

Investigating Social Anxiety among First Year LMD Students of English at Béjaia University and Coping Strategies

Nadia IDRI, Abderrahmane Mira
University, Béjaia

Abstract

The research into the relationship of anxiety to Foreign language Learning (FLL) has provided mixed and confusing results because of the existence of numerous variables that can affect learning. Additionally, many works also dealt with Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), its causes and the way to cope with it. However, few of them treat its social dimension in English as a Foreign language (EFL) context. This paper comes to explore one of the affective factors that can be existent in such contexts and that university learners live and experience the feeling of anxiety when having to do with social relationships in an EFL class. Our topic treats social anxiety engendered when learners have to put English in use. Having to use language in communicative situations and having to interact with peers is what we suppose to be the causes of social evaluative anxiety. For this, we used participant observation of six sessions with one group of 25 students. This makes the method purely qualitative and based on an ethnographic approach. Results showed that interaction mainly with the teacher is more significantly bound to social anxiety compared to peer interaction. In addition, learners displayed social fear from speaking in public mainly because they fear negative evaluation and judgment. They justify this by the menacing nature of language speaking and they can be subject of negative judgment especially when making errors.

Résumé

La recherche menée sur la relation entre l'anxiété et la langue étrangère a fourni des résultats mitigés et source de confusion en raison de l'existence de nombreuses variables qui peuvent affecter l'apprentissage. En outre, de nombreux travaux ont également traité l'anxiété en langue étrangère, ses causes et la manière d'y faire face. Cependant, peu d'entre eux traitent sa dimension sociale dans le contexte de l'anglais langue étrangère. Cet article explore l'un des facteurs affectifs qui peuvent être existants dans de tels contextes et que les apprenants universitaires vivent. Ces derniers éprouvent le sentiment d'anxiété lorsqu'ils sont dans des relations sociales dans une classe d'anglais langue étrangère. Notre sujet traite l'anxiété sociale engendrée lorsque les apprenants doivent mettre l'anglais en usage. Nous supposons que les causes de l'anxiété sociale sont liées à l'utilisation de la langue dans des situations de communication et le fait d'interagir avec les pairs. Nous avons utilisé l'observation participante de six séances avec un groupe de 25 étudiants. Cela rend la méthode purement qualitative et basée sur une approche ethnographique. Les résultats ont démontré que l'interaction, principalement avec l'enseignant, est particulièrement liée à l'anxiété sociale par rapport à l'interaction avec les pairs. En outre, les apprenants ont exhibé une peur sociale de parler en public, essentiellement parce qu'ils craignent l'évaluation et le jugement négatifs. Ils justifient cela par la nature menaçante du parler et ils peuvent faire l'objet d'un jugement négatif surtout quand ils commettent des erreurs.

Introduction

After decades of parallel, but separated studies on anxiety in clinical psychology, Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) have built a framework and made a relation between them in FLL. From this perspective, they were the first who introduced the construct of Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) to the educational domain. This construct, we label social evaluative anxiety or social anxiety in this paper is our main concern. The concept of FNE is simply referred to as the fear of being laughed at (Brown, 2004). Our target is to test the significance of social relations, interaction and language use in communicative situations as sources of social anxiety. That is, we need first to diagnose the existence of social anxiety and test our hypothesis about the sources we considered of this phenomenon.

Approaching the Concepts of Anxiety, Social Anxiety and FNE

The term anxiety is not specific to language learning. Its hybrid limelight urges us introduce anxiety from a clinical viewpoint; its origin. In our vision, we try to think of FLA as an affective variable. That is; anxiety is considered as psycho-physiological phenomenon where both inherent features and apparent ones make its explanation. Anxiety can have various forms. Our work is more invested in its social nature. That is the reason behind focusing social anxiety. Further, before treating social anxiety from a FLL point of view, we need to introduce its clinical consideration. To begin with, most individuals who suffer from social anxiety described a strong fear that they might do or say the wrong thing (Newth, 2003: 18). That is, they fear from being negatively evaluated when they (or think they) say or do the wrong thing. In this, Ingman (1999: 7) cited that Leitenberg (1990) defines social anxiety as feelings of apprehension, self-consciousness, and emotional distress in anticipated or actual social-evaluative situations. She added that this type of anxiety occurs in situations where individuals want to create a favorable impression but have doubts about their abilities to do so. They believe that such situations involve inspection or evaluation by others, and that negative evaluation is a possible and likely outcome (ibid). Social anxiety has many forms. Concepts like shyness, performance anxiety, social phobia, social withdrawal, public speaking anxiety, dating anxiety, and social inhibition are part of it. Concerning social phobia, the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) defines social phobia as a marked and persistent fear of social and performance situations in which embarrassment may occur. When referring to academic achievement, Storch, Eisenberg, Roberti and Barlas (2003: 411) associated social phobia with significant psychosocial impairment and distress including poor academic achievement. They added that socially phobic youth are at risk to be peer rejected (La Greca and Stone, 1993).

