



Received: 04 September 2014
Accepted: 19 November 2014
Published: 09 January 2015

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Reviewing editor:
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STUDENT LEARNING, CHILDHOOD & VOICES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Management of foreign language anxiety: Insiders' awareness and experiences

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Abstract: This study investigated EFL students' and teachers' perspectives and experiences of managing foreign language anxiety (FLA). Data were obtained from 49 student autobiographies, 18 student interviews, 8 teacher interviews and 351 student responses to an open-ended question. Content analysis was used to analyse the data with the use of NVivo. A dual-task approach to managing FLA (i.e. reducing its negative effects and taking advantage of its positive effects) with specific strategies for students, teachers and other stakeholders was identified. The analysis also revealed important findings related to key stakeholders in FLA management, tensions in managing FLA, the extent to which students' and teachers' perceptions of FLA management matched, how they managed student FLA at university and the factors affecting students' success in managing FLA. The findings of the study indicate that one should not expect a one size fits all model for FLA management, and emphasise the need to focus on working with FLA instead of only focusing on reducing it.

Subjects: Education; Classroom Practice; Educational Psychology; Higher Education; Language & Linguistics; Language Teaching & Learning

Keywords: foreign language anxiety; FLA; FLA management; perspectives; autobiography; NVivo; university students; Vietnam

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These two researchers worked together in the project *Foreign Language Anxiety in a Vietnamese Tertiary EFL Context: Understanding Its Status, Development, and Insiders' Awareness and Attitudes*, a project funded by Endeavour Awards. This paper is part of a series of papers published out of this project.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Many people seem surprised when hearing the term *foreign language anxiety* (FLA), and that students feel anxious when studying a foreign language. This study confirms that FLA does exist in some students learning a foreign language, and that although FLA usually implies something negative, it can also be facilitating. Therefore, this paper argues that FLA should be **managed** rather than **reduced**. By reducing FLA, the focus is on finding ways to minimise it; whereas by managing FLA, the focus is on both reducing its debilitating effects and making use of its facilitating effects. The study, on the basis of students' and teachers' perspectives, suggests a dual-task approach to managing FLA with specific strategies for students, teachers and other stakeholders. It also identifies the factors that affect anxious students' success in managing FLA.

1. Introduction and literature review

There is a considerable body of literature on foreign language anxiety (FLA), which is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986, p. 128). Since Horwitz et al.’s theory of FLA (see review by Tran, 2012), research into effects of FLA (both as general FLA and specific language skill anxieties, including listening, reading, speaking and writing) on FL learning has provided convincing evidence for an undesired relationship between FLA and FL learning with FLA negatively influencing learners’ cognition (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2000; Krashen, 1981, 1985; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a, 1994b), learning attitudes and emotions (Tran, Moni, & Baldauf, 2013), self-ratings (Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre, 2007; Stephenson & Hewitt, 2010), willingness to communicate (Liu & Jackson, 2008; MacIntyre & Doucette, 2010), and achievement and performance (Aida, 1994; Bekleyen, 2009; Cheng, Horwitz, & Schallert, 1999; Elkhafaifi, 2005; Tran et al., 2013). With strong evidence of the detrimental effects of FLA, it is plausibly necessary to find ways to reduce it.

Paradoxically, despite the prevalence of FLA found within different cultures in the findings of a voluminous body of research (see Figure 1), how students and teachers cope with FLA has not been adequately examined. Most of the anxiety research to date has usually provided pedagogical implications about how to cope with FLA rather than examining how students and teachers actually deal with it. Also, those studies, limited in number, which examined how students and teachers coped with student anxiety in the language classroom still require more evidence to corroborate their findings. For example, Hauck and Hurd (2005) investigated different strategies used by distance students to overcome FLA by asking them to look at a list of 11 strategies and tick any that applied to them. They found that the most frequently used strategies by the students were actively encouraging themselves to take risks in language learning (87.5%) and using positive self-talk (64.6%). This quantitative technique requires further analysis and triangulation to support the arguments.

