English Language Anxiety in Higher Education: A Case Study of Spanish Students

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the anxiety of French-speaking students in the Spanish Department at the University of Yaoundé I (Cameroon) while learning English. We used quantitative and qualitative methods. The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the Affective Filter Hypothesis developed by Krashen (2009). The results showed that anxiety is a barrier that negatively affects the learning of English by French-speaking students. Several factors were found to be at the root of this anxiety: language typology, language level, the influence of French, personality, the reactions of others, and beliefs. We also found that students were anxious about learning Spanish, but this anxiety affected them positively. The paper suggests that learners should be in permanent contact with the English language, teachers and students should develop language tolerance by focusing on the message, not the language form, and teachers should include digital technologies to lower anxiety.

Introduction

Anxiety in language learning is gradually becoming a concern for many linguists in many countries. Anxiety happens to have a significant impact on non-native speakers or learners worldwide. Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986:128) define language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perception, belief, feeling, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process". In the same line, MacIntyre (1999) describes it as a feeling of stress, nervousness, emotional reaction, and worry linked to a second/foreign language. This study aims to investigate English language anxiety in level 2 Francophone students studying Spanish at the University of Yaoundé I. These students are faced with a foreign language and a second official language, which can be a source of anxiety. Foreign language anxiety (or anxiety in foreign or second language learning) is a type of specific anxiety that is related to learning a language in the classroom. Different recent studies have investigated the causes, consequences, and implications of English as a foreign language anxiety in different settings (Goñi-Osácar & Lafuente-Millán, 2022; Fattahi Marnani & Cuocci, 2022; Mao, 2023), but few works have been found in Cameroon in general and for Francophone students of another foreign language (Tumasang, 2021; Sokeng Piewo & Njolai, 2024). For this study, we used quantitative and qualitative methods. For the quantitative

method, a questionnaire was administered to the students; for the qualitative method, participant observation was used. Finally, some suggestions are made regarding the findings of our study.

Literature review and theoretical framework

This section reviews the manifestations and sources of anxiety, and the theoretical framework adopted for this study.

Manifestations of anxiety

There are many symptoms related to anxiety. Kralova and Petrova (2017) cite Horwitz and Cope (1986) and Hashemi and Abbassi (2013), who identified *sweating, palpitations, trembling, apprehension, worry, fear, threat, difficult concentration, forgetfulness, freezing, going blank, and avoidance behaviour, blushing, perspiration, headache, tension and pain in any part of the body, abnormal verbal behaviour, such as staggered voice, either too fast or too slow speed of speech, rubbing the palms, squirming, fidgeting, playing with hair or clothes, touching objects, stuttering or stammering, poor performance, less interpretativeness, less eye contact because of reading from the paper or screen while giving presentation* among the symptoms that can affect a foreign language learner.

Loan (2022) investigated the causes of anxiety in learning English speaking skills. The findings revealed that the students' self-perceived language competence constitutes a barrier to learning. It also appears that learners behave anxiously when speaking because they want to avoid being corrected by their English teacher.

Tridinanti (2018) evaluated the link between speaking anxiety and self-confidence in EFL learners' speaking achievements in Palembang private universities. He noticed that self-confidence has a significant effect on speaking achievements. Furthermore, he concluded that self-confidence impacts speaking skills more than speaking anxiety, pointed out the importance of self-confidence in an EFL class, and encouraged instructors to help students build self-confidence by creating communication situations in language classes.

Bensalem (2017) investigated foreign language anxiety among trilingual Tunisian students. His findings showed that the classroom was one of the primary sources of anxiety. The other sources of anxiety among the findings were the worry about failing and the apprehension about speaking English. The researcher proved a correlation between foreign language anxiety and performance.