Indeed, social anxiety; also called social phobia, was first introduced by Geen (cited in Idri, 2006: 6). For Borrill (2002), when someone suffers from social anxiety disorder, he tends to be extremely anxious. They added that individuals who have this kind of anxiety worried a lot about what others think of them and how they will be evaluated. Later, Newth (2003) pointed out that individuals who suffer from social phobia might express a strong fear when they say or do the wrong thing. The component of social anxiety was first defined by Watson and Friend (1969) as "an apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (cited in Kitano, 2001). According to this definition, students who suffer from social evaluative anxiety often keep silent and avoid initiating conversations using the target language. This can be to avoid making any possible mistakes or receiving negative evaluations and criticism from their teachers and peers. As learners fear being worse than others in language studies (Abu-

Rabia, 2002), they adopt the action of avoiding necessary risks (Umemot, 2001) and keeping silent. They become ready to avoid any situation that holds any potential for criticism. This makes it an observable behaviour in the language class.

Additionally, Brown (2004) related FNE to assessing concern and worry about negative evaluation by others. He added other related terms like Social Avoidance and Distress in New Situations (SAD-New), which measures, for example, social avoidance and discomfort in novel interactions with peers; and Social Avoidance and Distress in General Situations (SAD General), which assesses distress in general social interactions. All of these aspects make the core of our project linking them to the sources of social evaluative anxiety in EFL contexts. Our starting point is undoubtedly Horwitz et al. (1986) who brought out anxiety to FLL. They mentioned that in the clinical experience, the subjective feelings, psycho-physiological symptoms, and behavioural responses of the anxious foreign language learner are essentially the same as for any specific anxiety (pp. 126-127). To establish the link between FNE and FLL, we can quote from Horwitz et al.'s article (1986: 127):

They experience apprehension, worry, even dread. They have difficulty concentrating, become forgetful, sweat, and have palpitations. They exhibit avoidance behavior such as missing class and postponing homework. Clinical experience with foreign language students in university classes and at the Learning Skills Center (LSC) at the University of Texas also suggests several discrete problems caused by anxiety and illustrates poignantly how these problems can interfere with language learning.

When considering social anxiety, many researchers approached performance anxieties among which FNE is part. Aida, for instance defined it as “*the apprehension about others evaluations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively*” (Aida, 1994). According to this latter, students who experience FNE often sit passively in class adopting the action of avoidance and keeping silent. This makes of it an observable behaviour in a foreign language class; a detail we focused upon in our observation sessions. In the foreign language context, negative evaluation can be derived from both teachers and peers either when engaged in social relationships or have to communicate in the foreign language. Generally, students who give much attention to the impressions others are forming of them are more exposed to this kind of anxiety, because they are afraid of making mistakes while performing in the foreign language. This is more likely to lead them to avoid initiating conversations and minimize their participation in the foreign language class, and they just listen to others' talk.

We hold the assumption that social context can influence the level of language anxiety. A competitive classroom atmosphere, difficult interactions with teachers, risks of embarrassments, opportunity for contact with members of the target language group, and tension among ethnic groups may all influence language anxiety. Research has shown that learners with higher level of language anxiety have the tendency to avoid interpersonal communication more often than less anxious learners. This issue becomes even more prominent when the authentic communicative competence is emphasised in current language education (Zheng, 2008). MacIntyre & Gardner (1991) pointed out in this that anxious learners do not communicate as often as more than relaxed learners.

In a foreign language classroom, the instructor can have difficulties to diagnose social anxiety and this can cause difficulties to cope with it. In fact, Horwitz et al. (1986) stated that FLA symptoms are the same as for any specific anxiety (p.126). Therefore, these are the same

for FNE. In classroom, symptoms like physical and behavioural ones are visible. The instructor may notice them. Physical symptoms may appear as palpitations (Horwitz et al., 1986: 126), muscle tensions (Newth, 2003: 6), and also fleeing eye contact (Idri, 2006: 88). Then, behavioural ones are characterized by avoidance, skipping classes and postponing home works (Horwitz et al., 1986: 126). Unfortunately, psychic ones are not visible. Only the learner himself may notice them. Such symptoms as lack of power and feeling of insecurity (Delmont and Lucht, 1995: 115 in Idri, 2006: 86), forgetfulness (Horwitz et al. 1986: 126 and Argaman and Abu Rabia, 2002: 148), and frequent nightmares when sleeping (Newth, 2003: 6) are only known if the individual/learner talks about them. This was just an overview about the possible symptoms. For more details about the possible symptoms see Newth (2003).

Symptoms of Fear of Negative Evaluation

Horwitz et al (1986) claimed that fear of negative evaluation' symptoms are similar to any specific anxiety (p.126). Thus, Fear of negative evaluation has been associated with a large number of negative reactions that may be classified as: Physical, Psychological, Behavioral and verbal symptoms.

