

Chapter Two
Literature Review
Table of Contents

Page no:

I. Introduction	28
II. Anxiety from a psychological viewpoint	28
III. Foreign language anxiety	30
IV. Facilitative and debilitating anxiety	35
V. Communication apprehension	36
VI. Historical overview of language anxiety research	38
VII. The effect of language anxiety on oral performance	42
VIII. The effect of language anxiety on written and oral language tests	44
IX. The effect of language anxiety on drop-out rates from language courses	48
X. Practical methods for overcoming language anxiety	48
XI. Practical methods for overcoming test anxiety	51
XII. Humanistic techniques:	54
A. Experiential awareness	57
1. Increasing awareness of the language learning process	57
2. Correcting erroneous beliefs	58
3. The use of journals	60
B. Group awareness	61
1. The importance of group work	62
2. Creating a sense of belonging to a group	64
3. Increasing opportunities for oral communication	65
4. Providing a supportive framework for oral preparation and oral presentation	66
XIII. Conclusion	67

I. Introduction

In recent years, great interest has arisen in the study of the role of affective factors in the language classroom. Research has shown that language anxiety is a significant problem in language classrooms throughout the world especially in terms of its strong relationship to the skill of speaking in a foreign or second language. It is, therefore, imperative that language instructors develop an awareness of the phenomenon of language anxiety, what causes feelings of anxiety in the language classroom and practical ways to reduce anxiety levels. Horwitz (in Young 1999: xii) states that language anxiety affects a wide range of students as the essence of foreign language learning entails the ‘communication of personally meaningful and ...appropriate messages through unfamiliar and unmastered phonological, syntactic, semantic and sociolinguistic systems’. It is, therefore, understandable that many language students with normal language and learning abilities find learning, using and taking tests in a foreign or second language a disagreeable and anxiety-provoking experience. The acquisition of a foreign or second language should be a challenging and rewarding experience and the current shift towards a more humanistic approach to language learning and teaching and the use of different humanistic techniques is one method which has been put forward to try and reduce levels of communication apprehension, general feelings of language anxiety and test anxiety. It is our responsibility as language instructors to provide our students with a low-anxiety classroom environment which is conducive to language learning and to ensure that language learning is viewed by our students as a pleasurable and life-enhancing experience.

II. Anxiety from a psychological viewpoint

Anxiety is described by psychologists as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Horwitz and Young 1991:27). Scovel (in Horwitz and Young 1991:18) states that anxiety is normally measured by means of:

- Behavioural tests where the subject is under observation
- Self-reports of internal feelings and reactions
- Physiological tests which involve the measurement of the subject's heart rate, blood pressure and palmar sweating.

Anxiety manifests in a number of different ways depending on the individual and the specific situation causing the anxiety reaction. Psychologists have identified three different types of anxiety which are trait or global anxiety, situation-specific anxiety and state anxiety.

Trait or global anxiety

Trait or global anxiety refers to a stable predisposition to become anxious in a wide range of situations. It is regarded as a feature of the individual's personality and is viewed as a relatively stable trait over time (MacIntyre in Young 1999:28). Spielberger (1983) defines trait anxiety as the probability of becoming anxious in any situation.

Situation-specific anxiety

Situation-specific anxiety refers to the anxiety experienced in a specific situation or context. MacIntyre (in Young 1999:28) refers to situation-specific anxiety as the probability of becoming anxious in a particular type of situation. Situation-specific anxiety may manifest in an educational setting as, for example: maths anxiety, test anxiety, public speaking anxiety, writing anxiety or language anxiety.

State anxiety

State anxiety refers to the actual experience of anxiety and its effect on emotions, cognition and behaviour (MacIntyre in Young 1999:28). It is the transient emotional state of feeling anxious which can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity. State anxiety results in heightened levels of arousal and a more sensitive autonomic nervous system which leads to feelings of being energised or 'keyed-up'. In terms of cognitive effects, individuals may become more sensitive to what other people might be thinking about them. Behavioural effects include the over-evaluation of one's own behaviour,

ruminating over real or imagined failures, attempts to escape from the situation and physical manifestations such as sweaty palms and an elevated heart rate (MacIntyre in Young 1999:28).

In terms of language learning, it is normal for individuals to experience a measure of state anxiety in the language classroom such as when meeting new people, speaking in public, having errors corrected and subjecting themselves to continuous oral and written evaluation. A problem arises, however, when feelings of state anxiety persist and develop into a situation-specific type of anxiety whereby the thought of the language class and the activities that take place in the class arouses uncomfortable feelings of anxiety. Once the individual associates feelings of anxiety with the language classroom, it is likely that the individual will begin to experience language anxiety. Individuals who experience trait or global anxiety will, by the very nature of language learning with all its connotations of opening oneself up to a critical audience, also be likely candidates for the experience of language anxiety.

III. Foreign language anxiety

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991:30) attempted to create a theoretical model of language anxiety which they view as essentially concerning performance evaluation within an academic and social context. Horwitz and Young (1991:30) state that there is a relationship between foreign language anxiety and three performance related anxieties which are:

Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension refers to an individual's level of anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Mejias et al in Horwitz and Young 1991:88). Communication apprehensive individuals are likely to experience anxiety about communicating with others in public speaking situations, group discussions and in dyadic communication situations. Individuals who experience

communication apprehension are likely to experience anxiety in a language classroom where they not only have to communicate in another language but also have low levels of control over the communicative situation and the feeling that their performance is constantly being monitored (Horwitz and Young 1991:30).

Test anxiety

Test anxiety refers to a type of anxiety concerning apprehension over academic evaluation which stems from a fear of failure (Horwitz and Young 1991:30). Students may have unrealistic expectations of themselves with regard to achievement in a test situation and feel that anything less than full marks constitutes a failure. Horwitz and Young (1991:30) suggest that oral tests can provoke test and oral communication anxiety simultaneously which can lead to higher than normal anxiety in the oral examination. This may lead to a student being allocated a mark for the oral examination which is not a true reflection of their ability. This undoubtedly will impact negatively on self-esteem and may lead to feelings of anxiety in future language learning experiences.

Fear of negative evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation refers to feelings of apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others will evaluate one negatively (Horwitz and Young 1991:31). Fear of negative evaluation can occur in any social situation which has an evaluative component and is particularly important in the language class where students may feel as if they are constantly being evaluated by their instructor and peers (Horwitz and Young 1991:29).

Foreign language anxiety should not, however, be viewed as a simple construct consisting of an amalgamation of different performance anxieties transferred to language learning. Horwitz and Young (1991:31) define language anxiety as 'a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process'. The subjective feelings, psycho-physiological symptoms and behavioural responses of the

anxious language learner are the same as for any specific anxiety. Anxious learners report feeling apprehension, worry and even dread of their language class. In addition, they report experiencing difficulties concentrating, become forgetful, sweat and have palpitations. The anxious language learner will often go to great lengths to miss class, postpone homework and avoid studying (Horwitz and Young 1991:29).

Much of the language anxiety research reports a strong positive correlation between speaking in the foreign or second language and language anxiety (Young 1999:8). Horwitz' (1991) research reveals that anxiety centres on the two basic task requirements of language learning which are listening and speaking. A large percentage of language students reported that they experienced difficulty speaking in class, struggled to discriminate the sounds and structures of the language, failed to grasp the content of a target language message and forgot information they already knew during an oral exercise (Horwitz and Young 1991:29) due to feelings of anxiety aroused by the context of the language classroom.

Young (1991) identifies six main sources of language anxiety which are:

Personal and interpersonal issues

Personal and interpersonal issues revolve around the individual's feelings of self-esteem and competitiveness. Krashen (in Young 1991:427) suggests that self-esteem is strongly related to language anxiety as 'people with low self-esteem worry about what their peers think (and) are concerned with pleasing others'. Students with low self-esteem may experience anxiety in the language classroom because of their need to be accepted and viewed in a positive light by others. Language learning involves making mistakes and risking ridicule or failure and this may impact negatively on students with low self-esteem. Bailey (in Young 1991:427) contends that competitiveness among students can lead to anxiety especially when they compare themselves to an idealised self-image. Academic study with its emphasis on individual achievement and high marks tends to create competition among students which can lead to feelings of anxiety in some students.

