improvement of the teaching and learning process of second languages, particularly English, in educational contexts. It is expected that the knowledge about linguistic anxiety generated can guide decision-making for the implementation of strategies that favor a stress-free environment in the learning context to encourage the improvement of learners' communication skills. Additionally, and in accordance with the transfer criteria, this paper seeks that the knowledge generated can also be applied in other similar contexts of the teaching of English. In this way, although the conclusions reached are not prevailing, it is expected that they can provide interpretive clues that favor the understanding of the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety in other realities similar to the one explored here.

2. THE AFFECTIVE COMPONENT IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

2.1. Emotions, feelings and affectivity: shedding light on meanings

Defining affectivity, feeling or emotion is not an easy task, nor is it easy to classify the multiple feelings that accompany us moment by moment in our daily life. In this sense, psychologists, neurologists and philosophers have taken care to define and catalog the different families of associated emotions and feelings to facilitate their understanding.

As regards emotions, the renowned American neurologist Antonio Damasio (2005, p. 55), explains that emotions are composed of a particular pattern of complex automatic reactions generated by the brain as response to the existence, real or memory, of stimuli, objects or events that activate the emotion.

Following the same author (2005, pp. 46-49), we can group the different emotions into three broad categories, which, far from constituting watertight compartments, are interrelated: "background emotions, primary emotions and social emotions". The former, which are not especially visible through our behavior, shape our mood. Primary or basic emotions, on the other hand, are easily identifiable due to their strong somatic component. In this second group, according to established tradition, the following are included: fear, anger, disgust, surprise, sadness and joy; those that are generally immediately associated with the word emotion. Lastly, the group of social emotions includes: "sympathy, shame, shame, guilt, pride, jealousy, envy, gratitude, admiration, outrage, and disdain".

In respect to feelings, Ledoux (1999), cited in Teruel (2009, p. 222), points out that these are about "thought emotions". Therefore, feelings can be explained as a conscious evaluation of our body state during an emotional response. Feelings are conscious mental maps like those that triggered the emotion —images, sounds, physical perceptions— (Damasio, 1999, cited in Pincheira, 2012, p.51). Although we can consider that we first feel and then express our feelings with emotions, this idea is wrong because emotions always precede feelings (Damasio, 2005, p. 33). Emotions can give rise to different feelings and these, like our interpretations of emotions, can be regulated by our thoughts.

Teruel (2009, pp. 222-223) starts from Damasio (2005) and Rojas (1998) to elaborate a synthesis of the characteristics of emotions and feelings:

- > Emotions: they come about because of something; the body is their theatre; they are subjective, concrete and sudden states; they entail relevant physical changes that disturb; they appear unexpectedly, acutely, and suddenly; they have some precise profiles, behavioral and motor in nature; they are fleeting states. The quintessential disease of emotions is anxiety.
- > Feelings: they come from different sources; the mind is their theatre; they are a subjective and objective fusion with encrypted and cryptic messages; they are "fuzzy" subjective states; they have little vegetative correlation; they are quiet and chronic; they have variegated profiles, and also diffuse; they present cognitively, in imagination; they are permanent states. The quintessential disease of feelings is depression.

On the other hand, Daniel Goleman (1996) points out that the word emotion refers to feeling and thoughts, biological and psychological states, and the type of tendencies to action that characterize it. He also mentions that there are hundreds of emotions and so many mixtures, variations and different nuances among all of them that words are missing from their description.

A propos affectivity, Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) affirm that "someone's affectivity towards a specific thing, action, situation or experience is knowing how that thing, action, situation or experience fits into the needs or intentions of that person, and the resulting effect on their emotions" (quoted in Stevick, 2000, p. 64). Also Teruel (2009, p. 221) points out that our affectivity is the way in which we are internally affected by the circumstances that occur around; which is made up of emotions, feelings, motivations, desires and illusions (Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 19). Along the same lines, Arnold and Brown (2000, p. 19) allude to the fact that in learning contexts, the term affectivity has a broad meaning related to the aspects of emotions, feelings, beliefs, moods or attitudes that condition our behaviour.

Thus, both colloquially and in literature, the words emotion and feeling are often used interchangeably to refer to the affective and emotional states that people experience. Thus, but only after pointing out the importance of these nuances, these terms will be used as synonyms in this Master's Dissertation since its first objective is to highlight that student works with two minds when learning a foreign language, the one that thinks and the one that feels (Goleman, 1996, p. 29).

2.2. Affectivity on learners: assessing its impact on language learning

2.2.1. The humanistic approach: the germ of everything

Traditionally, in the educational field, the cognitive has been considered more relevant than the affective. Nevertheless, the interest of education in emotional factors is not new. The study about it had a great boom in the sixties (Hernández-Rojas, 2004). Hilgard (1963) already highlighted the need to take affectivity into account to avoid the rejection of purely cognitive learning theories (cited in Brown, 2000, p. 142) at the same time that Vygotsky gave great importance to the integration of cognition and affectivity in his work *Thought and Language* in 1962 (González-Rey, 2009, p. 4).

It should also be noted that the development of humanistic psychology during the 1960s contributed greatly to increasing the importance of emotional factors in education. Maslow (1968) and Rogers (1969) and, also, the educational movement led by George Isaac Brown (1971) or Gloria Castillo (1973) highlighted the combination of cognitive and affective aspects as essential to achieve a global education of the learner (Arnold and Brown, 2000, p. 23).

According to Brown (2000, pp. 89-90), humanistic psychology focuses more on the affective than on the cognitive and, therefore, leads to a constructivist theory of learning. It defends the figure of the teacher as a facilitator and the figure of the student as the true protagonist of their own learning.

As the humanistic approach defends, the student must be considered globally, regarding both cognitive and emotional factors, as the focus of the teaching-learning process. In the language classroom, the most important are the students: their interests, learning experiences and self-realization. This implies the need to pay attention to the different learning styles, capacities, motivations and creativity of the students, making the teaching methodology more flexible. In short, the humanization of the educational process makes the emotional component of the student relevant.

Regarding language learning, humanistic psychology has been the basis in which several methods were developed, which give the student's affectivity a substantial role, such as Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning and Total Physical Response.

2.2.2. *The Monitor Model of Krashen: A key contribution*

Another important contribution that has managed to give relevance to the affective dimension of the language learner comes from the Monitor theory developed by Krashen (1985). In fact, it will be one of the first ones in valuing the affective factor in the learning of a foreign language. It is considered of great relevance in language teaching since it managed to focus on emotional factors as important as motivation, self-management, confidence, anxiety or attitude of the student.

The Monitor Model consists of five hypotheses. The first hypothesis differentiates two independent processes for developing skills in a second language: acquisition and learning. From this differentiation, the second hypothesis metaphorically explains the relationship between learning and acquisition. Regarding the third hypothesis, the natural order, Krashen (1985, p. 1) explains the sequence that the acquisition of another language follows. For its part, the entry hypothesis draws attention to the necessity for the student to receive accessible and understandable input.