1. Physical Symptoms: can include rapid heartbeat (Horwitz et al, 1986, p.126), muscle tensions, dry mouth, excessive perspiration (Newth, 2003: 6), and avoidance of eye contact (Idri, 2006, p.88).

2. Psychological and Symptoms: are those symptoms that are not observed unless learners reveal them. For instance, Forgetfulness (Horwitz et al, 1986, p.126), frequent nightmares when sleeping (Newth, 2003, p.6). In addition to embarrassment, feeling of helplessness, fear, going blank, poor memory and so on.

3. Behavioral Symptoms: Characterized by Skipping classes (Horwitz et al, 1986: 126), and sitting passively in the classroom (Sarason, : 449).

4. Verbal Symptoms: we have speech disturbance (hesitation, mispronunciation and silence (Matsumot, Kudoh, Schere & Wallbot, 1988).

Problem Statement and Methodology

We have been working on the phenomenon of anxiety in EFL contexts within the LMD system since its launching in 2004/2005. Based on Horwitz et al. (1986:16), we share their belief that FNE *"is not limited to test-taking situations; rather, it may occur in any social, evaluative situation ... Unique among academic subject matters, foreign languages require continual evaluation by the only fluent speaker in the class, the teacher. Students may also be acutely sensitive to the evaluations- real or imagined - of their peers"*.

Such a statement implies that foreign languages are more anxiety-provoking especially that they need on-going judgment and they possess a social characteristic. This is one argument behind considering social anxiety here.

Therefore, this study aims at shedding light on this phenomenon in relation to its social dimension in the Algerian EFL context. The study was conducted in response of one of our Master II students who reported:

"We faced problems in speaking at ease between peers and mainly in classes using the English language during our first year. The reason for this

was that we were really anxious as students when it comes to use English as a means of communication. A couple of days ago, through an experience lived with a group of about 50 students; I played a role of a teacher. Then, I noticed at the beginning that the students avoided speaking even though the teacher incited them to speak. After about an hour, I told them that I am not a teacher, but a Master II student. Then, I noticed that students showed more willingness to communicate. Hence, the problem seemed to be related to the teacher's presence. After that, I asked about the reason behind, their answers were all the same "we felt really anxious", we cannot speak in front of everybody, especially when the teacher is present. (Chabane, 2010)

This statement and this experience our student wrote in his master thesis we supervised in 2010 incited us think of the social dimension of anxiety in an EFL classroom mainly when they are in their first year. Our works on anxiety provide us with a continuous feedback from the learners about the situation of Teaching English as a Foreign language (TEFL) in the Algerian university mainly within the LMD system. All the longitudinal research we are still doing on anxiety takes Béjaia University as a case. This makes our works take a longitudinal dimension (c.f. (Idri, 2006; Idri, 2011b; Idri, 2012; Idri, 2013). To guide this study, our work is based on the following research questions:

- What is the nature of FLA that characterize Béjaia EFL classes?
- Is this anxiety related to social interaction and social use of EFL?
- Do the teacher-student or/and the student-student relationships influence the degree of social anxiety?
- Does negative judgment and public error correction engender social anxiety?

Since the work is qualitative through ethnographic research and a participant observation method, our work is a hypothesis generating.

Participants

We worked on 25 first year LMD students learning EFL at Abderrahmane Mira University. Their age range varies between 16 and 34 years old but most of them are aged between 18 and 23 years old.

Method and Procedures for data collection

We used the participant observation method with one class during six sessions, once a week. This observation was participant, direct and uncontrolled. Its aim is to establish an ethnographic method through direct contact with students because we need not only to converse but to learn from the respondents' perceptions and lived experiences in their real class situations. We could frame the sources in a better way through a face-to-face meeting with individual participants where we belong to the same group. This helped in getting highly natural and spontaneous information about our subjects' opinions, attitudes, beliefs, real class experiences and intentions. The ethnographic method using this participant observation can mirror out the classroom to consider our variables and find answers to our research questions. This is more likely appropriate to suggest ways to cope with anxiety generated by social tension in the classroom mainly when related to language use.

Results of the Observation

The participant observation method was used to navigate the topic and delimit its boundaries. We would like in these lines to highlight the origins we found prominent and that affect our group of students. This should more or less be done in accordance to the sources of social anxiety we relate principally to social relationships and interaction between peers and the teacher, language use in communicative situations and public judgement. Our sources are summarized in social interaction, communicative situations, language in use and classroom interaction. Hence, we have categorized our findings into the following themes where results from the participant observation during the six sessions are discussed.

We have followed a six-week observation of group 01 in 2012 attending the course of research methodology where study skills are focused in the first semester. There were three sections divided into 15 groups. In what follows, we present the dates of the sessions and the focussed activities and skills as well.