Sadiq (2017) discussed four types of language anxiety: writing anxiety, reading anxiety, speaking anxiety, and listening anxiety. Writing anxiety can be viewed as a negative attitude towards writing skills in a particular language, mainly when it happens to be a foreign language. As cited in Sadiq, Cheng (1997) discovered a negative correlation between foreign anxiety and foreign language writing achievement. According to Cheng (2002), a high level of anxiety makes students avoid written courses. It is also proved that learners who are immensely affected by writing anxiety do not write much in their tests, have problems with concentration, face obstacles in mastering their input, do not easily distinguish sounds and structures, and do not readily recall information. Reading anxiety occurs when learners must read a text in a target language. It influences academic performance in general. It is due to a lack of self-confidence. Speaking anxiety is also caused by the absence of self-assurance. Speaking is essential in communication, and according to Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986), speaking skills are the most affected by language anxiety. Listening anxiety significantly impacts listening because

listening is the channel through which important input is learned or acquired. So, proficiency in a target language depends on listening skills, which listening anxiety can immensely hinder.

Hayuningtyas (2022) analysed the types of anxiety in undergraduate students of Bahasa dan Sastra Arab Department of IAIN Jember. The research revealed two types of anxiety: Trait anxiety and state/situational anxiety. The first is a stable or permanent type characterising the person, whereas the second is temporal and determined by the context or environment. In the second case, the behaviour or the manifestations vary according to the situation. The researcher also discovered three sources of anxiety in the students: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is a type of shyness characterised by fear or anxiety about communicating with other people. The fear of failure generally causes test anxiety. The researcher defined it as an "unpleasant feeling or emotional state that has psychological and behaviour behavioural concomitants, and that is experienced in formal testing or other evaluative situations" (Dusek 1980, cited in Cubukcu, 2007). The fear of negative evaluation is characterised by bothering about how others will view one's performance and running away from evaluations.

Sources of anxiety

Hashemi (2011) listed some causes of anxiety, among which he mentioned the sociocultural contexts, cultural differences, and social status and self-identity as factors of anxiety. To him, the sense of foreignness of a language itself is already a factor of anxiety. In addition, he argues that the differences in culture are an essential element that can cause anxiety. To better understand this aspect, it is essential to understand the link between culture and language. When the cultural aspects of a language learner do not match those of the target language, it is likely to engender anxiety (Tanveer, 2007). In that sense, Jones (2004) found that culture is a causal factor in Asian contexts. As far as social status and self-identity are concerned, it is revealed that communication can be significantly influenced if there is a great social distance between the interlocutors (Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor, 1977, cited in Carrier, 1999:70). Pica (1987:4) affirmed that when there is an unequal status between students and teachers, it causes anxiety. Hashemi suggests that the language classroom be made less formal and friendlier to reduce anxiety. Attempting to have an exhaustive list of the sources of anxiety is engaging oneself in a challenging task because they vary from one learner to another, from one region to another, and from one sociocultural context to another.

It was challenging to find works on foreign language anxiety in Cameroon, especially among Francophones taking Spanish as a foreign language as their main course and English as their second official language.

Theoretical framework

Krashen (2009) developed a theory of second language acquisition in the 1980s with five main hypotheses. Our focus is on the Affective Filter Hypothesis, which stands on the ground that 'affective variables' play an important role in second language acquisition. According to Krashen (2009:31), there is a strong relationship between affective variables and language acquisition. He believes that learners who do not have an optimal attitude towards acquiring a second language will, at the same time, seek less input and have a solid or high affective filter as the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for acquiring a language. On the contrary, those with a positive or conducive attitude will have more input, and the affective filter will be weak or low. The affective variables identified by Krashen are motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the effect of anxiety on the learners' motivation?
2. How does anxiety impact the learners' self-esteem?
3. What are the manifestations of anxiety in the language learning process?

Method

Pedagogical Setting & Participants' linguistic background

This study randomly selected one hundred students of level 2 taking Spanish as a main course and English as a compulsory course for all Francophone students at the University of Yaounde I, which is a public university considered the *mother* of all universities in Cameroon. It investigated language anxiety's causes, extent, and manifestations of learning English. In Cameroon, French and English are the official languages used in administration, education, and daily activities around the ten regions. Alongside these official languages, we have pidgin English (primarily used in the 2 English-speaking regions), *Camfranglais* (a blend of local language, French and English, used mainly by the youths in the 8 French-speaking regions), and more than 200 local languages. The Francophone educational system teaches foreign languages like German or Spanish in *Quatrième, Troisième* (third and fourth year of secondary school), *Seconde, Première* and *Terminale* (fifth to final year of secondary school for language students). These languages are also offered as courses in two separate departments at the Faculty of Arts, Letters, and Social Sciences of the University of Yaounde I. The official languages are compulsory for all students (French for Anglophones and English for Francophones). Francophone students who choose to study German or Spanish must take English classes.