Finally, the last of the hypotheses formulated by Krashen is the "affective filter", which, according to the author, is key for a successful second language acquisition. In this sense, a series of emotional variables can act as a psychological barrier or negative "affective filter" in the mind of the student that prevents the input received from being processed successfully. If this filter is at high levels it can be a manifest impediment to learning. Nevertheless, a low filter translates into a more feasible and effective acquisition of the second language.

According to Krashen (1982, p. 32), the pedagogical implication of the affective filter hypothesis assumes that the objective of teaching the target language should not only be to provide sufficient understandable inputs, but also to provide a learning situation that encourages a low filter in students.

Although some questions need to be reviewed, Krashen's Model has helped to advance the understanding of foreign language acquisition and drawn attention to the role of emotional factors. In fact, the emotional variables with which the affective filter is related are main factors that must be considered in the language classroom and that, due to their complexity, continue to require further analysis and, above all, new research.

2.2.3. The current consideration of affectivity in the language classroom

In addition to the contributions of humanistic psychology and the Monitor Model of Krashen, there has been a growing number of scholars and researchers who have been supporting the importance of emotional factors in language learning.

In 1975, Chastain concluded that affectivity has at least as much influence as cognitive abilities in the learning outcomes achieved by students. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) and Onwuegbuzie, Bailey and Daley (2000) also highlight the influence of the affective dimension of the student in the achievement of the second language.

Meanwhile, Brown (2000, p. 142) pointed out that if we elaborate theories of acquisition of a second language and teaching methods based exclusively on cognitive considerations, we would be leaving aside the most relevant part of human behavior, the affective domain. The findings of the research conducted by this author in 2001 (cited in Arnold, 2006) showed a higher level of learning when the cognitive, affective and physical aspects of the student were taken into account, as well as an increase in motivation towards the subject and the perception of learning as an enjoyable process.

For his part, Hooper Hansen (2000, p. 232) highlights the influence, positive or negative, that emotional factors exert on language learning. He argues that negative emotions normally produce some passive defensive reactions that are common in the classroom (falling asleep, daydreaming, being mentally inactive) or other reactions of a certain aggressiveness, while positive emotions, as in the case of Arnold's study, have the opposite effect and prepare the mind to learn. Based on the same affective considerations, Stevick (2000, pp. 74-75) highlights how affectivity intervenes in the functioning of memory and, therefore, in learning. The author underlines the key role of affectivity in changing the internal resources of the student. Besides, he explains how its role is carried out in five ways, as it may be seen in the aforementioned reference.

In short, following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 35), the various investigations that have studied the influence of variables such as student self-esteem, motivation or linguistic anxiety have confirmed the importance of the emotional component in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages.

Therefore, it is evident that the inclusion of emotional and positive psychology in research in the field of foreign languages is absolutely essential to improve the teaching-learning process. The use of a foreign language implies the mobilization of various complex skills on the part of the student. When students generate sentences using a coded linguistic instrument that is phonologically, grammatically, and culturally different to the one they habitually use, they activate cognitive processes to be able to process information, but they also mobilize emotional factors such as motivation, desire and empathy. Thus, it is clear that the emotional dimension is a key variable in education and, specially, in foreign language learning. Indeed, in recent years, concern about these factors on the part of many language-teaching professionals has increased dramatically. Today, educational work is mainly carried out from communication-based language teaching approaches under the umbrella of the CEFRL.

2.3. Most relevant individual factors related to affectivity in language learning

The affective dimension of the learner is difficult to describe scientifically. There are many variables related to the emotional part of human behavior that intervene in the process of acquiring a second language, and whose classification or categorization is very complicated (Brown, 2000, pp. 142-143). In the specialized literature, the term "individual differences" refers to the student's non-linguistic factors that influence learning (Gass and Selinker, 2001, p. 329). This section deals with a series of individual factors that are related to affectivity.

Along the same lines, Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova and Markechova (2017) point out the great attention that has been paid in recent years to linguistic anxiety due to its influence on foreign languages learning. Other scholars, such as Gardner (1985), Arnold and Brown (2000), Brown (2000) and Dewaele (2011) have agreed to attribute special importance to the role of linguistic anxiety, as well as the positive value of the motivational component (Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 44).

The following sections of this chapter are dedicated to examining the most relevant affective variables that intervene in second language acquisition. This will also facilitate the understanding of the role these variables can play within the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety that is the object of this Master's Dissertation.

2.3.1. Motivation

Due to the complexity of this concept, there is no single agreed definition. Nevertheless, most scholars agree that this construct refers to the direction and magnitude of human behavior. In this way, motivation is responsible for the decisions people make to carry out a certain action, the duration of the desire for action and the amount of effort that is dedicated (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2013, p. 4). Hence, Fernández-Abascal (2000, pp. 27-29) defines motivation as a multi-determined process that energizes and directs behavior.

Motivation is a key element in the field of foreign languages. It is crucial in terms of planning, design, implementation and evaluation of learning. In addition, it is essential in the relationship that the teacher maintains with the students, since motivation is closely linked to involvement and participation in the language classroom. In light of this, the best scenario to learn a second language is the one oriented to emotions and in particular to motivation.

2.3.2. Self-esteem

Broadly speaking, this concept refers to the assessment that each subject makes of himself. This evaluation responds, therefore, to a personal perception that it can be more or less positive or negative and that, normally, it remains stable over time. According to Brown (2000, p. 145), self-esteem is probably the aspect that most permeates human behavior, since it is essential to achieve success in any emotional or cognitive situation that takes place in life.

In the academic context, the student's self-esteem is a key element. Several investigations provide evidence that self-esteem favors acquisition and performance in the second language (De Andrés 1993 and 1996, cited in De Andrés, 2000; Hassan 2001, cited in Kara, 2013). For their part, Oxford (2000, p. 80) and Montes de Oca (2005, pp. 62-63) point out the existence of a correlation between self-esteem and linguistic anxiety. It is often considered that self-esteem can go hand in hand with other different but closely related variables: self-efficacy and self-confidence, which are discussed in the next section.

Given this, it seems clear that students' self-esteem is a key factor that influences the process of learning a foreign language. Here, the teacher plays a decisive role in their development: they must create the conditions around the students, an environment where each of them has feelings of pride and belonging, and make each student be recognized as an individual and by their own characteristics.

2.3.3. Self-efficacy and self-confidence

The concept of self-efficacy was defined it by Bandura (1987, p. 416), according to Rubio-Alcalá (2004), as: "the judgments of each individual about their capacities" (p. 187). In accordance with Dörnyei (1994, p. 277), Schunk (1991) points out that self-efficacy refers to the belief or opinion an individual has about their ability to perform a specific task.