Table 01: Procedure for Data Collection Using the Observation Method

Week	Date	Activity	Focused Skill
01	November (11, 2012)	Personal Information Form + Introducing the Learners' Profile and Environment Activity (homework)	Writing.
02	November (18, 2012)	Discussing the Learners' Profile and Environment Activity + Responding to the Learners' enquiries concerning the lecture	Listening Speaking
03	November (25, 2012)	Free topic to present and act an imaginary conversation + students' feedback on the teaching method (interaction)	Interactive tasks (speaking and listening)
04	December (02, 2012)	December (02, 2012) Free choice of articles (newspapers or magazines) with guided questions	Interactive tasks (speaking and listening)
05	December (09, 2012)	Free choice of articles (newspapers or magazines) with guided questions Skimming and Scanning: finding out main ideas, supporting ideas and key words from written material	Reading Speaking (discussion) Listening Note-taking
06	December (16, 2012)	Description of figures and pictures (transforming visual charts and pictures into a text.	Reading Writing(descriptive) Speaking/listening (discussion)

Week 01: November (11, 2012): *Personal Information Form + Introducing the Learners' Profile and Environment Activity (homework)*

During the first week of our participant observation , we introduced the activity to the students. They were required to fill the same form we labelled "the Personal Information Form. As concerns the teacher's role, she started first explaining the nature of a FLC as distinct and different from any other class. The aim behind is to foster their thinking and direct it in the direction of beliefs and attitudes towards the FL and the class as well. The teacher also introduced the concept of evaluation to prepare the ground for understanding. Then, the form was introduced.

As far as the form is concerned and as its name suggests, as described in our previous section, it permits us collect data on our learners' characteristics which is also the population under investigation. Prior information on their socio-cultural background as well as the

personality one, are explicitly addressed. It should be made clear here that we did not urge students to respond to the activity just for the sake of research, but it was implemented as a pedagogical activity to assess the learners' entering behaviour and establish a secure contact with the learners. This is an important detail we should refer to for the sake of respecting the ethic principle required in research. When presenting the form, we explained the utility of every, single information that helps in the choice of the method and content to employ when teaching. Additionally, we could diagnose a number of the linguistic difficulties learners possess. We also added a free space for learners to express themselves on the one hand and diagnose their language proficiency (writing, vocabulary, spelling and grammar) on the other. Moreover, the rate of students who filled the blank might refer to their positive attitudes and high motivation towards the form itself.

After offering about 45 minutes to explain and load the form, students have been asked nine questions divided into two categories. This is a follow up of the previous activity but students just copied them from the board in this first session. This task was homework because of the long time needed to provide authentic and pensive answers. We also explained the questions, their aims and the link between them to help students respond properly.

The following details were reported:

- **Motivation:** Seemed average all along the session.
- **Language Proficiency:** The group expressed negative attitudes especially in speaking and vocabulary.
- **Task:** Positive attitudes and interest in it.

In the observation sheet, we reported:

Students were very quiet, attentive to all what I say. They used paralinguistic features using their heads to show agreement, their facial expressions that show easiness. However, they showed hesitation to ask me for help and preferred sharing their inquiries with peers more than me as a teacher. I made my observation discrete and let them interact because I preferred to let them feel secure especially that they did not create noise”.

Week 02: November (18, 2012): Discussing the Learners' Profile and Environment Activity + Responding to the Learners' Enquiries Concerning the Lecture

Students were asked nine questions by the end of the previous session and were given one week to accomplish the task thoroughly. She explained them and students did not ask questions about them. The instructor, then, asked her learners about their views on the questions. They were all positive saying that the questions developed a good feeling in them. They felt that the instructor perceives them as an individual in the classroom and not a mere learner as the object of the classroom. They added that this is the first time they see such a method in their foreign. However, not all students accomplished the task and a negative event occurred we describe below.

As far as the task is concerned, it can be viewed as a continuum of the first activity. It is also beneficial for the instructor to know more about her learners' abilities, opportunities to learn, interests and needs. This is more likely to help in the choice of the method, the input to be used, error correction techniques and evaluation preferences. Its purpose was also a means to build up a good interaction and elevate confidence between the learners and the instructor-researcher. During the session, we could observe the following:

- **Motivation:** Low along the session.
- **Participation and Interaction:** Very low, very low communication in terms of amount and quality.
- **Language Proficiency:** The group expressed negative attitudes especially in speaking and vocabulary.
- **Task:** Not prepared by all students.

The teacher's feedback was evaluative for the group because of the considerable number of students who did not prepare the task at home. They were seven in number. The instructor showed a strict behaviour as a result and decided to consider this for evaluation. The students' reaction was their silence, gazing at her and their gestures revealed some worry (**c.f. Symptoms of FNE**). This event made students show a negative attitude towards the teacher (c/-). This is an important detail because evaluation seems here to affect the learners' emotional state and can engender FNE. Therefore, this can be a sign of the possibility to conduct research on this topic.