Design of the Study

The research used a mixed-methods research design: quantitative and qualitative. One hundred students were randomly selected to answer the 20-item questionnaire on anxiety in learning a foreign language.

Data collection and analysis

The content of the questionnaire, based on the variables of the Affective Filter Hypothesis, was about the impact of anxiety on learning English. The questionnaire was divided into three main sections; the first section analysed the motivation of the informants, the second discussed self-confidence and the last anxiety. The researchers also used observation to check the informants' attendance and participation in English classes.

Results

Motivation

This section discusses anxiety in the motivation of the informants regarding learning English.

Table 1

Motivation of Language Learners

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
1	Choice of teaching approach	Use of students' L1	80	Anxiety
		Absence of students' L1	20	No anxiety
2	Results of using English only	Misunderstanding	54	Anxiety
		Poor performance	17	Anxiety
		Good performance	13	No anxiety
		Amelioration of the speaking skills	16	No anxiety

The findings in Table 1 reveal that 80% of teachers prefer to use French during their English classes, and only 20% prefer English. Overall, the performance in English could be better (13%), and only 16% claimed that their speaking skills had improved.

Self-confidence

Questions 3 to 13 examined aspects of self-confidence in learning English, which reflected anxiety.

Table 2

Self-confidence

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
3	Choice of evaluation	Reading comprehension	83	Anxiety
		Oral test	17	No anxiety
4	Options of essay	Submission of write-up	63	Anxiety
		Presentation	37	No anxiety
		Avoidance of mistakes	08	Anxiety
5	Reasons for choosing written evaluation	Fear of mockery	54	Anxiety
		Possibility to max. ideas	32	No anxiety
		Poor performance in Eng.	06	No anxiety
6	Sentiments toward an oral test in the English language	Fear	50	Anxiety
		Unhappiness	30	Anxiety
		Extreme happiness	07	No anxiety
		Happiness	03	No anxiety
		Indifference	10	No anxiety
7	Options for apologies	Written	72	Anxiety

		Spoken	28	No anxiety
		People's reactions	25	Anxiety
		Shame	20	Anxiety
8	Hindrance to speaking skills	Lack of self-confidence	22	Anxiety
		Grammar & reading	13	Anxiety
		Grammar & vocabulary	63	Anxiety
		Pronunciation & reading	07	No anxiety
		Listening & speaking	10	No anxiety
		Poor vocabulary	33	No Anxiety
		Grammar & speaking	07	No anxiety
10	Views about English words	Easy pronunciation	30	No anxiety
		Challenging pronunciation	70	Anxiety
		1 year	18	No anxiety
		2 years	16	No anxiety
11	Duration for fluency in English	3 years	24	Anxiety
		4 years	15	Anxiety
		5 years	12	Anxiety
		More than 5 years	15	Anxiety
	Students' thoughts about their performance after working hard	From 0 to 4.5	0	Anxiety
12		From 5 to 9.5	37	Anxiety
		From 10 to 14.5	32	Anxiety
		From 15 to 20	31	No anxiety
		Correctness	30	Anxiety
13	Concerns about speaking a language	Communicating fluently	38	Anxiety
		Communicating	19	No anxiety
		Being understood	13	No anxiety

The results in Table 2 show that some informants are favourable to anxiety. Concerning the choice of evaluation in Question 3, 83% of learners are affected by anxiety as they opted for reading comprehension over oral text. For essay options (Question 4), 63% chose to submit their write-up rather than to make presentations. Question 5 requested that learners justify their choice of written evaluation. 8 students justified it with the avoidance of making mistakes, which is a sign of anxiety, and 54 students justified their choice of written evaluation with the fear of mockery (which is also a sign of anxiety), thus giving us 62% of learners affected by anxiety. According to Question 6, students' sentiments towards the English language are presented as follows: 50 students for fear and 30 students for unhappiness, thus giving 80% of learners impacted by anxiety. Question 7 indicates that 72% chose written apologies over spoken as a sign of anxiety. Question 8 shows that learners consider the following factors as a hindrance to their speaking skills: people's reaction (25%), shame (20%), and lack of self-confidence (22%), thus giving a total of 67% of learners affected by anxiety. Question 9 investigated anxiety through language skills or lessons; those who avoid oral skills are 76%: we had 63 students who opted for grammar and vocabulary and 13 students for grammar and reading over all the combinations that request spoken English. For Question 10, 70 learners are affected by anxiety due to their view of English words (difficult). In Question 11, learners that require 3 years and above to be fluent in English are those impacted by anxiety (66%). Question