Self-efficacy is considered a key variable in relation to linguistic anxiety. Fallah (2016, p. 2; cited in Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 54) includes authors such as Chesney et al. (2006) and Luberto, Cotton, McLeish, Mingione and O'Bryan (2013) who consider it vital when regulating and controlling distressing or stressful situations. Fallah (pp. 2-3) also quotes Bandura (1997) who affirms that self-efficacy is central when self-managing emotional situations. In this sense, Dörnyei (1994, p. 277) highlights the convenience for teachers to facilitate the feeling of self-efficacy in their students by providing them with meaningful and achievable tasks that generate success in the target language. For their part, Arnold and Fonseca (2004, p. 53) affirm that to develop students' self-efficacy, the teacher must offer them different types of communicative tasks that adapt to different learning styles, so that students can express themselves successfully in the target language.

Clément (1980) introduced the concept of self-confidence in the literature on second languages for the first time. He added a notion that includes an emotional component (linguistic anxiety) and a cognitive component (self-perception of skills in the target language). For Dörnyei (2008, pp. 122-133), the notion of self-confidence is directly linked to self-esteem, self-efficacy and anxiety. This author understands that self-esteem and self-confidence are the bases to build firm learning. In this way, to promote the self-confidence of the students, language teachers must to provide successful experiences, to express in a positive and persuasive way their belief that the student is capable of achieving a certain goal, to reduce linguistic anxiety and to teach strategies of learning and communication.

In light of this, it can be stated that self-confidence refers to the perception that an individual has in his capacity to carry out a competent perform. While self-efficacy alludes to a particular situation, self-confidence refers to the global belief of individual's potentialities in relation to a wide variety of situations, as well as mastery of various subjects. Depending on the general ability that each person attributes to himself, he will be more or less prepared to perform different tasks and attain different achievements in foreign language learning.

2.3.4. *Extraversion and introversion*

According to Jung (1964), the extraversion-introversion dimension implies the direction in which the subject directs his or her focus of attention. In such a way that the person can be oriented mainly towards the outside world, directing their judgments and perceptions about people and objects, or towards the inner world, focusing their attention on concepts and ideas (Ríos-Muñoz, 2006).

At present, given that the communicative approach bases learning on oral interaction between students, the incidence of the extraversion-introversion trait is evident in the classroom and, therefore, has attracted the attention of academics and language teaching professionals.

In some investigations, such as those collected by Dewaele and Furnham (1999, p. 533), a clear pattern has been found. This form indicates that, in complex conversation tasks, the extraversion trait corresponds to a better oral production in the target language in terms of fluency, but students are not necessarily more precise in their use of the language, reinforcing the distinction between fluency and precision as two independent dimensions in language proficiency.

In general, it seems logical to think that certain classroom activities may be more appropriate to favor the learning of one student profile or another (Arnold and Brown, 2000, p. 29). Dewaele and Furnham (1999, p. 535) suggested that extroverted students perform better when performing tasks in the target language in stressful situations and that, in turn, they experience lower levels of linguistic anxiety. According to these authors (p. 536), the fact that more extroverted students are less nervous when communicating in the target language and are more willing to participate in discussions or debates in the classroom shows that they receive a more understandable input and, at the same time, produces a more understandable output.

Given the influence of extroversion and introversion on language learning, it seems clear that teachers must carefully select techniques, strategies and activities that favor the participation of introverted students. Creating this atmosphere would reduce students' levels of language anxiety and therefore encourage them to perform better in communicative tasks in the target language.

2.3.5. *Learning styles*

Broadly speaking, the term learning style can be defined as the way each person learns. Therefore, it is easy to understand that there are many different styles. In the reviewed literature, the term "learning style" refers to two closely related but different concepts.

On the one hand, learning styles "are characteristic cognitive, affective and physiological traits that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment" (Keefe and Thompson, 1987; cited in Pantoja, Duque and Correa, 2013, p. 81). As follows, Villanueva (2010, p. 248) collects Willing (1989) and Wenden (1991) who point out that learning styles describe cognitive and affective behaviors that reflect the characteristics and ways of perceiving, interacting and responding to the context of learning by the student. In turn, Brown (2000, pp. 112-122) highlights that they are the characteristics of intellectual functioning and personality that each person has and that differentiate them from others. On the other hand, the expression learning style is often used in reference to a unique characteristic of the learner, which can correspond to any of its dimensions, cognitive, affective or physical. To this it could also be added that the combination of different learning styles based on different classification criteria offers us a wide range of learning profiles.

In relation to learning styles, a series of important considerations must be taken into account (Reid, 2000, pp. 319-320). Each student has his own learning style that implies learning qualities and deficiencies. None is better than another. Thus, language teachers can encourage students to expand their learning styles so that they can make more effective use of learning situations. Likewise, it is necessary to meet the diversity of learning profiles present in students since, as Rubio-Alcalá (2004) points out, the teaching style that is not in tune with the student's learning style can generate frustration and anxiety.

In light of this, inquiring about the learning style of students is a necessity of any linguistic program, if the objective is precisely to obtain good results. Methodologies for teaching English as a foreign language, that take into account the way students learn and involve strategies in consonance with the learning style, reduce students' linguistic anxiety and therefore lead to better academic performance.

3. LINGUISTIC ANXIETY: KEY AFFECTIVE FACTOR IN THE LEARNING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

3.1. The concept of Linguistic Anxiety

The major aim of this section is to define the construct *linguistic anxiety* or *foreign language anxiety*, around which the central interest of this paper revolves. In the first place, it is considered appropriate to make a brief reference to the term *anxiety* in a general sense to later clarify the specificity of *linguistic anxiety* that this Master's Dissertation occupies.

In the specialized literature, there seems to be a broad consensus to remark that *anxiety* has two opposite meanings associated with it. On one side, a positive meaning connected with human existence itself, which is called *fear* by some writers while others call it *positive anxiety*. At the same time, it has a negative meaning simply label with the word *anxiety* or *negative anxiety* if the term *positive anxiety* is used to refer to *fear* (Segura and Arcas, 2003).

Clark and Beck (2012, p. 22) collect the definitions of these concepts made by Barlow (2002): "*fear* is a primitive alarm in response to a present danger, characterized by intense activation and tendencies to action", while *anxiety* is "a future-oriented emotion, characterized by perceptions of uncontrollability and unpredictability over potentially aversive events and a rapid shift in attention to the focus of potentially dangerous events or one's own affective response to these events" (p. 104).

On his side, Reyes-Ticas (2010) points out, citing Kaplan (1994), that "in psychiatry, *anxiety* is defined as an unpleasant emotional state in which there is a subjective feeling of danger, discomfort, tension or apprehension, accompanied by of a neurovegetative discharge and whose cause is not clearly recognized for the person" (p.12). He also pinpoints that in *fear* there is a similar physiological response, but there is a cause, a real, conscious, external danger, which it is present or threatens to materialize.

Foreign language anxiety was defined, for the first time, by Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986, p. 128) as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process".

There is a broad consensus that it is a specific type of anxiety (Trang, 2012). In this sense, research by MacIntyre and Gardner (1989 and 1991) evidenced that said anxiety is different from other forms of anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989 and 1991) also found that *linguistic anxiety* is negatively related to performance in a foreign language, which is not the case for general anxiety. Thus, said anxiety can negatively affect student performance (Arnold, 2006; Gregersen, 2007). Wang (2005) identifies it as a feeling of fright, pressure, uneasiness, edginess and concern, connected to a negative perception in second language learning.