Week 03: November (18, 2012): *Free Topic to Present and Act an Imaginary Conversation (follow up) + students' feedback on the teaching method (interaction)*

The session enclosed an interactive task. Students were asked to write at home an imaginary conversation. The choice of the topic, the content, the language to be used (i.e. not necessarily the Received Pronunciation (RP)), and the interlocutors were open for us to respect the learners' interests. At the start, the instructor clarified the objective of the activity and the rules learners should follow. The teacher focused on the importance of the presentation and role playing their dialogues. However, students showed hesitation towards this activity the thing that caused a problem in starting up the session. Hence, the teaching strategy the instructor opted for to get started was talking overtly to students, emphasizing the fact that errors are not to be taken into account by the teacher and that students can use various materials (chairs, tables, desk, board, bag, pictures, etc.) in their presentations. The instructor also used a smooth manner and a tolerant input in her explanation. As a result, students manifested relaxation which was apparent on their faces. A remarkably surprising result reached in the group was that a considerable number of students raised their hands to act their conversations. At this level, the teacher chose a group. While presenting, the teacher was an observer; taking notes. These notes include students' errors, behaviour, choice and use of the language (degree of formality, selection of vocabulary, etc.). However, students displayed fear from this assessment technique especially that the instructor took notes of the learners' names. On the one hand, learners preferred to participate without the instructor's error consideration and this was shown when she said that making errors is tolerated. However, the teacher finds it useful and necessary to correct the learners' errors for learning to take place and to succeed in scoring them for the sake of ongoing evaluation. To overcome such a withdrawal from participation, the instructor shared her objective explicitly with them to reassure them. She, then, explained that these observations and notes she took are part of the students' development and the teacher's one as well. They serve also as a background to evaluate students accordingly and in an objective manner. During this session, an exceptional relaxed atmosphere was characterized. There was a sudden change in the students' behaviour. Most students were interested and students were in competition to present their works they estimated of value. The learners' topics were diverse, presented in different manners and sometimes in a creative way. After each presentation, the teacher gave the floor to the learners' comments and additions to make of the class learner-centred. After the classmates' contribution, the instructor enriched the comments to get involved in the task as part of the group. A remarkably significant detail we feel the need to evoke is about the students who did not perform because of time shortage. Such students opposed the fact that they did not get

a chance to perform. We believe that this is a unique event in EFL classes where learners insist to speak, act and play roles whereas the instructor is unable to satisfy all their needs because of the large number of students in each class; one of the limitations we face in our teaching classes.

In this activity, we realized what students can do if the learning environment is relaxing and if error correction is appropriate and not menacing. This experience shows also how important is the role of the teacher to foster learning and make the learner the centre of it. Problems of fear from social evaluation, error correction and language use could be coped with the teacher's relaxing techniques.

All in all, we can summarize the observations in:

- **Motivation:** High and competition existed between learners.
- **Participation:** Low and after the teacher's note-taking, there was withdrawal, but very high when learners felt less menaced.
- **Language Proficiency:** Students played their roles in a good way.
- **Task:** Hesitation at the beginning but engagement later.
- **Fear:** Students seemed afraid from role-playing and the teacher's notes she took but relaxed after the teacher's remedial strategies.

Week 04: *December (02, 2012.) Free choice of articles (newspapers or magazines) with guided questions*

This week focused on reading tips and strategies. Learners were asked to pick up a number of the articles of interest for them from newspapers and magazines. Questions were asked about the articles as part of the guided practice. Articles from different students were treated to practise the reading techniques we treated in the lecture theoretically with emphasis on the main and supporting ideas.

The session at hand introduced an activity whose main concern is reading tips with guided questions.

What was first observed was the case of late students. When they came in and realized that the teacher took notes of task fulfilment, they panicked. More precisely, three students were subject of probable negative evaluation:

The task fulfilment took around one hour and a half (the whole session). The motivation factor fluctuated from low to average because we observed that learners started with negative attitudes, showed hesitation to speak, many grammar and pronunciation errors. Students were less involved, silent and the environment was not that smooth because of the teacher being strict towards homework's accomplishment. As a result, interaction was passive, not vivid. Evaluation was considered and the instructor took notes of the students who did not accomplish their tasks at home at the beginning of the session. This can be another reason behind the students' reluctance in a tense atmosphere created by the teacher. However, the feedback was corrective during the session and the instructor corrected the students' errors implicitly to avoid tension. Evaluation was not the main concern of the teacher, but when students did not prepare the tasks at home, she was strict and related it to evaluation; the thing that may be perceived as a negative facet of the evaluation. The result of this was the students' silence and hesitation to participate preferring gazing at the teacher. We believe this event is more likely to contribute in creating distance between the learners and the instructor. In addition, relying on the literature of FLA and FNE, we could identify a number of symptoms and indicators of these phenomena which are:

- Students remained looking to their sheets and copybooks, their heads downward to avoid any kind of eye contact with the teacher.

- Students seemed restless as many of them were moving their legs non-stop, their hands as well and others were playing with their fingers and hair.
- Avoidance behaviour: hesitation to take risks and answer, avoid performing, avoid participation.