Learner beliefs about language learning

Students often have unrealistic expectations about language learning and hold erroneous beliefs about the nature of language learning. Unrealistic expectations can lead to anxiety when these expectations are not met in reality. Horwitz (in Young 1991:428) conducted a survey of students' expectations and beliefs about language learning. She discovered that a large percentage of respondents believed that it was possible to become fluent in another language in one to two years by studying the language for only one hour per day. Erroneous beliefs about the nature of language learning can also lead to anxiety. In the same study, Horwitz (in Young 1991:428) discovered that 75% of respondents believed that learning a language was a matter of translating from one language into another and that certain people had a special aptitude for learning languages. Respondents expressed concern over the correctness of their utterances and believed that one must speak a language with an 'excellent accent' and good pronunciation (Horwitz in Young 1991:428).

Instructor beliefs about language teaching

In a study of instructors' beliefs about language teaching, Brandl (in Young 1991:428) found that the majority of instructors preferred an authoritative student-teacher relationship and believed that a 'little bit of intimidation (was)...a necessary and supportive motivator for students' performance'. The instructor is responsible for setting up and maintaining the social context of the classroom and the type of relationship and interaction between teacher and students. Authoritarian instructors who intimidate their students can only serve to create and reinforce feelings of anxiety.

Instructor-learner interactions

The interaction between the instructor and the students in a language class can have a tremendous impact on anxiety levels. One of the most important interactional areas in the language classroom is that of error correction. Young (1991:429) reports that students worry about how mistakes are *perceived* by others in the classroom as opposed to simply being concerned about making mistakes. Harsh error correction, instructors

who constantly correct grammar mistakes in discussions or conversations and instructors who make students appear foolish all increase the anxiety levels of students.

Classroom procedures

There are a number of popular classroom activities which can lead to feelings of language anxiety in students. It is accepted that language anxiety tends to centre on having to speak in the target language in front of a group – Koch and Terrell (in Young 1991:429) found that more than half of their subjects reported that oral presentations and oral skits were the most anxiety-inducing activities in language classrooms. Young (1991:429) states that 68% of her subjects reported feeling more comfortable when they did not have to stand up in front of the class and speak. The current emphasis on oral competence in the language classroom and the fact that oral activities are often cited as the most anxiety-inducing has led to a dilemma for the instructor as the greater the focus on oral activities, the greater the likelihood that the number of students experiencing language anxiety will increase.

Language testing

Daly (in Young 1991:429) found that students experience more apprehension when the testing situation is novel, ambiguous or highly evaluative. Students experience anxiety if they have had no experience with a particular test format and if the test involves content that was not covered in class. Students also report feeling anxious when they have spent hours studying for a test only to find that the test utilises unknown or obscure material or question types with which they have had no experience (Young 1991:429). Written and oral language examinations need to reflect the content of the particular course and should be viewed as an evaluation of a student's knowledge and ability level at a particular point in time. Testing should always serve a purpose and should support the teaching process. Directing all teaching towards the tests and creating complex and difficult tests which are inconsistent with the course content can only serve to raise anxiety levels.

Foreign language anxiety is a classroom reality and instructors face anxious students on a daily basis. These are the students who sit at the back of the room, attempt to 'hide' in their seats, neglect to hand in homework, never volunteer and when called upon, respond in a barely audible whisper (Phillips 1991:1). Guiora (in Horwitz and Young 1991:28) argues that learning another language is 'a profoundly unsettling psychological proposition' as it directly threatens an individual's self-concept and world-view. Language anxiety can result from any one or a combination of the six sources mentioned above. Understanding language anxiety is vitally important because of its profound influence on students' attitudes towards learning a language and on their intentions to continue the study of a language past the most elementary level (Phillips 1992:22).

IV. Facilitative and debilitating anxiety

A review of the language anxiety literature highlights the distinction between facilitative and debilitating anxiety. The learning of any academic subject is enhanced by both positive and negative motivation, for example: a good performance in music, art or language learning, especially the overt social act of speaking another language, depends on enough anxiety 'to arouse the neuromuscular system to optimal levels of performance, but not so much arousal that the complex neuromuscular systems underlying those skills are disrupted' (Scovel in Horwitz and Young 1991:22).

Facilitative and debilitating anxiety normally work in tandem, serving to motivate and warn the student. Facilitative anxiety motivates the student to 'fight' the new learning task and prepares the student emotionally to approach the learning task as a challenge (Scovel in Horwitz and Young 1991:22). Debilitating anxiety, however, motivates the student to 'flee' the new learning task and stimulates the individual emotionally to adopt avoidance behaviour (Scovel in Horwitz and Young 1991:22).

Language anxiety is a form of debilitating anxiety which has a negative impact on the students' performance, attitudes, emotional state and enjoyment of the language learning experience. Extremely anxious students are highly motivated to avoid involvement in the classroom activities which they fear the most. Horwitz and Young (1991:35) state that 'as long as foreign language learning takes place in a formal school setting where evaluation is inextricably tied to performance, language anxiety is likely to continue to flourish'.

V. Communication apprehension

Communication apprehension is a construct which is often linked to language anxiety. Horwitz and Young (1991:30) argue that communication apprehension is one of the performance anxieties which make up a theoretical model of language anxiety. Communication apprehension refers to an individual's level of anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication with another person or persons (Mejias et al in Horwitz and Young 1991:88). The high communication apprehensive individual's feelings of 'anxiety about participating in oral communication outweighs his/her projection of gain from the situation' (Mc Croskey 1977:18).

Communication apprehension is a learned trait which is conditioned through reinforcement. If a child is rewarded in the home environment for silence and not rewarded or even punished when communicating, the probable result is a quiet child (Mc Croskey 1977:18). We live, however, in an educational world where orality is viewed as a necessary, positive personal characteristic. Mc Croskey and Daly (in Horwitz and Young 1991:7) found that teachers have a positive bias towards talkative children in their classrooms. Low communication apprehensive individuals are more verbally participative, select seats in high interaction zones and are perceived by teachers and peers as more friendly and intelligent (Richmond in Horwitz and Young 1991:7).

Daly (in Horwitz and Young 1991:8) states that the single strongest and most consistent correlate of oral communication apprehension is self-esteem.

Communication apprehension is positively related to loneliness, general anxiety, test anxiety, intolerance for ambiguity and touch avoidance (Daly in Horwitz and Young 1991:8). Merrill (in Mc Croskey 1977:2) found that high communication apprehensive individuals were perceived by others as cool, independent, uncommunicative, disciplined, risk-avoiders and non-directive.

Daly and Buss (in Horwitz and Young 1991:9) identified five characteristics of anxiety-provoking situations which can lead to increased communication apprehension levels. All of these characteristics occur naturally in a language classroom which will have a negative effect on the behaviour and performance of individuals who already experience high communication apprehension. The five characteristics are:

- Evaluation – the greater the degree of evaluation in a particular setting, the higher the level of situational apprehension.
- Novelty – the less familiar the situation and the people involved, the higher the level of situational apprehension.
- Ambiguity – the more ambiguous the situation, the higher the level of situational apprehension.
- Conspicuousness – the more conspicuous a person feels, the more apprehension he/she will feel especially when making errors.
- Prior history – the greater the extent to which a situation created anxiety for the individual in the past, the higher the situational apprehension. People who have previously had negative experiences in a language classroom will probably enter a new language class with high anxiety levels and preconceived notions of what to expect.

Communication apprehension is an important construct in terms of its relationship to language anxiety. Instructors need to identify individuals who experience high communication apprehension levels as they will be the most likely candidates for language anxiety. Mc Croskey (1977:90) witnessed ‘several students fainting while

giving a speech, dozens of students disappearing when their first speech was due... (and) others who cowered in the back of the room'. For the least confident students, the experience of speaking in a language class can have a traumatic effect leading to a weak performance followed by a negative evaluation which only serves to reinforce anxiety.