Additionally, as Trang et al. (2013, p. 709) point out, the existence of said anxiety has been verified in many countries. Duxbury and Tsai (2010, p. 4) affirm that it is a universal phenomenon that prevents the linguistic success. In this sense, Trang (2012, p. 69) points out the considerable body of research that indicates that *linguistic anxiety* is a reality for many students (cited in Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 68).

Furthermore, Trang (2012, p. 69), citing Clement (1980), defines it as a complex construct that has to do with the psychological part of the learner in relation to their feelings, self-esteem and self-confidence. For their part, Sánchez and Sánchez (2017, p. 162) mention that Zhang (2001, p. 74) conceives this type of anxiety as "the psychological tension a learner goes through in performing a learning task" in another language.

Thus, it can be said that linguistic anxiety consists of the presence of a negative emotion when speaking or using a foreign language, which affects performance in the foreign language and its use. That is, the learner experiences the use of the foreign language as a deprivation of the ability to communicate in his mother tongue and forces him to express himself with a tool that he does not master. This association makes the student see the act of communicating in a foreign language as an almost unattainable challenge that leads to an increase of linguistic anxiety, hindering or preventing communication and vice versa. Language anxiety becomes one of the biggest obstacles to language learning and is currently a great challenge for both foreign language teachers and researchers in this field.

Given this, it is evident that numerous authors have broadly investigated the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety. Since the 1980s, much quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research has focused on language anxiety. Most of them have assumed the theoretical framework on linguistic anxiety developed by Horwitz et al. (1986) and have made

widespread use of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) to determine the learners' anxiety levels in relation to a series of variables. According to Suleimenova (2013), citing Worde (1998), this scale has been widely used by many authors.

McIntyre and Gardner (1989) and McIntyre (1995) highlighted the breadth of this construct when they stated that it could respond to numerous combinations of factors. It is, therefore, a "complex and multidimensional phenomenon" (Young, 1991, p. 434) in which various variables or independent factors of different nature intervene. In this sense, Horwitz (2010) underlined that linguistic anxiety can be broken down into three more specific types of anxieties: communicative apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation by others.

With respect to *communicative apprehension*, McCroskey (1984) defined it as "fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons" (p. 13). In this regard, Horwitz et al. (1986, pp. 127-128) explain it as the fear of communicating orally in pairs, groups or in public (stage anxiety). Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 70), there are numerous studies that have given communicative fear an important specific weight in linguistic anxiety, highlighting how this fear negatively interferes in the knowledge acquisition process. This fact is of great importance considering, as Soler (2008) points out, in recent years foreign languages teaching has evolved considerably towards more communicative methods, in which the ability of oral expression is strongly enhanced.

Regarding *test anxiety*, these authors emphasize that, in general, students who feel such anxiety are intransigent people with their possible mistakes, who fear making them. They also noted that both communication anxiety and test anxiety converge on oral tests in the second language classroom.

Finally, as for the *fear of negative evaluation*, others identify it with the avoidance of such situations and therefore any possible evaluation. Although it includes the fear of exams, it is much broader since it is associated with any social situation in which students perceive that they are being observed, such as speaking tasks in the foreign language classroom. Given this, students feel continuously evaluated by both the teacher and their peers (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128).

3.2. Causes of Linguistic Anxiety

Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 71), studies have mainly focused their attention on the influence that different variables may have on this type of anxiety, such as the level of language competence of students; the competitive nature of students; the apprentice's perceptions; the attitude of students towards the second language; lack of knowledge of vocabulary and syntax of students; classroom procedures, teacher behaviors, and teacher and student beliefs; activities in the classroom and the personal characteristics and behavior of teachers; and students' fear of negative assessment and self-perceived oral competence.

Taking into account the aforementioned literature and the multidimensional nature of linguistic anxiety, it is evident that its causes can be diverse and obey the interaction of a series of factors. For example, Gkonou (2013) showed that there are numerous factors influencing linguistic anxiety such as the student's perception of the input they receive; the type of activities; the individual characteristics of the apprentices; and other psychosociological variables related to the fear of being wrong, corrected, or negatively evaluated by the teacher or other classmates.

Thus, linguistic anxiety can be caused by a series of independent variables, both internal and external to the student, as well as by different interrelated factors. These factors are associated with the students themselves, teachers, assessment tests, class characteristics, or instructional practices (Trang et al., 2013, p. 711).

Young (1994, pp. 31-32) classified sources of anxiety into five categories: 1) Anxiety derived from personal or interpersonal anxieties; 2) Beliefs related to traditional language teaching, which give the protagonist and the corrector role to the teacher and do not support work among peers; 3) Anxiety arising from interactions between teacher and student; 4) Anxiety related to classroom procedures; 5) Anxiety related to assessment tests.

Thus, the main factors identified as sources of linguistic anxiety in the literature have been classified into two large groups: those that correspond to the learners' own characteristics and those that are external to them.

3.2.1. Factors related to the internal dimension of the learner

With respect to the factors of the internal dimension of the learner, the three types of anxiety already introduced when defining linguistic anxiety and which, according to Horwitz (2010), are mainly related to this construct are described below. Additionally, the correlation between linguistic competence and linguistic anxiety is established, as well as the psychological factors related to the learner.

3.2.1.1. Communicative apprehension

Communicative fear is key in linguistic anxiety, focusing mainly on oral tasks (Horwitz et al., 1986; Suleimenova, 2013). Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 73), to date, there are numerous studies that identify oral expression activities as the main source of stress when learning languages.

Communicative apprehension also refers to fear of public speaking, which is a specific type of said apprehension that deserves special attention in language learning. Public speaking anxiety is defined it as "an individual's level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication in front of a group of persons" (MacIntyre, Thivierge and MacDonald 1997, p. 158, cited in Elmenfi and Gaibani, 2016, p. 4). The fear of public speaking is a very frequent problem among students and its relevance lies in the fact that it significantly conditions their participation in the classroom and with it their learning (Orejudo, Herrero, Ramos, Fernández and Nuño, 2007, p. 89).

Additionally, certain students' beliefs about how they should communicate in the second language influence the anxiety they experience. These students think that only those who speak correctly in the target language can do so; when this is not the case, anxiety appears.

It is evident that communicative fear is crucial for linguistic anxiety, especially in oral tasks. Public speaking anxiety has become a common problem for students, significantly reducing their participation in the classroom and negatively influencing their learning. Thus, it is essential that teachers put into practice those strategies, techniques and activities that can reverse the situation, encouraging students to use language in communicative tasks.

3.2.1.2. Fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated by others

Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 74), another key factor is the fear students have of making mistakes, as reflected in numerous studies. In our current society, the image projected towards others plays a fundamental role in people's self-esteem and self-concept. In this way, according to Jones (2004), cited in Crichton, Templeton and Valdera (2014, p. 1), the fear of making mistakes in front of colleagues and, consequently, the fear of suffering their belittling and damaging their own image before them, make students reluctant and embarrassed to participate in class activities.