Hence, we can recapitulate the observed variables as:

- **Motivation:** fluctuated from low to average and negative attitudes at the beginning.
- **Participation:** Low due to the teacher's strict behavior towards task accomplishment.
- **Language Proficiency:** Hesitation to speak, many grammar and pronunciation errors.
- **Task:** Hesitation
- **Fear:** Late students panicked from note-taking of task fulfillment, fear from the tense environment created by the teacher.

Week 05: *Free choice of articles (newspapers or magazines) with guided questions Skimming and Scanning: finding out main ideas, supporting ideas and key words from written material.*

Students had positive attitudes as a whole. Their level was average. The environment was smooth the thing that resulted in a good interaction although the teacher's feedback was both corrective and evaluative because the teacher based her method on error correction and exchange of ideas. Students seemed to well prepare their tasks after the tense environment that experienced the previous week. As concerns anxiety, two students seemed to experience it. Student "A" was called upon to go to the board. He showed no readiness and uncertainty to do so and this was readable through his facial expressions. Another case in point was student "B" who put his tongue between his teeth when the instructor asked him to play the role of the teacher. She overtly expressed her shyness (one facet of social anxiety) justifying her hesitation by the difficulty of being a teacher and that her aim is not to become a future teacher. In the session, there was no volunteerism towards playing the role of the teacher and the teacher then called upon students randomly. According to Horwitz et al. (1986), being called upon to talk in the classroom is a source of FLA.

To sum up the session:

- **Motivation:** fluctuated from low to average and negative attitudes at the beginning.
- **Participation:** No volunteers, no participation.
- **Task:** Positive attitudes but fear to play the role of the teacher.
- **Fear:** From public speaking through playing the role of the teacher.

Week 06: December (16, 2012): Describing figures (tables, charts and trends)

This activity or set of activities are also part of the descriptive, academic style learners should acquire for future use in academic writing for research. This embeds transforming visual images into pieces of writing. For our group, there was a clear appreciation of the tasks and all students prepared them at home. Even though the session was during lunch time, students were involved in the activities. The first activity lasted for 45mn whereas the second one took about 30mn. We noticed a surprising improvement in listening and speaking. Students could successfully describe what they saw except for *student "A"* who had a problem in vocabulary. For interaction, students were more focusing on peer interaction than teacher-learner interaction. They talked to each other more than answering the instructor's questions. Evaluation was considered in this session to collect information about the learners'

works for the sake of ongoing evaluation. Hence, the teacher took notes on students' participation and work. This operation was implicitly held to avoid embarrassing the students, especially after observing that students are sensitive towards evaluation. Yet, negative evaluation seemed present when a student on the board was corrected loudly by the teacher because of the corrective nature of the feedback. It was fortunate that the student in question appreciated error correction and this may be due to his personality. Anxiety symptoms were revealed in *student "A"*. This student made a deep, long and loud breath. The teacher remarked this and inquired about the reason to help her overcome the problem. The student replied with an anxious voice: *"I'm unable to understand the vocabulary used in the activity"*.

Our overall observation can be summarized in:

- **Motivation:** High motivation and positive attitudes.
- **Participation:** High level of participation by all students.
- **Language Proficiency:** Surprising improvement in listening and speaking skills with the use of the appropriate vocabulary and descriptive style needed.
- **Task:** Prepared by all students at home, positive attitudes towards it.
- **Fear:** No fear since learners were totally engaged in peer-interaction in a totally learner-centered milieu. It happened only to one student as mentioned above in relation to vocabulary deficiency.

Discussions

We would like in these lines to highlight the rudiments we found prominent and that affect our group of students. This should more or less be done in accordance to the sources of social anxiety we consider, especially that research has not yet fully described the nature of language anxiety, or its potential sources that underlie its manifestations (Young, 1991). Our said sources are instructional, social and psychological because we believe that FLA is part of the individual learners' differences that should be inquired. In this, Ervin, for example, argued that *"the social and psychological incitements to imitation and to identification may account for some of the marked individual differences in (linguistic) attainment"* (1954: 10) (In Gardner, 1960: 9). Hence, for an effective learning and positive outcomes in FLL, there should be a social stimulation like a good learning environment and a positive interaction in the classroom. In our sessions, the influence of the environment plays an important role to lower tension and anxiety and makes the classroom more sociable and interactive is smooth it is and the reverse holds true (as evidenced in week 03 for positive results and negative in week 04).