VI. Historical overview of language anxiety research

In the past, research in the area of anxiety as it relates to foreign or second language learning and performance was scattered and inconclusive (Young 1991:426). Some of this research suggested that a relationship between anxiety and foreign or second language performance existed but other findings suggested no relationship between anxiety and performance. Within these studies, anxiety may have been negatively related to one skill and not to another or positively related to one skill and not to another (Young 1991:426). There are two main reasons for these inconclusive results:

- The anxiety measures used in the studies were not specifically designed to be used in the foreign or second language learning context. The measuring instrument used was, therefore, inharmonious with the anxiety definition and the interpretation of anxiety, for example: state anxiety, trait anxiety, test anxiety, facilitative or debilitative classroom anxiety, was not defined in accordance with the basic purposes of the research (Young 1991:427).
- Researchers did not state whether the research was designed to examine one variable (language anxiety) or a number of variables such as anxiety and its relationship to motivation, self-esteem or introversion. Horwitz and Young (1991:29) state that few achievement studies specifically examined the effect of anxiety in a foreign or second language learning context.

Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (in Horwitz and Young 1991) were the first researchers to treat foreign language anxiety as a separate and distinct phenomenon particular to the language learning context. Their theory evolved from clinical data and anecdotal evidence obtained from student focus groups and led to the development of the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale which is a self-report instrument designed to measure language anxiety levels in the classroom.

Language anxiety is, however, a research area in which divergent differences of opinion can be found. Some researchers believe that anxiety is a minor inconvenience for a language student – Sparks and Ganschow (in Young 1999:24) argue that studying language anxiety does not add much to our understanding of language achievement as they view language anxiety as ‘an unfortunate by-product of difficulties rooted in native-language coding’. Other researchers believe that language anxiety may be the key to understanding the entire affective reaction to language learning. Campbell and Ortiz (in Young 1999:24) state that anxiety levels in language classrooms are ‘alarming’ and Horwitz (in Young 1999:24) estimates that at least half of the students enrolled in foreign language courses experience debilitating levels of language anxiety.

There has been an increase in evidence to validate the existence of language anxiety as a form of anxiety specifically related to the context of the language classroom.

MacIntyre and Gardner (in Young 1999:29-30) employed factor analysis to investigate the relationship between twenty-three different anxiety scales. They identified three clusters of anxiety: general anxiety, state anxiety and language anxiety. The procedure used specified that there could be no correlations among the anxiety factors, therefore, it is possible to separate language anxiety from other forms of anxiety. MacIntyre (in Young 1999:27) argues that foreign and second language anxiety is negatively correlated with language anxiety which he defines as ‘the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a foreign or second language’. In general, the recent literature upholds the theory of an anxiety ‘which is not general but (is) instead specific to the language acquisition context (and) related to foreign or second language achievement’ (Gardner in Young 1999:27).

MacIntyre (in Young 1999:30) states that most students do not enter a language class with language anxiety. He argues that at the earliest stages of language learning, the student encounters a number of difficulties with learning, comprehension and grammar. If the student experiences feelings of anxiety and discomfort, state anxiety occurs. After repeated occurrences of state anxiety reinforced by negative classroom experiences, the student begins to associate feelings of anxiety with the language classroom. The student will, therefore, expect to become anxious in a language learning context and is likely to develop language anxiety. Young (1991:324) states that if this is true then the problem does not lie with the students but in the fact that we, as instructors, are doing something 'fundamentally unnatural in our methodology'.

Several researchers have attempted to discover the origins of language anxiety. Price (in Young 1999:31) discovered that her students felt anxious about speaking the target language in front of their peers, feared being laughed at by others, experienced difficulty understanding different accents and were very anxious about making pronunciation errors. Young (1991) offers an extensive list of the potential sources of language anxiety arising from the student, the instructor and the teaching methodology used. MacIntyre and Noels (in Young 1999:32) found evidence that students' self-perceptions of their proficiency may be affected by language anxiety. Students with high levels of language anxiety underestimate their ability to speak, comprehend and write in the target language. Language anxiety, therefore, affects the way in which these students perform and the way they perceive their performance.

Lalonde and Gardner (in Young 1999:32) found that personality traits may indirectly influence language learning. MacIntyre and Charos (in Young 1999:32) investigated the role of personality in the development of language-related attitudes, motivation and language anxiety among beginning language students. They discovered that anxiety is more closely related to introversion than to nervousness. People who are shy and introverted are more likely to develop language anxiety as they are less willing to engage in the communication necessary for language learning success.

Research also suggests that feelings of language anxiety can influence the communication strategies that students use in language classes. Kleinmann (in Horwitz and Young 1991:28) found that ESL students with high levels of debilitating anxiety attempted different types of grammatical constructions than did less anxious students. Steinberg and Horwitz (in Horwitz and Young 1991:28) discovered that students with high anxiety levels used less interpretive and more concrete messages than those students who did not experience language anxiety. Students with high anxiety levels, therefore, tend to avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language.

Casado and Dereshiwsy (2001:540) investigated whether language anxiety is a natural phenomenon that decreases as students' progress with their language studies. One would expect that language anxiety would diminish as students become more familiar with the language. Casado and Dereshiwsy (2001) compared the levels of anxiety of a sample of beginner students enrolled for Spanish at university with levels of anxiety perceived by a sample of second semester Spanish students. The researchers found that levels of confidence were higher for the beginners and levels of language anxiety were higher for the second semester students. Gardner (in Seliger and Long 1983:68) in a study of one thousand high school students studying French as a foreign language in Canada found that 'anxiety possibly plays a more important role as students begin to achieve a better grasp of the language'. Language anxiety, therefore, does not decrease as students become more familiar with a language and progress with their language studies. Instructors can, therefore, expect to find anxious students across the various levels of English instruction ranging from beginners right through to the advanced levels.

The future of research in the area of language anxiety is promising with the development of a theoretical base for generating testable hypotheses and sound instruments to measure the constructs (MacIntye and Gardner 1991:112). Results reported in the literature are consistent with the notion that negative experiences, both

inside and outside the classroom, contribute to the development of language anxiety. Studies of foreign language anxiety consistently show that language anxiety impairs language learning and production as anxious students perceive the language learning situation as an uncomfortable experience, withdraw from voluntary participation, feel social pressure not to make mistakes and are less willing to try uncertain or novel linguistic forms (MacIntyre and Gardner 1991:112). It is likely that one of the reasons that language anxiety persists is because of its negative effect on students' self-perceptions of proficiency (MacIntyre in Young 1999:33).

VII. The effect of language anxiety on oral performance

The influence of the Communicative Approach and the drive to develop communicative competence in language students has changed the way that languages are taught and the type of activities that take place in language classrooms. An emphasis on the memorisation of vocabulary lists, drills and extensive grammar explanations has given way to functional language use, communicative activities, the use of authentic materials and the importance of language in context. This has created a dilemma for language instructors as the increasing emphasis on developing oral competence can also lead to higher anxiety levels which reduces the enjoyment associated with the language learning experience (Phillips 1991:1).

It is widely accepted in the research literature that the act of speaking in a foreign or second language is the most anxiety-provoking activity for the majority of students. Krashen (in Young 1992:163) states that 'according to the research...speaking is particularly anxiety-provoking as...we often expect people to perform beyond their acquired competence'. Hadley (in Young 1992:163) suggests that speaking creates feelings of anxiety because 'there is (so much) at stake: not only do you have to create your own utterances but most students feel that they have to pronounce properly' as well.

Horwitz (in Phillips 1991:4) found that students were highly concerned about the oral component of their language classes and Price's (in Phillips 1991:4) report of interviews with highly anxious students indicates that all of the students felt that speaking in their language classes had been the greatest source of anxiety. Arnold (2003:1-2) proposes that the skill of speaking is greatly influenced by the time factor as it involved producing language spontaneously to a critical audience. The embarrassment that students' feel when they expose their language imperfections to others and the possibility of negative feedback from the instructor increases anxiety levels significantly.