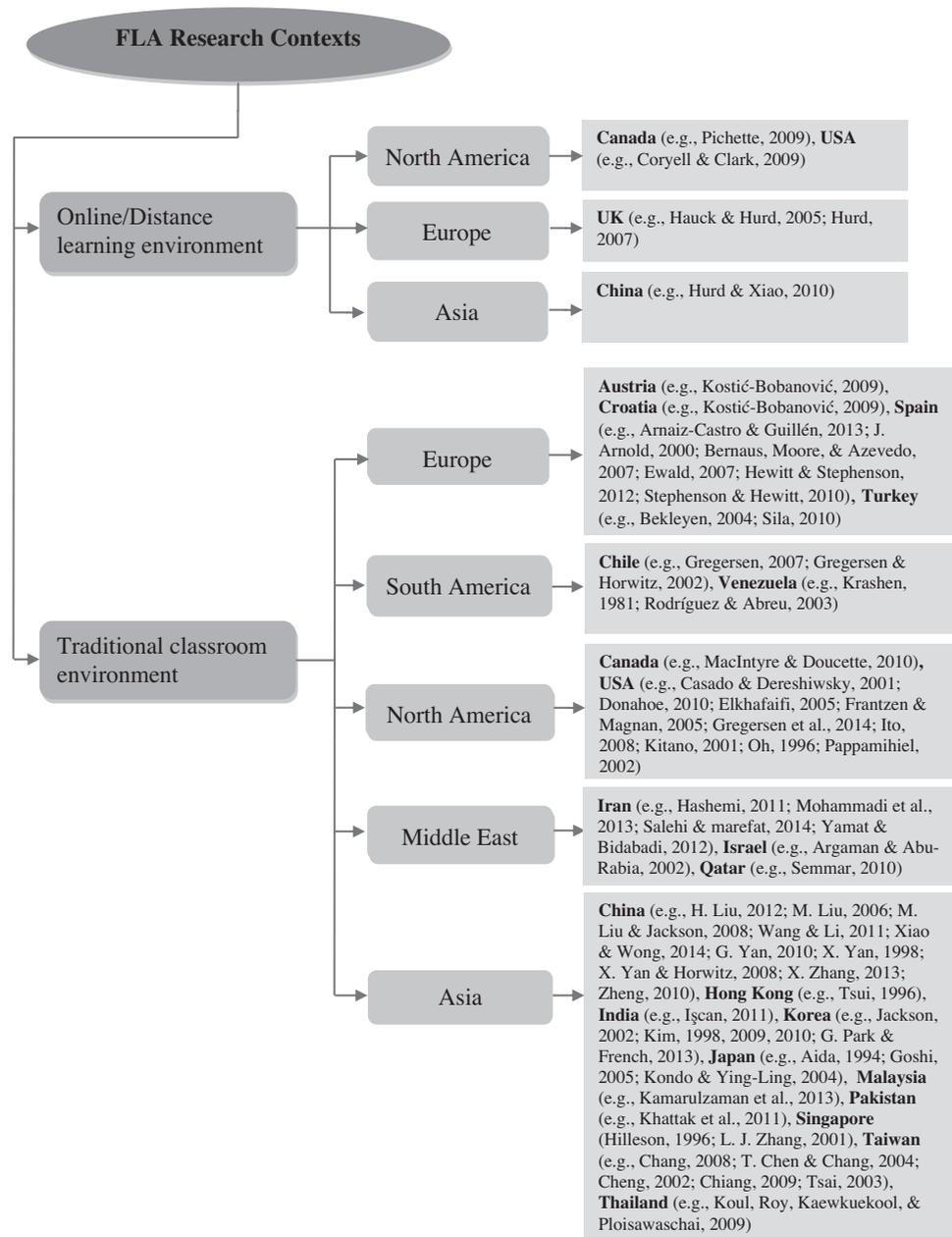
In a similar vein, Williams and Andrade (2008) examined students’ ability to cope with FLA, using a five-item questionnaire with two choices, *Agree* and *Disagree*. Their results showed that most of the students felt that whatever they did would be ineffective. However, because the questions used in the questionnaire were quite general, it is difficult and premature to conclude whether students actually tried to cope with FLA.