Social Anxiety and Social Relationships in the EFL Classroom

Concerning negative evaluation in social relations in our study, there are many facets. There is the case of the student who played the role of the teacher, read the passage loudly and was corrected by her peers. She also manifested some kind of fear from the teacher's evaluation. She was blocked, stopped from time to time, but the instructor used her authority and asked students to stop loud correction and just take notes. The instructor here tried to put an end to a stressful situation. In this, Vasey and Dadds (2001: 415) explained clearly that those who are afraid of social negative evaluation tend to:

"develop insecure internal working models of social relationships on the other hand, come to view the [classroom] as unpredictable comfortless, and unresponsive. This

insecure internal representation may lead some [learners] to "shrink from their social worlds"

Many factors whether internal or external can be anxiety-breeding. For instance, large classes can obstruct learners to perform in public, but if they do or urged to do, they are more likely to fear evaluation and anticipate negative evaluation. This was also witnessed and overtly expressed by our participants. They mainly mentioned the problem of the large number of students and the inappropriate time allocated for sessions. In our six sessions, evaluation proved to be an influential variable that can engender social anxiety and so is public performance (the case of playing the role of the teacher and when the instructor takes notes for evaluation purposes).

Our approach is putting focus on the positive affect and the learners' psychological well-being. That is why; selecting the appropriate learning strategies of the affective kind is more likely to help learners cope with their anxiety and fear to be negatively evaluated either by peers or by the instructor. Affective learning strategies are classified by Oxford. From her work, we can quote:

If there is harmony between (a) the student (in terms of style and strategy preferences) and (b) the combination of instructional methodology and materials, then the student is likely to perform well, feel confident, and experience low anxiety. If clashes occur between (a) and (b), the student often performs poorly, feels unconfident, and experiences significant anxiety. (Oxford, 2003: 02)

Besides the affective learning strategies, we can in no way ignore the social ones. The reason behind is the nature of the topic at hand as well as the nature of the foreign language classroom. Our topic is socially bound because FNE is also coined to social anxiety. It has to do with the kind of relation that exists between the members of the group; that is the teacher and the learners. That is why; we opted for Oxford's social strategies:

(e.g., asking questions to get verification, asking for clarification of a confusing point, asking for help in doing a language task, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) help the learner work with others and understand the target culture as well as the language. (Oxford, 2003: 14)

From Oxford's quote, we can make an analogy with our EFL classes and our results as well. Our learners are supposed to interact with the others and get engaged in social relations. That is why, asking, communicating, clarifying, answering, enquiring and the like from the tasks a foreign language learner should do in his social group is an enquiry. Helping learners socialize in their classroom will help them acquire both these social strategies and the language they are learning as well. In addition, such social strategies are more likely to help learners feel fear from negative social evaluation or cope with it if ever felt and experienced.

Social Anxiety English in Use in Communicative Situations

Another key element we reached after the observation phase is the student's fear from performing. In a broad-spectrum, students seemed to perceive performing in public as a negative experience. In our case, the teacher asked learners to take her role and replace her on the board. Yet, in most sessions, we got little and sometimes no volunteerism towards playing the role of the teacher. The teacher focused on the importance of the presentation and role playing their works. However, students showed hesitation towards this activity the thing that caused a problem in starting up many of the sessions. According to Vargas Batista, (2005:

20), one frequently anxiety-provoking factor is simply being called on in class, whether prepared to speak or not. This was evidenced in our study. As some students overtly expressed their reticence that they do not like to speak in front of others. They withdrew from the task, avoided any kind of eye contact to not get called upon by the teacher. In a nutshell, there should be a way out to lessen this withdrawal from performance and without forcing students to get engaged in this kind of tasks. We can refer here to Nunan who pinpointed that "*learners should never be forced to engage in learning experiences to which they object*" (Nunan, 1992: 46).

Social Anxiety and Classroom Interaction

It is agreed that the instructor has a crucial role in the foreign language classroom. Hence, he can also be either a source of anxiety as he can cope with it. This has been evidenced in our observation sessions. In this, Price (1991: 106) reported that "*instructors had played a significant role in the amount of anxiety each student had experienced in particular classes*". Many of the observations we made support this view. We shall merely cite the example when the teacher was strict towards homework's accomplishment. As a result, interaction was passive; not vivid, students were hesitant and withdrew from the day's activities. This can lead us refer to the FNE aspect as mentioned in Watson and Friend's definition (1969) of FNE as avoidance of evaluative situation.

Generally speaking, Handley (1973: 106) claimed that success in learning and in teaching depends greatly on the nature of teacher-learner interaction. Additionally, for language learning and language anxiety, many researchers relate language anxiety to instructor-learner interactions (Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope, 1986; Young, 1990; Koch and Terrel, 1991; Price, 1991; Scarcella and Oxford, 1992). In this study, we greatly believe that not only teacher-learner interaction, but peer-interaction alike can generate social anxiety. Idri (2011a: 218) concluded from her study that students should be aware of the importance of the group where interaction and language use are needed as part of a better learning.

In our case study, this view was evidenced in our second week observation. Students manifested positive attitudes towards the task saying that the nine questions developed a good feeling in them. They felt that the instructor perceives them as individuals in the classroom and not mere learners as the object of the classroom. This can simply help in fostering learning as interaction is said to be a marked dimension that promotes considerable great efforts to achieve both performance and social productivity (Gillies, Ashman and Terwel, 2008).