The experience of learning a foreign or second language may also threaten an individual's sense of identity and self-esteem. Horwitz (1989:63) states that 'those who perceive themselves as reasonably intelligent and socially adept...find themselves having difficulty using a foreign language to express the most basic concepts'. The language learner is placed in a situation where they feel fundamentally incompetent in all the things that everybody else around them takes for granted such as catching a bus or ordering food in a restaurant (Allwright and Bailey 1991:174). Language students may feel as if they are in a vulnerable position in which they are expected to reveal and express themselves to others without the security of their mother tongue. Littlewood (in Horwitz and Young 1991:142) states that students may 'come to feel that they project a silly, boring image and become withdrawn'. Students may feel that they are representing themselves badly, showing only a small part of their real personality and intelligence. Language learning, therefore, impacts on the students' sense of identity and self-esteem which is linked to the awareness that the range of communicative choices and authenticity is restricted (Horwitz and Young 1991:31). This sense of alienation at the loss of communication skills can lead to reticence, self-consciousness, fear and even panic (Horwitz and Young 1991:31).

There are several other important results which have emerged out of studies involving students' perspectives on anxiety and speaking. Price (in Horwitz and Young 1991:105) discovered that students were also concerned about making pronunciation

errors and expressed great embarrassment at their ‘terrible’ pronunciation. Beebe (in Arnold 2003:4) states that ‘the very act of pronouncing...is an essential part of what we communicate about ourselves as people’. When working with speaking in the language classroom, pronunciation is not always given sufficient prominence. Morley (in Arnold 2003:4) states that ‘it is well-documented that speakers with poor intelligibility have long-range difficulties in developing into confident and effective oral communicators’. Students express frustration at not being able to communicate effectively and at expressing themselves in a way which is inconsistent with their self-image. One student remarked that ‘you feel frustrated because you’re an interesting adult and you sound like a babbling baby’ (Price in Horwitz and Young 1991:105). Students also mention that language classes are difficult and there is a great discrepancy between effort and results which is particularly disturbing for students who are used to achieving high marks (Price in Horwitz and Young 1991:105).

Moskowitz (1978:2) states that ‘when learning a foreign language, feelings of uncertainty, insecurity and even fear often develop in the learner’. Students believe that, in spite of their ability, they are not truly in control of their own fate in the language classroom. The oral skill appears to be the most problematic area in terms of its relationship to anxiety levels and its potentially negative effect on self-esteem. Research suggests that despite what instructors may believe, students feel that anxiety is important and that it can and will affect their performance in class and on tests (Phillips 1991:2). The study of the effect of anxiety on oral performance is, therefore, very important as students’ beliefs influence their attitudes towards the classroom, the target language and culture and towards language study in general.

VIII. The effect of language anxiety on written and oral language tests

According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1991), test anxiety is one of the performance anxieties that make up a theoretical construct of language anxiety. Test anxiety is, therefore, very important because of its link to language anxiety and its role in

increasing anxiety levels in the language classroom. There is little research available which focuses specifically on the relationship between anxiety and oral performance in a foreign or second language testing situation. Steinberg (in Horwitz and Young 1991:58) studied the role of anxiety in second language oral test performance by inducing anxiety in half of her subjects and comparing the performance of the anxiety-induced group with that of the group with no induced anxiety. Steinberg discovered that the more anxious individuals tended to be less subjective and more objective in their oral responses. This suggests that anxiety may affect an individual's avoidance behaviour as the anxious individuals avoided offering opinions and conveying personal content in their oral tests, preferring to rather communicate in terms of objective facts.

Studies have revealed many factors which influence students' reactions to language tests including the test format, length, time limit, testing environment, perceptions of test validity and clarity of test instructions (Young 1999:99). Schwarzer (et al in Young 1999:100) argues that 'test anxiety may play an indirect role in performance depending on the amount of time available for completing a test and the degree to which an individual has prepared for the task at hand'. Strong negative reactions to a test may seriously weaken performance and reduce the validity of the test. Madsen (in Horwitz and Young 1991:66) states that 'on a wide variety of measures, persons with high test anxiety are outperformed by those with low test anxiety'.

Calvin (in Young 1999:101) found that giving students the opportunity to express how they felt about a test may have an effect on anxiety levels. Students were allowed to write comments about their language tests which led to improved performance on future tests. Obtaining student feedback about testing may reduce the threat of testing and provide a means of releasing anxiety. Madsen (in Horwitz and Young 1991:65) found that tests that were perceived as lacking face validity led to higher anxiety and a negative attitude towards instruction which could affect future progress in learning a language. Taylor (in Horwitz and Young 1991:65) argues that inappropriate testing is linked to a high failure rate and the use of valid and fair tests can help alleviate high drop-out rates, underachievement and negative student attitudes.

Existing research on test anxiety indicates that an individual's performance can be affected both positively and negatively by anxiety. Spielberger (in Horwitz and Young 1991:57) argues that an individual's objectively measured ability to perform the task can determine the effect of anxiety on performance in a test. Spielberger found that anxiety did not have any effect on performance when the individual perceived that he/she had the ability to perform the task however, with individuals who believed that their ability levels were low 'anxiety interfered with learning and performance'. This study highlights the importance of students' perceptions in the language classroom and the fact that it is vital to create a positive, affective climate in which students feel supported in their quest to succeed. Bailey (in Seliger and Long 1983:77) in her diary study of learning French, describes her experience of debilitating test anxiety as follows: 'My competitiveness in test-taking situations was causing me to do poorly...I attributed the gaps in my test-taking behaviour to carelessness – in fact, it was debilitating test anxiety'. Much to her surprise, Bailey discovered that her perceptions of her ability were more important than her real ability level and that she suffered from a common tendency among students to race through exams in order to finish first.

It is widely believed that oral language tests are more anxiety-inducing than written language tests. A review of the research literature reveals, however, that this is not always the case. Scott (in Horwitz and Young 1991:67) found no such effect in her assessment of students' reactions to oral language tests. Observations of live oral testing by Jones (in Horwitz and Young 1991:67) indicate that oral tests are less anxiety-producing than written tests. Savignon (in Young 1999:101) reports that reactions to oral tests of communicative competence examined in her study were 'overwhelmingly positive, even though the tests were difficult for students'. Students reacted positively because they felt that the test was valid and fair even though they had not performed well on it. Shohamy (in Young 1999:101) in a study of students' reactions to oral interviews found that students thought that the oral interview 'reflected their actual knowledge of the language since they could see the direct relationship between the testing procedure and their performance'.

Many students, therefore, feel that oral tests are a necessary part of a language course and represent an accurate evaluation of their ability to speak in English. Madsen (in Young 1999:133) investigated the effects of anxiety on ESL language examinations and found that high-anxiety producing ESL tests were psychologically debilitating and were also perceived by students as less valid. In the study, students rated oral tests as the least anxiety-provoking and a reading comprehension test taken under time pressure as the most anxiety-provoking. Phillips (1992:16) examined the effects of students' anxiety on performance in an oral test and investigated the attitudes of highly anxious students towards the oral examination. Students who expressed high language anxiety levels on the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale received lower marks than their less anxious classmates. Students in this study stated that they had found the oral exam to be 'a very unpleasant experience' in spite of the fact that the instructor took precautions to ensure their comfort and had ensured that they had practiced communicative role-plays in the class. The student with the highest ability level provided the most dramatic example of language and test anxiety during the oral examination when 'she began to cry...and confessed that her anxiety had arisen because she couldn't remember how to say things and could not get her failure out of her mind'.