Focusing more on anxiety coping techniques, Schlesiger (1995) designed a list of techniques of anxiety reduction which were then used to teach 225 German students to determine if such techniques could be a useful tool in the FL classroom. The findings revealed that the groups receiving anxiety reduction techniques showed significantly lower anxiety levels than the group receiving no treatment. Nevertheless, although the findings confirmed the effectiveness of teaching anxiety reduction techniques to students, Schlesiger suggested exploration of other anxiety reduction techniques in the classroom, and her study dealt more with anxiety prevention than with anxiety control.

How teachers coped with student FLA was examined in Liu’s (2006) study, in which all of the teacher interviewees reported trying their best to be friendly and nice to students, and avoiding embarrassing students when they made a mistake; and some of them reported trying to create opportunities for nervous students to speak up and intentionally praising them as a way to encourage them. However, only three teachers were involved in Liu’s study; thus, it is not possible to generalise their opinions as representative of teachers’ perspectives. Also, as theory and practice do not always align, what the teachers said they did and what they actually did might not be the same, meaning that further evidence is required to understand what happens in practice in language classrooms.

Research has also shown that in addition to the detrimental effects, a certain degree of FLA might be positive for students. Hadley, Terrell and Rardin (as cited in Young, 1992) believed students should experience some tension to create the desire to learn, because if anxiety is at the level that creates

Figure 1. Prevalence of FLA in different cultures and research contexts.



no challenges for the students, it is likely that they will make slower or no progress in learning. Tran et al.'s (2013) study supported this belief, finding that FLA might create in students a stronger determination to study English, help them to be aware of their weaknesses, make them pay more attention to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, push them to learn more and/or push them to endeavour to prove themselves. Furthermore, Gregersen, MacIntyre, and Meza's (2014) study, using idiodynamic method to examine the moment-by-moment changes in anxiety of high-anxiety and low-anxiety participants, found that "Everyone experiences vibes and/or emotions, along with an increasing or decreasing heart rate, but neither is itself stimulating or debilitating—how the emotion is interpreted or appraised forms the basis of action" (p. 98). That is, anxiety can be either debilitating or facilitating to a person depending on how s/he interprets the emotion. From this perspective, it is important to make use of these facilitating aspects of FLA.

Given that FLA can be both positive and negative, it is likely to be more important to *work* with FLA instead of only focusing on *reducing* it. In other words, the ultimate target of anxiety research should be to find ways to effectively *manage* it. By reducing FLA, the focus is on finding ways to minimise FLA; whereas by working with, or managing FLA, both aspects are considered. As anxiety is common and that “it is not normally possible to free human beings from it [anxiety] entirely” (Bigdeli & Bai, 2009, p. 108), it is likely that the best way to manage anxiety is to try to keep its intensity under control. Few studies have investigated whether students and teachers accept a certain degree of anxiety as a factor that facilitates learning.

Tran, Baldauf, and Moni (2013a) found that FL students and teachers are generally aware of FLA as a phenomenon in FL learning, not just in relation to students’ individual struggles to learn a FL. Questions were then raised as to what extent they are aware of how to manage FLA, and how they operationalise it into the reality of teaching and learning. Specifically, what do students and teachers perceive as appropriate approaches and strategies to work with FLA? How have they managed student FLA? And which factors are likely to affect their management of FLA? It is also important to know how students themselves perceive their active role in working with FLA, and how they expect external stakeholders to support them in dealing with FLA. Understanding these questions can contribute to enhancing effective cooperation among the stakeholders for better management of FLA. Furthermore, as effective teaching is expected to incorporate efforts to tackle anxiety problems associated with learning, it is important to find out if FL teachers perceive managing student anxiety as part of their teaching responsibilities in their own classrooms, and what importance they attribute to this issue in their teaching strategies.

Young (1992) has proposed that “language anxiety is a complex psychological construct requiring investigation from a variety of perspectives and approaches” (p. 157). Although much has been done in the field of language anxiety in the forms of correlational research (e.g. Chen & Chang, 2004; Kitano, 2001; Pappamihel, 2002; Rodríguez & Abreu, 2003), from the perspectives of students (e.g. Bailey, 1983; Ewald, 2007; Price, 1991; Yan & Horwitz, 2008) and from the specialists’ perspectives (Young, 1992), there is a need for more research that draws insights from both students and teachers on the issue in the same context. The research literature has shown that teachers’ perceptions are not always congruent with those of their learners (Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005; Siebert, 2003). It is thus possible that there is a discrepancy between students’ and teachers’ perceptions of FLA management, which are likely to affect how FLA is addressed in the FL classroom. Also, an examination of students’ and teachers’ perceptions and their actual actions is necessary to understand the distinction between theory and practice in terms of working with FLA.