12 indicates that 69% of students need help to reach fluency. The last question, 13, proves that 68% of the respondents are concerned with anxiety.

Anxiety

Questions 14 to 20 examined anxiety in learning English.

Table 3

Anxiety

N°	Investigation	Options	Respondents (N=100)	Classification
14	Options for job interview	Crowded	22	No anxiety
		Not crowded	78	Anxiety
15	Reactions to English speakers	Response in English	34	No anxiety
		No response	04	Anxiety
		Response in French	26	Anxiety
		Mixing of English and French	36	No anxiety
16	Feeling about the arrival of the English teacher	Nervousness	23	Anxiety
		Worry	25	Anxiety
		Excitement	19	No anxiety
		Indifference	33	No anxiety
		Much excitement	14	No anxiety
17	Feeling about the announcement of the English test	Fear	32	Anxiety
		Worry	15	Anxiety
		Nervousness	15	Anxiety
		Indifference	24	No anxiety
18	Opinions about English words	Difficult to retain	70	Anxiety
		Easy to retain	30	No anxiety
19	Belief about innate ability in English	False	37	No anxiety
		True	63	No anxiety
20	Concerns about speaking a language	Communicating fluently	38	Anxiety
		Correctness	30	Anxiety
		Being understood	13	No anxiety
		Communicating	19	No anxiety

Table 3 reveals that in question 14, 78% of the learners opted for a job interview not crowded (anxiety). In 15, only 30% of learners are concerned with anxiety due to the way they respond to English speakers (no response: 4, response in French: 26). Question 16 enabled us to detect nervousness (23%) and worry (25%) altogether, giving 48%. English test anxiety was detected through the learners' feelings when the test was announced in Question 17 (fear: 32%, worry: 15%, nervousness: 15%), and we got a total of 62%. We also got from Question 18 that 70% of the learners view English words as challenging to retain. Furthermore, Question 19 permits us to understand that 63% of learners believe in the innate ability to do well in English. Finally, the concerns about anxiety in speaking a language were the last components of our diagnosis in Question 20 (30% for correctness and 38% for fluent communication). These last components are valid because focusing on correctness and fluent communication within the learning process is a source of anxiety because they hinder oral improvement.

The quantitative data reveal that out of twenty questions, only two (15 and 16) have less than 50% of learners affected by anxiety within the learning process of English. The rest of the questions vary from 62 to 83 %. This shows that the sample of our study is highly influenced by anxiety.

Participant observation

We observed the behaviour of informants with a focus on their attendance to classes in general (and English in particular) and their attendance to oral evaluations. We also observed their choices of seats in the English classroom. We came out with the following details:

- No motivation noticed through attendance

The students' attendance in English classes is lower than that of the Spanish classes. We had to be present during English and other classes to check whether learners attended English classes. It was noticed that the gap was huge. We could estimate 35 to 40% absentees during English classes.

- Lack of self-confidence through a low attendance to oral evaluation and the shallow voice during oral evaluation

The student's attendance at oral evaluations is lower than that of regular classes. In this case, the oral evaluation of students generally refers to presentations. Students are given topics to work in groups and present in class. The teachers reported that very few students (sometimes half) come for the presentations. There are two possibilities in this case (as the informants reported): some students were absent from work. They did not participate, and others were present and participated but did not come for the presentation because they were afraid to speak in front of the teachers and their classmates. The informants reported many reasons for speaking in a shallow voice, depending on the teacher's position. When the teacher sits on a front bench, the intention is to avoid the mistakes being heard or noticed by the classmates. When the teacher sits on a back bench, the low voice is a sign of a lack of self-confidence in whether the sentence grammaticality is correct, or the pronunciation of the words is correct.