The study of language anxiety, therefore, reflects an interest in the whole-person and not just in the intellect or mastery of skills (Madsen in Horwitz and Young 1991:66). A review of the literature on test anxiety produces conflicting and unexpected results. Although it is accepted that speaking in the target language is the most threatening aspect of language learning, many students report that their anxiety levels with regard to oral tests are not correspondingly high. Other students, however, report that oral tests are traumatic experiences. A great deal more research needs to be done in the area of test anxiety and its relationship to oral and written tests in the foreign and second language classroom. The importance of reducing student's anxiety related to oral and written tests cannot be over-emphasised if instructors are to maintain the development of communicative competence as a goal (Phillips in Young 1999:140).

IX. The effect of language anxiety on drop-out rates from language courses

Language anxiety has a significant influence on the drop-out rates of students. Young (1999:4) states that ‘one reason why many students drop out of language classes...is that they find language learning to be an unnecessarily unpleasant experience’. A negative experience in a language course may deter an individual from embarking on language study in later years which represents a great loss to the individual. Speiller (in Young 1999:4) found that high school students who chose not to continue language study often mentioned their perceived lack of progress as a contributing factor. This brings one back to the importance of students’ perceptions and how unrealistic beliefs and expectations can influence their attitudes to language learning.

Gardner (1987:7) conducted a study of the language anxiety levels of students who had considerable training in a language but who had opted to discontinue their studies. He proposes that language anxiety is a major correlate of proficiency in the use of a foreign or second language when the student is fearful about using the language or when the language learning context is stressful. Gardner discovered that students were concerned about their language proficiency in terms of how others perceived their performance. Individuals who expected to perform poorly became extremely anxious which simply fulfilled their expectations of a poor performance. All of these students dropped out of language courses because of their perceived inability to perform according to their expectations.

X. Practical methods for overcoming language anxiety

Lynch (in Arnold 2003:5) recognises the importance of the classroom atmosphere for developing successful communication skills: ‘Learners are not neutral pawns in the teacher’s game, but individuals with positive and negative feelings about themselves and others...one of the skills of teaching is knowing how to create a positive atmosphere’. Instructors need to worry less about materials, techniques and lesson

plans and more about what goes on ‘inside and between people in the classroom’ (Stevick in Arnold 2003:5). Dornyei and Malderez (1997:75) suggest that instructors use seating arrangements which encourage eye contact, the formation of intermember group relationships and greater interpersonal involvement. Instructors can also personalise the classroom by means of posters, examples of students’ writing exercises, photographs and music. Dornyei and Malderez (1997:75) suggest that instructors ask students to assist in personalising the classroom so as to create a greater sense of personal involvement and investment.

Researchers have suggested a number of activities which can be used to alleviate feelings of language anxiety. Young (1991:431) suggests helping students recognise their irrational beliefs or fears, discussions on the nature of language learning, journal writing, support groups and private tutoring. Foss and Reitzel (in Phillips 1991:5) contend that discussions about students’ fears and anxiety indicates to students ‘that they are not alone in their anxiety...the instructor understands their apprehension’. They suggest the use of Horwitz’ (1986) Foreign Language Anxiety Scale as an excellent framework for generating a discussion about students’ concerns.

Saunders and Crookall (in Young 1991:433) advocate more pair and group work to create interest and encourage participation. If students work in pairs and ‘feel that they are anxious about their lack of proficiency...the only person who really gets to hear how they sound is their partner who sounds about the same’ (Hadley in Young 1992:164). Getting to know other students within a pair or small group context helps students to relax and reduces their fear of being ridiculed. The importance and benefits of group work in the language classroom is widely reported and accepted in the research literature.

Instructors should ensure that the classroom is a place for learning and communication and not a platform for performance. Instructors need to provide students with a greater amount of fluency based activities in which they can practice their oral communication skills. Krashen (in Young 1991:433) suggests that the best way to reduce language

anxiety is to make the message so interesting that students forget that it is in another language – ‘when the teacher drops the book and starts talking about something really important, students listen’. Kundu (in Arnold 2003:2) states that instructors spend too much time talking in class ‘hardly ever giving students a chance to talk, except when we occasionally ask them questions...even on such occasions, because we insist on answers in full sentences and penalise them for their mistakes, they are always on the defensive’. A real need exists for activities where students are invited to speak to each other and express their ideas which makes the experience more emotionally real than practicing structures in the make-believe world of the textbook.

Instructors need to be sensitised to their role as a language teacher in a learner-centered environment. Instructors are facilitators whose responsibility is to provide students with input and opportunities to communicate in the language in authentic situations using authentic materials (Young 1991:431). In a study of students’ attitudes to their instructors, Young (1991:432) discovered that students preferred instructors ‘who had a good sense of humour, were friendly, relaxed and patient’. In a similar study, Prices’ subjects stated that they ‘would feel more comfortable if the instructor were...like a friend helping them to learn and less like an authority figure making them perform’ (in Young 1991:432). A warm, accepting instructor is more likely to instil trust in students as students know they can take risks and are not going to be penalised – instructors who are less accepting and more exacting will ‘undoubtedly make them feel more on edge to volunteer anything beyond the necessary’(Hadley in Young 1992:165).

Instructors may need to reassess the way that error correction takes place in the classroom. Instructors can reduce language anxiety by adopting the attitude that errors are a natural part of the learning process. Rardin(in Young 1992:166) states that ‘the teacher’s understanding of the students’ struggles can reduce barriers...in a trusting atmosphere, one is able to unselfconsciously focus on the language and...all one’s energies can be directed towards being and learning rather than keeping an arsenal in reserve to protect oneself against making mistakes and appearing foolish’. Instructors who insist on perfect pronunciation, complete sentences and near-native grammar tend

to induce feelings of language anxiety in students who develop a fear of oral communication in the target language because of the inevitability of making a mistake in front of the class.

Language anxiety can, therefore, be reduced by creating a positive classroom atmosphere in which students feel a sense of belonging and involvement. Various classroom activities can be used to reduce language anxiety such as group work, journal writing and discussions about language learning. The emphasis should primarily be on conveying ‘personal meaning’ – when learners merely repeat phrases in a mechanical way there is no real engagement or involvement in the task and students are quick to sense the falseness and irrelevance of the situation (Arnold 2003:9). The behaviour of the instructor can also influence language anxiety levels in the classroom. Language instructors need to practice positive error correction and show empathy, acceptance, patience, understanding and tolerance. Dornyei and Malderez (1997:76) state that the traditional authoritarian role of the teacher is undesirable as ‘it does not allow the group to structure itself organically, nor for the members to share increasing responsibility’ in the language learning process.

XI. Practical methods for overcoming test anxiety

Creating a low-stress language learning environment is believed to facilitate acquisition of a foreign or second language by allowing students to concentrate on communication rather than being distracted by worry and the fear of negative evaluation. Language instructors need to acknowledge students’ fears about oral and written evaluation while encouraging them, reassuring them and providing them with ample opportunities for oral communication practice. Alcalá (2002:1) states that anxious students ‘frequently fail to reach their potential and...their marks do not fully reflect their knowledge of the foreign or second language’. The experience of oral testing in particular can be so traumatic that it lowers self-esteem and makes the academic evaluation system seem ‘inhuman’ (Alcalá 2002:1). It is imperative that language instructors find ways to

evaluate students without inducing high levels of anxiety and while still maintaining a positive, affective climate.

Alcala (2002:1) states that in the period of time before the oral test, instructors should familiarise students with the exam format, the type of rating system to be used and who the examiners are going to be. Alcala (2002:1) advises the use of two to three examiners as one is too subjective and more than three can inhibit the students' performance. The best types of oral tests are those that are interactive and involve the negotiation of information between the examiners and the student such as an oral interview or a dialogue. Rubio (in Alcala 2002:2) found that interactive tests often lead to lower levels of anxiety in the oral exam. Monologic tests in which the student presents a short speech on a particular topic are also popular but do need to be practiced in a group setting beforehand in order to reduce anxiety levels.