In general, shame can be explained as "a feeling of discomfort produced by the fear of making a fool of ourselves or by the feeling of loss of dignity, caused by a fault committed or by a humiliation or an insult received" (Siagto-Wakat, 2016, p. 8). When learning a language, linguistic anxiety is associated with experiences of shame that can manifest themselves in different ways, such as tremors or episodes of excessive sweating.

To some extent, the teacher can manage the fear of making mistakes in front of peers. If, when students make a mistake, they observe that their classmates laugh at them, it is likely that they will not want to intervene again. Instead, the application of a series of educational measures, such as cohesive group dynamics, can lead to the creation of an appropriate environment where all students feel confident to use the foreign language.

3.2.1.3. Fear of exams

Fear of exams is the third factor directly related to linguistic anxiety according to Horwitz (2010). This type of fear refers to the tendency to become alarmed, regardless whether the fears are well founded or not, relating to the consequences derived from an inadequate performance in an exam or other type of evaluation exercise that frequently causes cognitive interferences in students (Sarason, 1984; cited in Arnold, 2000, pp. 82-83). Fear of exams is experienced mainly in evaluative communicative situations, although it can also appear in non-communicative situations (Arnold, 2000, pp.82-83).

Regarding the specific causes of test anxiety that foreign language learners may experience, Aydin (2009), citing Young (1986, cited in Aydin 2007), points out that "learners' perceptions of the validity of the test, the time limit, the testing techniques, its format, the

duration of the test, the test environment and the clarity of the instructions" (p. 130). Additionally, as the most relevant literature suggests, low levels of target language proficiency and study skills are also vital factors that cause test anxiety among language learners. Furthermore, Daly (1991) states that students experience more anxiety about assessment when faced with tests that are ambiguous, new, or especially important (Young, 1991, p. 429).

In the specific case of fear of exams as generator of linguistic anxiety, it is crucial to ensure that the situations surrounding the application of a test generate experiences of tranquillity. It is vital to compensate the tensions caused by the excessive need for study, with other activities or experiences that provide relaxation. Likewise, it is important to assertively manage test results, especially when it comes to unexpected or unsatisfactory results.

3.2.1.4. Level of proficiency in the foreign language

Before analyzing the influence that the level of command of the foreign language can have on linguistic anxiety, it is considered convenient to establish a prior distinction between two different concepts. The first refers to the level of general competence that the student has in the target language, which can be classified with the terms: beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, advanced and proficient; or according to the levels established in the CEFRL: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. The second concept refers to the sublevel of competence that the student has within one of the aforementioned levels or within the level required in a particular foreign language course. This sublevel of student competence within a specific teaching or subject context is established by the grades obtained.

With respect to the influence that the level of competence exerts on linguistic anxiety, the investigations carried out to date have obtained contradictory results, as collected by Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009). In this regards, the studies by Phillips (1992) and by Arnaiz-Castro and Guillén (2012) determined that those students who had the highest levels of anxiety were those who, in turn, had the lowest grades in the subject. Likewise, the investigation of Fang-peng and Dong (2010) showed that students who had the lowest oral competence in English experienced the highest levels of linguistic anxiety.

In contrast, two recent qualitative studies by Ewald (2007) and Kitano (2001) concluded that learners in higher-level courses (cited in Marcos-Llinás y Garau, 2009, p. 95)

experience higher levels of anxiety. In this sense, the findings of the study conducted by Trang et al. (2013) evidenced that linguistic anxiety experiences appeared in the higher stages, when students do not trust themselves to be as competent to respond to what is required. In turn, the outcomes of the research conducted by Marcos-Llinás and Garau (2009, p.103) showed great differences in the anxiety experienced by learners at a beginner and advanced educational level, the latter being the ones who showed greater anxiety. The lower the level of the course, the lower the level of anxiety, and vice versa. The learners at an advanced level felt more pressure to perform better as they wanted to meet certain expectations. Therefore, it can be stated that the role played by the importance given to foreign language learning must also be born in mind in understanding the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety.

In the light of above, as Král'ová (2016, pp. 7-8) points out, anxiety to learn a second language seems to be a phenomenon of "communicating vessels" or bidirectional, where there is controversy about whether the low level of competence causes linguistic anxiety or it is the latter that prevents students from achieving proficiency in a foreign language.

3.2.1.5. Psychological factors of the learner: self-perceived competence in the target language, self-efficacy, self-confidence and perfectionism

To begin with, a distinction must be made between the linguistic competence and the concept of self-perceived communicative competence. This new term refers to the estimation of one's own competence, a belief rooted on self-awareness rather than on real communicative competence (McCroskey and McCroskey, 1988; cited in Lahuerta, 2014, p. 41). Therefore, the self-perceived competence in the foreign language may or may not coincide with the previous one, since it is the student's own subjective evaluation.

This concept directly connects with self-efficacy. If students ascribe a high linguistic level, they feel more effective in developing different types of exercises. On the contrary, the perception of having a low linguistic level is connected to low self-efficacy. In this sense, the study carried out by Lahuerta (2014, p. 39) found that students' self-perceived communicative competence had a positive correlation with their desire to communicate in English, while this relationship was inverse in terms of anxiety. Likewise, research that has explored the relationship between the level of self-efficacy and language anxiety exposes that learners with

low levels of self-efficacy experience higher levels of anxiety when learning a foreign language (Mills, Pajares & Herron, 2006).

Another aspect to highlight is the perception that students have of their relative level of competence within the group of classmates. According to the conclusions of the study carried out by MacIntyre and Devaele (2014), this aspect is identified as another independent variable that influences the level of linguistic anxiety. Furthermore, the students' belief that other classmates have more qualities than they do for foreign languages and that studying a second language requires special skills that they do not possess was pointed out by Price (1991), cited in Rodríguez and Delgado (2008, p. 213), as a key factor of anxiety for students. Additionally, the lack of progress in mastering the language can be another reason for anxiety in students. If they perceive that they are lagging or not making progress in the development of second language skills, their level of restlessness increases (Horwitz et al., 1986).

Due to its close relationship with linguistic anxiety, another psychological factor of the learner that is referred to in the specialized literature is self-confidence (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels, 1998). Ahmad et al. (2013, p. 91) point out a negative correlation between lack of self-confidence and participation in reading aloud situations. Subaşı (2010, p. 33) points out that Foss and Reitzel (1991) also highlight the lack of self-confidence as a key factor in the fear of making mistakes.

Likewise, there exists a direct correlation between perfectionism and linguistic anxiety, since learners with high levels of anxiety when learning a foreign language are perfectionists and vice versa. Perfectionist students seek to intervene in class fluently and without making grammatical or pronunciation errors. Thus, they prefer not to intervene in the classroom when they consider that their oral production will not be perfect. This self-demanding and self-critical attitude raises the level of linguistic anxiety. In fact, there seems to be some parallelism in some of the consequences of linguistic anxiety and perfectionism (Gregersen and Horwitz, 2002, pp. 562-563).