Implications for Teachers and Learners

To the teachers:

- Teachers should introduce learners to the concept of self-appraisal and self-evaluation through discussion.
- Teachers should reduce the distance between them and their students. Hence, when teachers are friendly, this will lessen students' fear towards their teachers' evaluation.
- Teachers should remind their students' names. When students notice this, they feel valued, and automatically they get rid of their fear.
- Teachers should modify their error correction; instead, they should give learners positive evaluation. In other words, teachers should correct their students errors in nice tone so that to minimize the students' feeling of embarrassment.

Teachers should encourage students to work in groups. By doing this, students will feel that they are not alone while performing. When these students feel they are supported by their peers, their fear towards their teachers' evaluation will be diminished.

To the learners

- Students should discuss their feeling with other students. In other words, students should use a peer-seeking strategy to alleviate their fear.
- Students should consider errors as part of the learning process.
- Students should trust and believe in their capacities. That is, trusting one's capacity help students to take more risks.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this research is to identify the possible factors, as perceived by first year EFL students that may contribute in amplifying feelings of fear from possibly occurring negative social experiences related to FLL. The observation method as an ethnographic research was used to collect data accompanied with logs and activities to reinforce our observation. Through the results, the importance of social relationships was highly apparent as an issue although the role of the teacher to monitor such relationships in the classroom is paramount. The teachers proved to be the key issue for a relaxed atmosphere and a less stressful classroom. In addition, using language in public is also confirmed as a strong source of fear to use the language in front of the whole classroom. We suggest that further research put focus more on the role of the teacher as a facilitator in his language classroom in order to lessen the risk of social anxiety and devastating effects on both learning and the learner.

References

- Aida. (1994). Examination of Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope's construct of Foreign Language Anxiety: The case of the students of Japanese. *The Modern Language Journal*, vol.78 , 155-168.
- Argaman, O. & Abu Rabia, R. (2002). The influence of Language Anxiety on English Reading and Writing Tasks Among Native Hebrew Speaker. *Language, culture and curriculum*, Vol.15, No. 2 , 143-159.
- Borrill, J. and Bird, A. (2002). *All About Anxiety*. Victoria Street, London: The Mental Health Foundation.
- Borrill, J. A. (2002). *All About Anxiety*. Victoria Street, London: The Mental Health Foundation.
- Brown, R. (2004). Learning consequences of fear of negative evaluation and modesty for Japanese EFL students. *The Language Teacher*, 28(1) , 15-17.
- Chabane, N. s. (2010, June 20). Sources of Fear of Negative Evaluation Among First Year LMD Students. Unpublished MA thesis of Didactics of English submitted to the Department of English at Abderrahmane Mira University.
- Gardner, R. C. (1960). *Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition*. Unpublished Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. McGill University
- Gillies, R. M. Ashman, A. F. & Terwel, J. (2008). *The Teacher's Role in Implementing Cooperative Learning in the Classroom*. Jan Terwel: Vrije University.
- Idri, N. (2006, Septembre 2). La psychologie de l'enfant africain et le droit de l'education. *Lumière*, p. 28.
- Idri, N. (2011). Sources of FNE among First Year LMD 1 Students of Abderrahmane Mira University. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 29, 1932 – 1941.

Idri, N. (2012). Foreign language anxiety among Algerian EFL students: The case of first year students of English at the university of Abderahmane Mira-Béjaia; LMD (Licence/Master/Doctorat)system group. *Universal Journal of Education and General Studies* , Vol. 1(3) pp. 055-064.

Idri, N. (2013). Investigating the Potential Sources of Fea of Negative Evaluation Among Eleven EFL Learners: A Qualitative Analysis. *"Psychology of Fear: New Developments"*. (N. P. Marta, Ed.) New York, USA: Nova Science Publisher, Inc.

Koch, A. S. & Terrell, T. D. (1991). Affective Reaction of Foreign Language Students to Natural Approach Activities and Teaching Techniques. In E. K. Horwitz & D. J. Young (Eds.), *Language Anxiety: From Theory and Research to Classroom Implications*. (pp. 109-126). Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Kitano, K. (2001). Anxiety in the college japanese language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85/4 , 549-566.

La Greca, A.M. (2001). Friends or foes? Peer influences on anxiety among children and adolescents. In W.K. Silverman & P.D.A. Treffers (Eds.), *Anxiety disorders in children and adolescents: Research, assessment and intervention* (pp. 159–186). New York: Cambridge University Press.

MacIntyre, P. & Gardner, (1991). Language anxiety: its relationship to other anxieties and to processing in native and second languages . *Language Learning*, 41/4, 513-34.

Newth, S. (2003). *Anxiety Disorder Toolkit: Information and Resources for Effective Self-Management of Anxiety and Anxiety Disorder* . British Columbia: BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information .

Nunan, D. (1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). *Language Learning Styles and Strategies: An Overview*. GALA 2003