Huelsman (in Phillips 1991:12) found a tendency for warm behaviour on the part of the instructor during oral tests to be associated with more output from students and higher exam scores – 'something as simple as an encouraging smile before the test begins might diminish the ominous atmosphere...associated with oral evaluation'. During oral tests, examiners need to be careful to accommodate their speech to the student's language level, reduce the speed of their utterances and try to have a 'real' conversation (Alcala 2002:3). After the oral test, it is imperative that marks are communicated timeously and students are given a report outlining the strengths and weaknesses of their oral presentation. This feedback is valuable in reducing the anxiety often associated with receiving a mark lower than one expected for an oral test but not knowing why one received this mark.

Certain types of tests encourage student participation without placing undue stress on the individual learner. There has been increased interest in the use of evaluation that involves pair or small group work, role plays and group problem-solving activities. Cooperative efforts such as these can reduce competitiveness and anxiety while still encouraging the development of communicative competence. Phillips (1991:12) states

that group testing formats may provide students with 'comfort in numbers' thereby reducing anxiety levels. Group testing also reduces test time and allows for more frequent testing which means that students become more accustomed to oral evaluation and techniques like interactive role plays.

In terms of written tests, it is vital that the content of the written test is congruent with the content of the course. Anxiety levels will increase if students are faced with written tests which contain grammar, vocabulary and writing activities which were not covered in the course. Young (1999:433) states that it is vital to 'test what you teach' as tests that are perceived to be unfair will lead to anxiety about future tests and negative attitudes towards the course and the instructor. Instructors should expose students to different test items and formats during the course so as to familiarise them with the type of items and formats that will be used in the written exam. Students can also be given the opportunity to practice with the different item types and formats which will reduce anxiety and the chance of frustration hindering performance on a written test. When the students write their final written examination, they will have a good idea about performance expectations in terms of the standard required of them which serves to reduce feelings of anxiety.

Phillips (in Young 1999:39) states that during language testing, numerous types of anxiety identified in the literature come into play such as language anxiety, test anxiety, communication apprehension and the fear of negative evaluation. It is important that instructors test what they teach and designate marks on a test for the conveyance of meaning and content and not just for grammatical correctness. Anxiety associated with testing can be reduced by providing students with ample opportunities for oral practice and presentation, familiarising them with different test items and formats and testing students in pairs or small groups. Instructors should ensure that oral and written examinations are viewed by students in a positive light as a reflection of their language ability at a particular point in time and as a means of providing valuable feedback for the instructor and the students.

XII. Humanistic techniques

Humanistic techniques refer to classroom activities which lead to:

- The development of human values
- A growth in self-awareness and in the understanding of others
- A greater sensitivity to human feelings and emotions
- Active student involvement in learning and in the way that learning takes place (Richards et al 1992:169)
- An emphasis on the whole-person as a composite of cognitive and emotional behaviour
- A view of education as a life-long process
- Self-empowerment and self-actualisation (Underhill 1989:251)

Moskowitz (1978:14) states that the use of humanistic techniques in the language classroom represent a way of ‘getting in touch with the strengths and positive qualities of ourselves and others’.

There is a difference between a traditional language classroom and a humanistic language classroom in terms of seating arrangements, the role of the instructor and the activities that take place. In traditional language classrooms, the students sit in rows, the instructor is the sole authority in the class, there is little oral communication, little or no group activities and affective needs are not taken into account. In humanistic language classrooms, students sit in groups, the instructor is a facilitator and guide, there is an emphasis on oral communication within a cooperative group setting and affective needs are always taken into account (Crookall in Horwitz and Young 1991:143).

Rogers (in Underhill 1989:251) proposes that there has been a shift in language education from teaching to learning and from teaching to facilitating. He states that ‘much of what is called learning...involves little feeling of personal meaning, and has insufficient relevance for the whole person, with a resulting lack of interest’.

Consequently, students feel that their expectations have not been met by the course, the instructor and the institution. Brown (1994:86) argues that the goal of education should be ‘the facilitation of change and learning’ and that instructors need to ‘establish interpersonal relationships’ with their students.

Underhill (1989:251) refers to the ‘process’ of humanistic education which concerns the way in which the content of a lesson is taught and learnt from the point of view of the learner and how that content can become directly relevant to the lives of the learners. Humanistic values emphasise the importance of instructors assisting students in a sensitive way so as to enhance their understanding of a topic and their perception of being successful at the learning task, for example: a humanistic language instructor does not view errors as the result of faulty learning but as outcomes of students’ efforts to learn which can be used to guide and direct the students’ language learning (Underhill 1989:253) in the required direction. Humanistic instructors trade authoritative power for autonomous power which the student exercises for and on behalf of him/herself by taking personal responsibility for their own progress. The more instructors empower students to take responsibility, the more they empower themselves in an ‘authentic and valid way building their own authority and credibility’ (Underhill 1989:256). This leads to a classroom environment in which students work from their own inner motivation and not from a reliance on the instructor’s ‘subtle repertoire of reward or praise’ (Underhill 1989:256). Students are, therefore, released from a tendency of working to please the instructor and towards working to satisfy their own inner criteria of what constitutes success.

Instructors should be warm and approachable and reward effort, risk-taking and successful communication. Humanistic instructors emphasise meaning rather than mistakes. Crookall (in Horwitz and Young 1991:142) states that in a humanistic classroom, students should be more concerned with trying to communicate their opinions than with avoiding public humiliation or trying to impress the teacher – this should lead to students developing more realistic expectations about language learning and becoming less competitive. Underhill (1989:258) states that humanistic instructors

are able to be their authentic selves rather than playing the role of teacher. They respect and accept students in an unconditional way and are empathic in the sense of understanding what the language learning experience must be like for the student in his or her subjective world.

Rivers (in Young 1999:5) states that the classroom atmosphere must be one of 'acceptance and mutual respect, where students...appreciate other students, teachers appreciate students and students appreciate the teacher'. Mechanical manipulation of a language within an anxiety-ridden classroom can never lead to authentic communication. Little and Saunders (in Young 1999:129) state that students must become a 'community of learners' because the existence of a classroom community, who sincerely strive to reach their goals, feeds the 'desire for authentic communication'. The classroom, therefore, becomes a place where students support each others' efforts and act in a cooperative rather than a competitive manner.

An important point needs to be made about course books which have a significant influence on the affective states of students. Wajnryb (in Tomlinson 1998:20) analysed two best-selling English course books and concluded that they 'belong to a world which is safe, clean, harmonious, benevolent, undisturbed and PG-rated...What is absent is significance, jeopardy, threat, negotiation and context'. Course books often reduce the learner from an individual with opinions, attitudes and emotions to a language learner whose brain is focused on 'low-level linguistic de-coding' which only serves to sanitize and trivialise language learning (Tomlinson 1998:20). In a study of students' attitudes towards course books, Tomlinson (1998:20) found that most students were indifferent to the course book and felt that it was 'boring' providing little opportunity for self-expression and emotional involvement.

Tomlinson (2001:5) states that global course books try to cater for everybody and strive not to offend anybody which leads to course books which engage nobody. Humanistic instructors, therefore, need to develop supplementary activities which make the learning process more affective and relevant. Tomlinson (2001:5) advocates a multi-

dimensional approach which is text-driven as opposed to a sole focus on the linguistic and analytical areas of language learning. Instructors should try to extract personal meaning and relevance from course books by providing examples, anecdotes, sharing opinions and attitudes and adding a local flavour to topics and themes in the course book.

Moskowitz (1978:1) states that as language instructors, we have a responsibility to change the 'stereotypes of the language class' and help our students become the best language learners they can be. Affect is the most important factor in learning as people learn through feeling emotion and experiencing things in the mind (Moskowitz 1978:1). Language learners need to feel relaxed, develop their self-confidence, develop positive attitudes towards language learning and be involved intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally in the learning experience. Instead of filling in gaps in endless grammar exercises, students in humanistic classrooms make use of their life experiences, interests, opinions, feelings and ability to make meaningful connections in their minds so as to empower themselves to achieve their language learning goals.