- Anxiety noticeable through the choice of seats

Committed students sit on the front benches, and non-committed students sit on the back benches of the class. This observation may not seem relevant to others, but to an extent, it is essential to mention. Many students avoid front benches to avoid close contact with the language teacher. Generally, teachers quickly call on those in the front benches more often than those in the back. So, to avoid being called on by the teacher to speak or give an answer orally, many students prefer sitting in the back or off to the sides. This observation is not relevant in some cases because some students sit behind because they come late and for other personal reasons.

Discussion

The findings are presented into three groups following Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis.

The effect on motivation

Motivation is fundamental in a learning process. Mehmet (2020) views motivation as '*the mental event that decides the course of action'.* The importance of motivation can be seen through its effect on the learner's autonomy (when it comes to learning) as proven by Nguyen et al (2024). Considering the fact that the new trend of teaching advocates developing autonomy

in learners (particularly when learning a language) to be able to study or work by themselves, the researchers ibid. discovered that the desire for greater educational achievements could prompt the students to be more autonomous in their studies.

This study reveals that the absence of the learner's L1 within the teaching and learning process demotivates the learners. They lose interest, fail to understand, and consequently, perform poorly.

The effect on the learners' self-esteem

Sedikides & Gress (2003) viewed self-esteem as the individual's perception or subjective appraisal of one's self-worth, one's feeling of self-respect and self-confidence and the extent to which the individual holds positive or negative view about self. Abeer (2023) proves that the correlation between the students' anxiety and their self-esteem is a negative one. He posits that when the learners' anxiety drops, their self-esteem increases. In our study, a lack of self-confidence characterises anxiety, and this brings about the following:

- most students avoid spoken activities and oral evaluations to opt for written activities and written evaluations;
- learners are overwhelmed by fear, unhappiness, worry, and nervousness when an activity or evaluation is to take place orally;
- the more crowded the class is, the more anxious the students become; anxiety increases as the environment becomes more populated.
- students underestimate themselves as far as their capacity to gain proficiency is concerned, which means anxiety does not only concern the speaking skills but the learning process and performance in both written and spoken English;
- people/classmates' reactions are one of the significant causes of anxiety;
- many students care much about the correctness of their sentences while communicating in the target language.

The effect on anxiety

According to Abeer (2023), anxiety is considered a negative factor that can control the way a person deals with learning. The author cites some works (Brown 2007; Liu & Huang 2011; Samimy & Rardin 1994) viewing anxiety as one among the most powerful affective predictors of learners' performance and competence.

In our study, anxiety is also characterised by an influence on the learners' beliefs and behaviour within the teaching and learning context:

- students think about divine or innate abilities;
- students' attendance in the English class is lower than that of Spanish classes;
- many students speak in a low voice as a sign of inhibition;
- some students sit on the back benches as a sign of inhibition;
- students view English words as challenging to retain and pronounce;
- students develop negative attitudes towards the target language speakers.

Observing our findings and comparing the students' performances and attitudes towards English and Spanish, we realise that some disparities are linked to the language typology, the input, the impact of the L1, personality, people's reactions, and beliefs.

Language typology or the linguistic distance

Linguistic distance here has to do with the typology of different languages. For instance, foreign language learners of a particular language can feel intensely anxious when learning a language of a different typology or origin. Thus, one can understand if a Francophone feels more comfortable learning Spanish than English. Like many other researchers, Kralova and Petrova (2017) noted that the typological distance between languages increases anxiety in foreign language. This goes on the same line as Robert's (2004) view that the acquisition/learning of a foreign language greatly depends on the proximity between the target language and their L1. In Cameroon, one will realise that some Francophone language learners feel less anxiety when learning Spanish than when learning English. This is because French, their L1, shares the same origin as Spanish (Indo-European derived from Latin), whereas English is an Indo-European Germanic language. Here, the difference lies more in the writing systems. So, we can affirm that the proximity of the writing system between Spanish and French may bring less anxiety than the distance between French and English.