As it has been pointed out by a wide range of research in this field, it is essential to take into account all the student's psychological factors (self-perceived competence in the target language, self-efficacy, self-confidence and perfectionism) into the teaching-learning process of foreign languages, as they play a crucial role in linguistics anxiety.

3.2.2. Factors related to the external dimension of the learner

As regards external sources of linguistic anxiety experienced by students, specialized literature refers to various causes related to classroom dynamics, teachers' attitudes and behaviors, classroom environment in terms of competitiveness, and typology of activities.

3.2.2.1. Class dynamics

The methods and dynamics used in the classroom have been highlighted as variables that influence the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety. In this sense, whole-class instruction provides a more nervous atmosphere and is less conducive to foreign language acquisition than small group learning (Effiong, 2015, p. 4). As reported by Crinchon et al. (2014, p. 12) from Cao and Philip's (2006), speaking in front of an entire class, unlike what happens in smaller groups or in pairs, increases the reluctance of learners to communicate in the target language. On the contrary, students' linguistic anxiety decreases when they develop their oral skills in small groups, which suggests cooperative learning strategies as beneficial in achieving lower levels of anxiety (Nagahashi, 2007, cited in Effiong, 2015, p. 4). Nevertheless, when the group is made up of strangers, the students' levels of linguistic anxiety increase, and vice versa, according to the findings of Effiong (2015, p. 18) and Kurihara (2008), among others (cited in Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 80).

In light of this, the selection of the most appropriate class dynamics by teachers must be made taking into account the characteristics of the students. In this sense, small groups and cooperative learning strategies appear to be beneficial in reducing language anxiety.

3.2.2.2. Teacher performance

As can be extracted from the qualitative studies of Wörde (2003), Ewald (2007) and Suleimenova (2013), the classroom environment and the way the teacher directs the class and interacts with students are also factors that influence students' linguistic anxiety experiences.

Rodríguez and Delgado (2008, pp. 212-213) highlighted some behaviors of teachers that can raise the level of linguistic anxiety of students: the requirement that students speak in front of their peers in the target language, the use of unannounced assessment tests, communicating with students exclusively in the foreign language, and being unfriendly, sarcastic, or authoritarian in front of them. In this way, the research by Khattak, Jamshed,

Ahmad and Baig (2011, p.1600) showed that teacher corrections can make students feel nervous in class. Likewise, Sánchez and Sánchez (2017, p. 161), citing Piniel (2006), point out that some error correction practices can generate anxiety in students such as lack of clarity of the correction or constant interruption every time an error is detected; the latter also corroborated by Katayama (2007). On the contrary, Young (1990) found that teachers can reduce student anxiety by being pleasant, patient, calm, having a sense of humour, not giving excessive importance to mistakes, favouring group work, and allowing have students respond voluntarily in class instead of asking directly for their answers (Rodríguez and Delgado, 2008, p. 213).

Given this, it is evident that teachers can increase and reduce language anxiety in students through their own performance. Teachers can favor the creation of a classroom environment that reduces students' experiences of linguistic anxiety. It is up to them to contribute positively or negatively to this phenomenon.

3.2.2.3. Competitiveness in the classroom

The existing competitiveness within the group-class has also been pointed out as a variable that can produce linguistic anxiety. In this regard, Arnold (2000, p. 82) collects the contributions of Scarcella and Oxford (1992) and Bailey (1983). The former point out that competitiveness can influence anxiety but does not affect all types of students equally. For these authors, the emotional meaning of competitiveness for each individual depends on aspects such as learning style, the specificity of competitiveness or the demands and rewards of the environment. For the latter, competitiveness influences linguistic anxiety when the learner compares himself with his peers or with an idealized self-representation that can hardly be achieved.

To avoid the emergence of linguistic anxiety among students, teachers should use cooperative strategies rather than those that can lead to peer comparisons. On the contrary, competitiveness in the classroom must be understood as improvement, making students aware that they must be better than what they were but no one else.

3.2.2.4. Type of activities

When learning a language all the activities that can take part are not perceived or enjoyed in the same way by all students. In accordance with this, Koch and Terrel (1991),

cited in Rodríguez and Delgado (2008, p. 213), pointed out the existence of great variability in the reactions of students to different activities. While some students perceived any activity as comfortable, others as stressful. Despite this, they found that the most stressful are speaking activities in front of their classmates. Young (1992) also pointed out that oral tasks are, of the four language skills, the ones that generate the most anxiety from both the students' and teachers' perspectives. A fact also underlined by Horwitz et al. (1986), MacIntyre (1995), Price (1991) and Young (1991), among others (cited in Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 82).

Although specialized literature has shown that speaking tasks are the ones that cause the most anxiety in students, different studies indicate that the activities that seek the development of the rest of the competencies are not free to produce stressful experiences in students. Therefore, it is vital to be aware of this phenomenon in all types of activities.

3.3. Consequences of linguistic anxiety in the teaching and learning process

Like any other phenomenon, linguistic anxiety has implications for the teaching educational process, so it is vital to know the main consequences attributed to it. In this regard, Král'ová (2016, pp. 20-21) affirms that learners have their own individual characteristics and, therefore, signs of linguistic anxiety may differ in their manifestations or degree of severity. A fact that Young (1991, p. 434) also includes in his conclusions.

3.3.1. Effects on learning and performance in the target language

There is a broad consensus among researchers when it comes to attributing to this affective component a disruptive effect on the teaching and learning process. Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 86), numerous authors state that linguistic anxiety negatively affects acquisition and learning, as well as performance in the target language.

With respect to acquisition, Krashen (1985), Zheng (2008) and Suleimenova (2013) highlight that linguistic anxiety acts as a distraction element that makes students not perceive the inputs of the language goal and, therefore, that their learning does not progress. As Král'ová (2016, p. 19) recalls, Eysenck (1979) concluded that anxiety distracts the learner's attention, reducing the efficiency of cognitive functioning. As regards performance, the study by Woodrow (2006) showed the negative influence of linguistic anxiety on the oral production, and concluded that the level of anxiety is a factor that predicts student oral results.

In this sense, avoiding participating in tasks is one of the most common reactions of students when they feel anxious, with the corresponding lack of opportunities for practicing the foreign language and, consequently, for learning (Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 87). Other researchers have underlined that anxiety not only affects the final performance in the target language, but also influences the decisions and attitudes that students adopt with respect to the proposed tasks, such as the lower degree of commitment to them (Horwitz et al., 1986; Suleimenova, 2013).

Thanks to these studies, it can be affirmed that linguistic anxiety has effects on both learning and performance in the target language. In addition, it also influences students when making decisions, or even their attitude towards the language.

3.3.2. Effects on the physical and mental well-being of the learner

When we consider the effects of linguistic anxiety, we detect a series of psycho-physiological and behavioral responses of students, frustration as a result of increased time spent on the target language without improving results, and delayed behaviors in task execution (Horwitz et al., 1986, pp. 126-127).