A. Experiential awareness

Experiential awareness is a humanistic technique which involves:

- Raising awareness of the nature of the language learning process
- The discovery and correction of erroneous beliefs about language learning
- The use of journals to pinpoint positive and negative experiences related to using the target language inside and outside the language classroom and as a means of self-expression.

1. Increasing awareness of the nature of the language learning process

Language learning is more than merely memorising grammar rules and vocabulary.

Instructors need to emphasise the holistic nature of language learning and its

connection to different contexts such as culture, technology, the mass media, history and identity issues. By countering traditional beliefs and approaches with humanistic beliefs and techniques, instructors can increase the students' awareness of the language learning process. Instructors may, for example, present students with selected research findings about language learning, fundamental study skills, goal setting and time management skills.

Learner training aims to help students consider the factors that affect their learning as it focuses attention on the process of learning and on 'how to learn' rather than on what to learn (Young 1999:144). Instructors and students should view their relationship as a partnership whereby the instructor sensitises students to the methodological, linguistic and learning aspects of their course, shares some of the problems faced by instructors and invites them to express their learning problems. It is only by helping students deal with and overcome their feelings of anxiety, that we are training them to become better language learners (Young 1999:145).

2. The discovery and correction of erroneous beliefs about language learning

Many of students' fears are based on erroneous assumptions about the language learning process. Students with unrealistic perceptions of language learning may become anxious when the techniques they use and the assumptions under which they operate fail to produce the expected results (Phillips 1991:4). It is, therefore, imperative that students are helped to develop realistic expectations about language learning. Instructors may, for example: discuss the amount of time required to learn a language, discuss the strategies of successful language learners such as the willingness to take risks and seek out oral interaction opportunities (Rubin in Phillips 1991:4) and even use standardised self-report instruments such as the Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (Horwitz 1986) – the results of which form the basis of class or group discussions about beliefs and stereotypes associated with language learning.

Horwitz (1988:286) undertook an investigation into students' beliefs about language learning using the BALLI. She discovered that a substantial number of students felt that

‘If someone spent just one hour a day learning a language, it would take a maximum of two years to achieve fluency’. Students who expect to speak the target language fluently in an unrealistic amount of time are destined for severe disappointment and may consequently develop anxiety at their perceived failure and even drop out of language study altogether. 32% of students in the study had a negative assessment of their language learning abilities and felt that they did not have the ability to learn another language. Such students are setting themselves up for failure by their lack of self-belief. 39% of students believed that learning grammar rules was the most important part of language learning and 75% of respondents stated that learning a language is merely a matter of learning how to translate from their first language into English. Such students are likely to be resistant to holistic language learning strategies and will spend the majority of their time learning vocabulary and/or grammar rules. Likewise, a preoccupation with translation is likely to distract students from other important language learning tasks. When these students do not achieve the results they desire, they may develop feelings of anxiety regarding language learning (Horwitz 1989:288-91).

Lindenou (1987:57) conducted an investigation into the issues that language instructors and students consider to be important in the language classroom. She states that ‘students and teachers are not saying the same things about what is important in language learning (as)...students did not rank a single issue the same as language teachers’. In her study, instructors marked the three most important issues as: testing, promoting and maintaining interest in the language and language learning theory. Students, however, ranked ‘developing oral proficiency’ as their most important issue with testing and promoting and maintaining interest in the language in second and third place respectively. Students stated that ‘in spite of all the talk about communicative competence there is, in fact, not enough speaking being done...in language classes’ (Lindenou 1987:60). This discrepancy between student and teacher perceptions of what is important in the language classroom can lead to anxiety on the part of the students and dissatisfaction with the course as a whole.

Horwitz (1998:292) states that erroneous beliefs can result in negative outcomes for many language learners. Language instructors cannot afford to ignore these beliefs if they expect their students to be open to particular teaching methods and to receive maximum benefit from them. The most effective course of action for instructors is to confront erroneous beliefs with factual information and discussions about the nature of language learning should be a regular part of the course content. Horwitz (1998:292) believes that instructors need to show students by example and instructional practice 'the holistic nature of language learning'.

3. The use of journals in the language classroom

Bailey (in Nunan 1992:120) defines a language journal as 'a first-hand account of a language learning or teaching experience, documented through regular, candid entries in a personal journal and then analysed for recurring patterns or salient events'.

Journals are useful diagnostic tools for determining students' anxiety patterns, can assist students in grasping a more realistic view of the process of learning a language, highlight areas of weakness and strength and help students prioritise which areas of language learning to concentrate on.

There are a number of researchers who have kept language diaries which have become the source of much useful information about constructs such as anxiety, competitiveness and self-esteem. Moore (in Seliger and Long 1983:79) describes his feelings of anxiety while learning Danish as follows: 'one feels bewildered; ashamed and inferior when everyone else appears to understand except oneself...humiliated when one has to admit ignorance openly, however, kind the teacher is'. Leichmann (in Seliger and Long 1983:83) reports that she felt a fear of public failure and a need for success when learning Indonesian: 'when in class I still had the fear of being called on...I became a little less confident...in almost every class I would fluctuate between feelings of success and failure'.

Walsleben (in Seliger and Long 1983:86) states that what the student perceives as real may be more important to that person's language learning experience than any external

reality. Diary studies, if candid and thorough, can provide access to the language learners hidden classroom responses, especially in the affective domain (Seliger and Long 1983:94). Bailey kept a language diary of her experience of learning French as a foreign language. She discovered that there was a strong relationship between her feelings of language anxiety and her need to compete with other students. In her diary she writes: 'Today I panicked in the oral exercise...I am absolutely worn out...I feel so lost. I am very anxious about this class and I feel like I am behind the others and slowing down the pace'. Bailey identified a number of factors which contributed to her sense of anxiety and competitiveness: a comparison of self to others, a desire to outperform others, the teacher's emphasis on tests and grades, a desire to win the teacher's approval and a discrepancy between an idealised self-image and a realistic assessment of herself as a language learner (Seliger and Long 1983:73-7).

Self-perception plays a key role in how students approach the acquisition and use of a foreign or second language. Learning how to reflect upon their experiences by means of journal writing can assist students in becoming more in tune with their impressions of their language competence and provide a means of modifying their approaches to language learning. The use of journals enables students to articulate problems, generate original insights, develop a personal relationship with their instructor, create material for discussion purposes and become more responsible for their language learning experience and ultimate success (Nunan 1992:120).

B. Group awareness

Group awareness is a humanistic technique which involves students working in small groups on a variety of classroom tasks in order to create a sense of belonging to a community of learners involved in the pursuit of a common goal. Group work increases the amount of time students have for practicing their oral communication skills and provides a supportive framework for oral preparation and presentation. Group work assists in reducing teacher talk time and creates a situation where the responsibility for

participation and input is handed over to the student while the teacher's role becomes that of facilitator and guide. Students start to view the teacher as a resource rather than as a critical and authoritarian figure.

1. The importance of group work

The group is a powerful entity whose characteristics have a major impact on the productivity of learning. The use of group work in the language classroom can make classroom events appear less threatening and create cohesive, creative and well-balanced groups for whom language learning becomes a cooperative and self-actualising experience (Dornyei and Malderez 1997:80).

The use of group work in the language classroom encourages individual participation as each member of the group is valued equally as a contributor to the group's resources and ultimate success. This is in contrast to traditional language classrooms where the focus is on individual achievement and the class tends to be dominated by a few vocal individuals. Dornyei and Malderez (1997:77) state that group work 'promotes classroom interaction' as it encourages people to interact with each other and build strong interpersonal relationships. A mixture of pair and small group work allows for contact and interaction between all group members which helps students to overcome their inhibitions and feelings of anxiety.