Language input

Language input is of great significance to language learning. Krashen (1985) showed it with the input hypothesis. He posited that the best way to make learners acquire a language is to supply them with comprehensible input in low-anxiety situations. Here, the number of language items is significant. The less a learner is in contact with the language input, the more likely he/she is to behave anxiously when communication is required. Even if more and more Anglophone Cameroonians use French for different reasons (Ze Amvela, 1999; Fonka, 2014; Atechi, 2015; Kouega, 2002), Francophone Cameroonians do not use English at the same pace due to some social, cultural, or psychological barriers.

Nevertheless, we must specify that the input that Francophones in Cameroon are exposed to in English is less than that of Anglophones in French; the population of both languages is enough to help understand (8 Francophone and 2 Anglophone regions). Some Francophone learners of English get in contact with their target language only in a classroom, whereas French is spoken widely. It is not easy to come up with an exhaustive list of the causes of anxiety because it depends on factors like geographical spheres, social aspects, and linguistic and cultural differences from one region or country to another. Hashemi (2011) posited that because of limited exposure in a country like Iran, language learners face serious difficulties that hinder learning foreign languages.

The L1 impact

The L1 impact here refers to the influence of the learner's behaviour that is created by the linguistic background he/she has received from his/her first language. Jarvis (2007) states that *" as a theoretical construct, conceptual transfer can be characterised as the hypothesis that certain instances of crosslinguistic influence in a person's use of one language originate from the conceptual knowledge and patterns of thought that the person has acquired as a speaker of another language."* It is referred to as the Conceptual Transfer Hypothesis. However, in our analysis, the L1 impact has two components: the L1 learning/acquisition system and the communication focus. Let us take the first one; if a student has acquired his/ her L1 based on the form, he/she will tend to learn the target language based on the form, which can have a negative impact. Learning a language based on grammaticality usually prevents students from making fast progress because of the tendency to be willing to make correct sentences so that the interlocutor will not notice the mistakes. There is this fear of making mistakes that constitutes a blockage. This is the case with our informants. French is taught based on the form

or grammaticality, and students try to transfer that system to their English language learning process. The second aspect is the focus when communicating in the target language. There are two aspects in an interaction: the message and the form. If a learner focuses on the message, there will be less anxiety. However, if his/her focus is on the form of language, he/she will automatically be bothered about people's reactions to the language form.

Personality

Many researchers have shown the link between personality and language learning/acquisition. Krashen's Affective filter hypothesis is one of the main points that are linked to personality. Schutz (2019) comments on Krashen's affective filter hypothesis by positing that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, good self-image, a low level of anxiety and extroversion can be more fit to succeed in second language acquisition. The majority of these factors are personality traits. Cook (2001), also points out the link (positive) extrovert learners have with the communicative approach. It has been demonstrated that extrovert language learners are predisposed to quick success in oral communication and language learning. However, introverted learners are overwhelmed mainly by shyness, which is a factor of anxiety. Raamkhumar et al. (2024) while establishing the relationship between personality traits and language learning, posit that personality plays a significant role in language learning. To them, extraversion is also the trait that is most conducive to language learning because students with this trait tend to be more sociable and outspoken.

People's reaction

Let's introduce this factor with one of the 'principles of accommodation' revised and expanded by Giles et al. (2023) stipulating that people can reduce social distance by using more accommodative acts for a positive outcome when they wish. Indeed, this is not directly connected to the language situation, but it matches with people's reaction to language utterances. Yang & Zhao (2017) highlight the role of interlocutor in second language and come up with four aspects:

- The interlocutor's social status,
- The interlocutor's familiarity with the speaker,
- The interlocutor's target language proficiency and,
- The appropriateness of feedback (which matches perfectly with our context)

This last aspect (appropriateness of feedback), according to the authors, does not refer to a straight *yes* or *no* reaction to a learner's utterance. Firstly, they argue that *direct, sharp even rude corrections* can cause the interruption of the speaker's thinking process and can also end his/her communication which would affect the student or the learner's performance. Secondly, they state that in such situations, there can be a negative impact on the learner's self-esteem and willingness to speak.