Thus, students who experience linguistic anxiety have to handle the psycho-physiological manifestations that such anxiety generates while dealing with the frustration of poor production in the target language. Andrade and Williams (2009), cited in Siagto-Wakat (2016, p. 2), state that linguistic anxiety involves a series of physical reactions such as increased heart rate, a sensation of heat or sweating, flushed cheeks (also exposed by Bekleyen, 2009, p.670), as well as a feeling of a lump in the throat and other emotional reactions such as blank mind and lack of concentration. According to Young (1991, p. 430), symptoms of linguistic anxiety can also manifest as difficulties with intonation and rhythm, distortion of sounds, blockage, forgetfulness of newly learned vocabulary, or refusal to speak.

Students who experience language anxiety suffer from a wide range of symptoms related to their own physical and mental well-being. In this sense, teachers must identify them and provide students with techniques and tools to reduce their influence on language learning.

3.3.3. Effects on the evaluation results

Linguistic anxiety can influence the results of assessment exercises, especially when the tests assess oral skills (Horwitz et al., 1986). Studies that have considered linguistic anxiety in relation to oral assessment tests show a large negative effect. Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 88), in an oral test the quality of students' speech is affected. According to Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 126), in general, after the tests, students realize the errors made by their nervousness. Nevertheless, when they are aware of it during the assessment test, both errors and anxiety can increase. The conclusion reached by Aydin (2008, p. 134) also points in the same direction.

Thus, it can be stated that anxiety before evaluation tests considerably affects the levels of achievement in the target language, performance, competence and abilities of students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers receive specific training to better understand this phenomenon.

3.3.4. Effects on the emotional dimension of the learner

As has been previously reflected, when learning a foreign language many factors can intervene which, in turn, can influence the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety. In this way, oral presentations, test interviews, answers to improvised questions, interactions with other students with greater proficiency in the foreign language, etc. are triggers of linguistic anxiety which interact with other variables such as the pedagogical styles of the teacher or the characteristics of the student, generating a series of uncomfortable situations in the classroom. Does compromise the academic performance but also the emotional component of the student can be affected by experiencing a decrease in their level of self-efficacy and self-esteem (Sánchez and Sánchez, 2017, p. 163).

Zheng (2008) and Horwitz et al., (1986) have also highlighted the effects of linguistic anxiety on affectivity, arguing that motivation, self-esteem and self-confidence decrease in students who perform deficient interventions and experience unpleasant situations in the classroom. The findings of Izadi and Atashened (2012) also evidenced the negative relationship between linguistic anxiety and self-esteem and self-confidence. Likewise, Dörnyei (1994, p. 281) emphasizes that linguistic anxiety decreases the student's interest in the target language, which is corroborated by Huang and Hung (2012), Sheen (2008),

Tsiplakides and Keramida (2009) and Wong (2009) (cited in Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 89). Additionally, students may suffer isolation within the class-group since classmates may decline working together due to their low level in oral competence (Sánchez and Sánchez, 2017, p. 170). For Siagto-Wakat (2016, p. 10) the most significant consequences of linguistic anxiety are precisely those effects on the personal dimension of the learner.

Thus, it is clear that linguistic anxiety negatively influences the emotional dimension of the learner, since it reduces the levels of affectivity, motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-confidence, interest in the language and integration in the group.

3.3.5. Avoidance behaviors when learning the target language

As previously anticipated, another of the effects attributed to the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety is the generation in students of behavior that seeks to avoid the practices and learning environments where they experience such anxiety. MacIntyre and Gardner (1991), cited in Bekleyen (2009, p. 672) and Král'ová (2016, p. 20) point out that anxious students sit in the last rows of the class trying not to be required by the teacher to participate in classroom activities. Horwitz et al. (1986, p. 126) underline that these learners also tend to avoid the use of complex oral messages or the writing of long compositions in the target language. For their part, Sánchez and Sánchez (2017, pp. 170-171) affirm that, in the absence of strategies to overcome anxiety symptoms, they may drop out of courses.

When students experience linguistic anxiety, they do not feel confident to use the target language, so they avoid those tasks where communication is required instead of using strategies or techniques that help them overcome the situation.

3.4. Strategies to Reduce Language Anxiety in the Classroom

3.4.1. Teachers' strategies

When learners face experiences of linguistic anxiety, teachers can guide students to learn to handle the situation that causes anxiety or create a less stressful learning context. But any case requires that the teacher be previously aware of its existence (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 131). According to Ahmad et al. (2013, pp. 91-108) the first recommendation to reduce linguistic anxiety is also that teachers admit its existence and its effects on student performance.

It is essential that teachers facilitate effective conditions for language learning, ensuring that the classroom atmosphere encourages interaction among students without them experiencing anxiety (Goñi Osácar, 2019, p. 92). Thus, promoting a relaxed and comfortable environment should be a priority for language teachers (Kavanoz, 2017, p. 663). In essence, the interpersonal relationships between the educational agents involved have a great influence in creating the relaxed atmosphere necessary to learn the target language (Effiong, 2015, p. 5). Dörnyei (1994, p. 281) also states that student anxiety can be reduced by creating a learning climate of support and acceptance and by avoiding harsh treatment or excessive criticism. For their part, Rodríguez and Delgado (2008, p. 212) concluded that promoting a pleasant learning atmosphere in class can reduce the anxiety of the learners. As Arnold (2000) points out, the time and effort devoted to establishing a solid affective background of the group-class in the long term will produce a satisfactory experience at the interpersonal, linguistic and pedagogical level, both for the teacher and for the students (pp. 174-175).

As regards strategies to correct mistakes made by learners, the research by Crichton et al. (2014) showed that the corrections that take into account not to damage the image of the students before the rest of the class avoid experiences of anxiety and contribute to increasing oral participation. Selective error correction also turns out to be a useful strategy to promote oral performance and reduce anxiety among students (Sato, 2003). In turn, Soler (2008) highlights the importance of not interrupting the student and not personalizing the mistakes made in the classroom. Likewise, Price (1991), Bekleyen (2009, p. 672) and Hsu and Huang (2017, p. 38) point out that positive feedback and teacher support can generate confidence in students, motivate them to participate more actively and thus reduce the anxiety that may exist in the classroom.

As previously anticipated, the methodology and classroom dynamics influence the level of anxiety in the classroom. In this sense, work in small groups favors suitable contexts for learners to work on oral expression (Sato, 2003). As Lahuerta (2014, p. 53) and Rodríguez and Delgado (2008, p. 216) point out, working in small groups or pairs with known speakers does not generate much stress since students feel more competent and more comfortable communicating orally in a foreign language. Following Goñi Osácar (2019, p. 94), intergroup and intragroup synergies encourages students to communicate in the second language and manage their anxiety (Strausset et al., 2011 and Tani-Fukichi, 2005, cited in Effiong, 2015, p. 4). In this respect, Arnold (2000, pp. 246-250) points out that working in cooperative groups

translates into a reduction in anxiety and an increase in participation and learning. Along these lines, Dörnyei (1994, p.279) highlights that cooperative learning drives to experiencing less anxiety, greater participation, positive attitudes, and cohesive relationships between classmates and teacher.