Bejarano (1987:483) investigated the effects of two small group cooperative techniques and the whole class method on academic achievement in EFL learning. Both group methods registered significantly greater improvement than the whole class method on the total score of the achievement test. These findings support the link between the Communicative Approach and cooperative learning in small groups. Observers reported that students in the small groups were 'actively involved in real communication rather than in using answers taken out of texts or manipulating...set linguistic structures' (Bejarano 1987:485). Students, therefore, used new linguistic structures necessary for specific task communication which enriched their linguistic competence. Hatch (in Bejarano 1987:495) argues that linguistic forms are acquired

and used productively only when they assume ‘a critical role in transmitting essential information’. Group work may be a means of overcoming the common problem in EFL/ESL classes of students knowing a grammar structure but being unable to use it in real communication situations.

Littlejohn (in Long and Porter 1985:212) in a study of beginner level Spanish students, found that small group, independent study led to increased motivation to study Spanish. Students reported feeling less inhibited and freer to speak and make mistakes than in teacher-led classes. Although students may not be able to provide each other with accurate grammatical and sociolinguistic input, they do provide each other with genuine communicative practice including negotiating for meaning which is believed to aid second language acquisition (Long and Porter 1985:217). Long and Porter (1985:215) found that in adult EFL classes in Mexico, the amount and variety of student talk was found to be significantly greater in small-groups than in teacher-led discussions. Students talked more and used a wider range of structures in the small-group context.

In small group activities, the students and the instructor are in a state of dynamic cooperation in which they can both contribute to the creation of a positive social atmosphere. Group work gives students time to think aloud and to talk in less than perfect language providing them with the opportunity to get exposure to language that they can understand and which contains unknown items for them to practice and learn (Nation 1989:20). Bejarano (1987:495) states that group work creates ‘far less inhibition and tension...because discourse serves communicative needs rather than the demands of public recitation’. Small group activities and discussions, therefore, contribute to the creation of a meaningful social environment which promotes authentic language use and social communication as opposed to the somewhat dry and sterile practices of the traditional language classroom.

2. Creating a sense of belonging to a supportive group working towards a common goal
 Language instructors can create a sense of belonging to a supportive community working towards a common goal by means of cooperative learning activities, group seating arrangements, group discussions and the creation of a sense of collective achievement rather than a sole focus on individual achievement. Students will soon realise that they are part of a community of learners and that cooperative rather than competitive learning is encouraged.

A small group provides a relatively intimate setting and a supportive environment in which to practice new language skills (Long and Porter 1985:211). Working in groups reduces the ‘audience effect’ of the language class, the anxiety created by the listening instructor as ‘judge’ and the need to produce a concise, polished product within a short space of time. Barnes (in Long and Porter 1985:211) states that a small group ‘allows us to be relatively inexplicit and incoherent, to change direction...to be uncertain...our confidence in our friends allows us to take the first steps towards sorting out our feelings by putting them into words’. Once students are free from the tyranny of ‘accuracy at all costs’ (Long and Porter 1985:212), they enter a richer and more fulfilling set of relationships provided by small group interaction. The creation of this more positive, affective climate in the language classroom can assist in reducing anxiety levels.

Forsyth (in Dornyei and Malderez 1997:73) defines group cohesion as ‘the strength of the relationship linking the members of the group to one another and to the group itself’. The greater the students’ identification with their group, the more they will be motivated to participate in group activities and advance the group’s objectives. Levine (in Dornyei and Malderez 1997:73) states that ‘members of a cohesive group are more likely to participate actively in conversations, engage in self-disclosure and collaborative narration’. Group cohesion can be achieved by means of spending a significant amount of time together, having a shared group history, experiencing positive intermember relations and sharing feelings of joy and success in individual and

group achievements (Dornyei and Malderez 1997:73). Group cohesion leads to the feeling of belonging to something bigger than oneself and being part of a positive group experience that builds confidence and self-esteem and reduces feelings of alienation, anxiety and inhibition.

Dornyei and Malderez (1997:69) state that there are several ways that instructors can promote group cohesion such as sharing genuine personal information because acceptance occurs through knowing, sitting next to or close to each other, playing language games or other forms of positive intergroup competition and creating communication-rich activities in which all group members are given the opportunity to interact with each other.

Group work in the language classroom can, therefore, be used as a tool to create a sense of belonging to a supportive group working towards a common goal. A review of the research literature reveals that there is consistent evidence that a cooperative group setting is more powerful than a competitive or individualistic setting in promoting the intrinsic motivation of students, reducing feelings of anxiety, creating positive attitudes towards the language and culture and promoting the formation of caring, cohesive relationships between students and instructors (Johnson in Dornyei and Malderez 1997:74).

3. Increasing students' opportunities for oral communication practice

Group work can be used as a means of increasing students' opportunities for oral communication practice. Long and Porter (1985:208) propose that one of the main reasons for low-achievement by many EFL/ESL students is simply that 'they do not have enough time to practice the new language'. In many language classrooms, the predominant mode of instruction is the 'lockstep' (Long and Porter 1985:208) in which the instructor sets the pace of instruction and decides on the content of each lesson for everyone by lecturing, explaining grammar or asking questions of the whole class. When lessons are organised in this manner, the instructor talks for at least half and even two-thirds of any class period (Flanders in Long and Porter 1985:208). The use of

group activities can, therefore, increase the amount of time that students have for oral communication.

Face to face communication in a small group setting is a natural format for conversation and discussion. Students can engage in cohesive and coherent sequences of utterances and learn how to develop discourse competence as opposed to sentence grammar (Long and Porter 1985:209). In small group conversations and discussions, students also develop important communication skills such as learning how to suggest, infer, disagree, generalise and hypothesise. This can lead to students' feeling more confident about their ability to communicate in the target language and can, therefore, lead to a reduction in language anxiety.

By using small group work to increase the amount of time that students have to actually use the language in oral communication, instructors can facilitate and guide students in their quest for oral communication skills and more natural target language use. With the use of appropriate authentic materials and problems to solve or discuss, students can engage in the kind of information exchange characteristic of communication in the 'real world' where the focus is on spontaneous and creative language use in order to convey the desired meaning (Long and Porter 1985:210).

4. Providing a supportive framework for oral preparation and presentation

The small group can be used as a forum for practicing oral communication skills within the context of small group activities. Activities such as role plays, dialogues, language games and discussions all serve to encourage participation and involvement among students. Many of these activities are, however, recognised to be anxiety-inducing activities. Instructors need to work hard at creating group cohesion and presenting activities in a positive and sensitive manner so that the small group is perceived as a supportive framework in which all participants can relax and feel comfortable to practice oral skills without the sense of 'performing' in front of a critical audience.

The small group can also be used as a tool to allow students to practice their final oral presentation. Oral presentation topics should be given to students some time before the final examination and once students have chosen their topics, class time can be allocated to allow students to practice presenting their oral within the supportive framework of their group. Group members may be allowed to offer supportive suggestions to the individual. This activity serves to allay the anxiety associated with the final oral presentation as students will already have presented their orals to a supportive and non-critical audience. Final oral examinations tend to increase students' anxiety levels about oral communication and also induce feelings of test anxiety. By using the small group as an initial audience feelings of anxiety can, to a certain extent, be alleviated.

XII. Conclusion

A review of the literature suggests that language anxiety is a problem common to language classes throughout the world. It is also widely accepted that language anxiety is linked to the constructs of communication apprehension and test anxiety. A historical overview of the research literature reveals that research on language anxiety has come a long way and the affective state of the individual in the language classroom is now receiving the attention it deserves. The negative effect of language anxiety on the skill of oral communication in another language and on oral testing can be countered by the use of selected humanistic techniques which take account of the whole-person and attempt to create a positive, affective atmosphere in which to learn a language.

The objective of ridding language learning of unnecessary anxiety is to create more effective language learning and to instil in students an increased interest and motivation to learn another language. As language instructors, it is our responsibility to create a language learning environment which does not lead to unnecessarily high levels of anxiety and resulting unpleasant emotions and stress. Our task is to create an atmosphere conducive to successful language learning, to ensure that our students feel a sense of achievement and enjoyment in the learning of another language and perhaps,

most importantly, is the realisation that we have been given the opportunity to open our students' eyes to another world view and culture through which they can become more self-actualised and confident individuals.