It is expected that some teachers, learners, or students will react very poorly towards an interlocutor whose utterance needs to be grammatically correct. Many do that ignorantly, but it affects and prevents many learners from progressing in their learning process. What generally causes anxiety in some language learners is the way people react. Some interlocutors are fond of laughing at those who utter wrong sentences or words that are not grammatically correct. In a classroom context, both the teacher and the classmates are a cause of anxiety because of the

way they react when someone speaks. Among the negative attitudes, we can talk of laughing (this ultimately discourages some shy learners), exclaiming, mocking, murmuring, and shouting.

From a general perspective, both a positive and negative reactions can impact the learning process according to the various types. The importance of a positive feedback is demonstrated by Dinh & Pham (2024). Their study shows that praises and suggestions raised the awareness of language proficiency, had a great impact on the students' motivation and facilitated the interaction between the teacher and the student.

Students' beliefs

The main idea about students' belief in this study is that the ability to gain proficiency in the English language is innate. Dewaele (2002), while listing *learner variables* as sources of anxiety, also mentioned noticeable beliefs in our study; some believe that to be proficient in English, one needs to have that capacity in the genes. That fact cannot be denied, but in our context, this awareness prevents students from working hard to ameliorate their language skills because of a barrier in their minds. This awareness brings about laxity, laziness, and total abandon for others. Boakye (2016) emphasises c According to her, the learner's ''*belief*'' and strategy have a great impact on the learning process. She postulates that no matter the efforts put in place by the teacher, if there are erroneous beliefs in the learner's mind, the result will hardly be positive.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate anxiety in Francophone learners of English. We chose Spanish 2 students from the University of Yaoundé I. We used both the quantitative and the qualitative methods. In the first place, the results enable us to postulate that there is a strong connection between anxiety and motivation in the sense that the absence of L1 engenders demotivation, which gives existence to anxiety within the teaching and learning process. Secondly, it appears that anxiety is characterised by a negative impact on the learners' self-esteem. Finally, it is observed that anxiety is also characterised by an influence on the learners' beliefs and behaviour within the teaching and learning context. The discussion in this work indicates that the differences in language typology, the lack of necessary input, the L1 impact, personality, people's reactions, and students' beliefs contribute massively to increasing anxiety in the student's process of learning English.

Although the research was conducted in a public university and a specific department, the findings are significant and worth considering. However, future research should venture into private higher institutions with fewer students or consider other language departments. Moreover, this study relies more on a questionnaire and observation as research instruments, so it might be interesting for future research to get the individual points of view of students and teachers to provide a well-rounded understanding of the problem.

Our suggestions against English language anxiety faced by our informants will be based on their realities. We have observed that one of the primary sources of anxiety is the lack of necessary input in the English language. Their contact with the language is rare, which significantly impacts them. English is taught once a week for two hours. Permanent contact with a language can significantly contributes to building a low-anxiety class. A gap will be filled if students constantly or regularly get in touch with English. This will make them familiar with the language, and the words of the language will not look strange to them. They must be

brought closer to English because, in the present situation, there is a great distance between the language and the learners. This can be done by adding a Spanish course taught in simple English since most enjoy their Spanish classes. This is possible because English is one of their official languages; it is a global language (Crystal, 2009). The more they will learn the words of the language, the more they will gain confidence. However, a challenge remains: How do we make students attend English language classes? Teachers and students must be sensitised on how to come up with classes free from anxiety. We have discussed the impact of people's reactions towards the learners or other learners. How people react when learners utter ungrammatical or wrong sentences can discourage or positively impact the speaker. Both teachers and students must develop a specific language tolerance towards their students and classmates. The manner of approach to correct mistakes or errors has a significant role to play in the learning process. Suppose language teachers and students develop language tolerance. In that case, it will be easy to cultivate the focus on the message for learners and reduce the focus on language form because the latter is also a significant source of anxiety for Francophone learners of English.

Another suggestion is the introduction of digital technologies in the teaching of English. Digital technologies offer access to material in a second/foreign language. Watching video, audio, or text, using interactive games or platforms can engage students in class. Using interactive platforms like Wooclap, MOODLE, or other digital media like Instagram can help learners lower their anxiety. As learners become less worried about learning English, they become more confident and willing to communicate using English (Makodamayanti, Nirmala, and Kepirianto, 2020).

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