The materials used by the teacher also play a significant role in linguistic anxiety. In this sense, Ahmad et al. (2013, p. 108), referring to the texts used in the classroom, affirm that the teacher must choose them taking into account that they include an appropriate vocabulary, familiar topics and motivating instructions that increase the self-confidence of the students.

Another type of strategies that teachers can use to promote student performance and reduce linguistic anxiety are the so-called motivational strategies (Sánchez and Sánchez, 2017, p. 164). In this regard, Dörnyei (1994, pp. 280-282) presents a battery made up of around thirty proposals aimed at increasing students' motivation to learn a second language.

Among other effective strategies, Atas (2015) concluded that the use of theatre or dramatization in foreign language teaching favours positive feelings and increases the probability that learners engage in language training (p. 968). For his part, Silva (2005, p. 1029) stated that using songs in foreign language teaching decreases linguistic anxiety because music can create a more relaxed work environment and be an element of extrinsic motivation. With respect to assessment, Young (1991, p. 433) points out that to reduce anxiety, teachers must create fair tests that accurately reflect instruction carried out in the foreign language classroom. Another strategy recommended by Madsen, Harold, Bruce, Brown, and Randall (1991) is to allow students to practice the type of tests beforehand (Ibidem, p. 434). For his part, Rubio-Alcalá (2002, p. 182) concluded that positive re-evaluation reduces anxiety before an oral exam (p. 176).

Finally, other actions or strategies collected by Arnold (2000, pp. 85-86) that teachers can carry out to reduce linguistic anxiety in their classroom are:

- > Provide learners with a better understanding of anxiety.
- > Foster self-esteem and self-confidence in learners.
- > Create an adequate learning atmosphere.
- > Decrease competitiveness.
- > Make class goals clear and make students develop strategies to achieve them.

- > Offer a range of activities in relation to the variety of learning styles present in class.
- > Allow students to communicate in the target language with non-perfect standards.
- > Promote relaxation with music, humor or games.
- > Create reasonable tests with known and unambiguous types of exercises.
- > Help students to realistically evaluate their performance.
- > Offer meaningful rewards that contribute to promoting the use of the language.
- > Encourage learners to talk to themselves positively and rethink negative ideas.

3.4.2. Learners' strategies

Compared with research on the strategies used by teachers to manage anxiety about learning a second language, not many studies have focused on the resources used by the students themselves. The reason for this fact may be that the role of leadership and the ability to manage most of the aspects related to the educational process correspond to the educator.

Most language learners intuitively think that the most effective "remedies" to alleviate or reduce language anxiety are: intellectual in nature, intensive practice of the target language; emotional in nature, something that serves to reduce their psychological inhibition in relation to foreign language communication (MacIntyre, 1995; cited in Král'ová, 2016, pp. 41-42).

Preparation, positive thinking, peer support, and relaxation are the most common learners' strategies to manage their language anxiety. That is, four of the five categories in which Kondo and Ying-Ling (2004) classified them. The fifth corresponds to the renunciation strategy, which may imply abandoning the studies. In this sense, Bekleyen (2009, p. 670) highlighted the positive correlation between language practice and anxiety level, and the effectiveness of positive thinking for the successful development of language skills. More recently, Qashoa (2014, p. 64) suggests a series of strategies that include: raising the level of self-confidence, improving prior knowledge, developing positive attitudes towards possible errors, using the peer correction technique, relaxation exercises, and more practice and preparation.

The series of strategies that students have to manage their linguistic anxiety is not as broad as that of teachers. Nevertheless, all of them (positive thinking, peer support, relaxation, etc.) have been shown to be effective. In light of this, it would be advisable to train students to use them when they experience such phenomenon.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In language classrooms, it is essential to take into account the emotional aspects of students to achieve an effective and enriching teaching and learning process. As Goleman (1996, p. 29) says, the student works with two minds, the one that thinks and the one that feels.

From humanistic psychology in the sixties, the affective dimension of the language learner has been gaining ground over time. At present, its importance is reflected, for example, in the document *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* of the Council of Europe (2002).

Among the individual affective factors that have been addressed in the specialized literature are motivation, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-confidence, introversion and extraversion, and learning styles. As it has been pointed out in this work, a wide series of investigations have amply demonstrated that all these aspects are directly related to linguistic anxiety, the object of study of this Master's Thesis.

The specialized literature has also highlighted that linguistic anxiety is a complicated phenomenon generated by a multiplicity of interrelated factors that can come, on the one hand, from the student himself and, on the other, from the characteristics of each learning context. The investigations carried out have been concerned, fundamentally, with measuring this type of anxiety and analyzing its sources and consequences, as well as certain strategies that could be useful for its management.

In this sense, the review of the studies carried out on this type of specific anxiety allows us to verify its relevance in language teaching, since the experiences of linguistic anxiety can take place in the classroom regardless of the language in question, the country where the language is studied, the student's age or level of language proficiency.

In this Master's Dissertation, the phenomenon of linguistic anxiety has been considered especially relevant in learning English as a foreign language, which explains why it has been widely investigated. Thus, it has been considered pertinent to build knowledge about linguistic anxiety, its possible causes and effects, and strategies to avoid or reduce it, since it can contribute to improving the teaching and learning process of the English language

and, consequently, favor a later lifelong relationship between the student and the English language.

It is essential for teachers to be aware of the possible presence of this type of anxiety and its effects. Otherwise, in the absence of explicit recognition, sufficient corrective measures could not be articulated. In this sense, and taking into account that students associate more causes and consequences to their linguistic anxiety than those perceived by teachers, it could be interesting for the latter group to gather information from the former to build a global vision of the classroom reality in relation to this type of anxiety.

It might also be wise to consider offering students specific workshops or courses aimed at enhancing communicative competence by addressing a broad audience. Feeling competent when it comes to expressing yourself in front of others by having strategies and some oral practice could reduce the linguistic anxiety that some students experience in English classes. Furthermore, the development of this communicative competence would provide students with greater benefits for the rest of their lives than its usefulness in foreign language subjects.

It is important for language teachers to consider the possibility that certain personality profiles may be more vulnerable to experiencing anxiety about learning a foreign language. Although teachers identify that shyness and insecurity traits may be related to this type of anxiety, they should also consider the possibility that students with good command of the target language and a perfectionist personality are susceptible to experiencing linguistic anxiety.

Nevertheless, once said this, it can be difficult for teachers to perceive the extent of linguistic anxiety in their classrooms in relation to its negative effects. It would be advisable to transmit to all teachers the importance of this type of anxiety in order to keep it in mind in their programming and teaching practice. Thus, language anxiety should be addressed in university training programs for teachers and receive the same attention as other factors involved in the teaching and learning process, such as student motivation. In this way, future teachers will be able to apply the appropriate tools to avoid or reduce it in their teaching work.

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