This study, therefore, aims to contribute to knowledge of FLA by investigating the extent to which EFL students and teachers are aware of how to manage FLA, the importance they attribute to and their degrees of success in FLA management. The following research questions guide the study:

- (1) What are EFL students’ and teachers’ perspectives on FLA management?
- (2) How have EFL students and teachers managed student FLA?
- (3) What factors are likely to affect the success of student management of FLA?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants in this study were 351 non-English major students in a university in Vietnam and their eight EFL teachers. All of the students were aged 18–20, and were undertaking a Basic English Level 2 course (i.e. the second of the three EFL courses required at the university). They were selected following a stratified random scheme from five faculties, including Political Economics, Economic Information Systems, Accounting and Finance, Business Administration and Economics. The EFL courses were typically transmission based with between 50 and 60 students in each class. Due to the crowded class-size, the dominant classroom interaction pattern was teacher-students oriented, and

the model of learning was to some extent similar to that identified by Lian (2011) as one where “learning sequences and paths through knowledge are predetermined and where everyone is supposed to traverse set knowledge in lock-step synchrony” (p. 8).

The teacher participants were all female, non-native English, aged between 24 and 42 with varied teaching experience of 2–19 years.

2.2. Instruments

Data were collected from the student participants using questionnaires, autobiographies and semi-structured interviews; and from the teacher participants using semi-structured interviews.

2.2.1. Student questionnaire

A student questionnaire was administered aiming to measure student anxiety levels. The questionnaire comprised the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), a five-point 33-item Likert scale designed by Horwitz et al. (1986), and included an additional open-ended question (i.e. What do you usually do when you feel anxious about studying English?)

2.2.2. Student autobiography

An autobiographical approach has been found to be effective in collecting rich introspective information about learners’ experiences (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983; Tran, Baldauf, & Moni, 2013b), and this approach was used to collect data for this study. Students were asked to write short autobiographies about their experiences during their EFL learning process, focusing on their feelings about EFL learning and how they had managed their anxiety about it. Prompts were given to direct the focus of students’ experiences to the matters of interest.

2.2.3. Student semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students about their perceptions of FLA management, how they had managed their anxiety and how they viewed their teachers’ efforts and actions in managing student FLA.

2.2.4. Teacher semi-structured interview

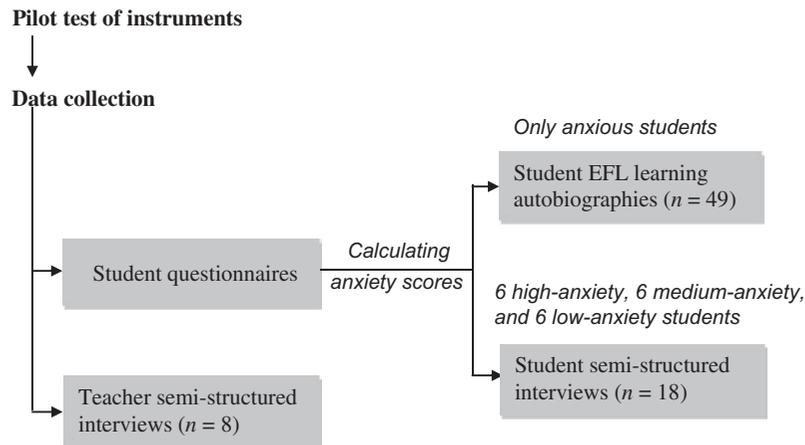
The teacher semi-structured interviews were also conducted focusing on their perspectives about FLA management and how they had managed student FLA.

2.3. Data collection

The student sample was drawn from a larger sample of 419 students participating in answering the student questionnaire. Based on their FLCAS scores, students with averages near or above four, around three and below three were identified as high-anxiety, medium-anxiety and low-anxiety, respectively (see, Horwitz, 2008). Some 288 out of 419 students had averages of 3 or above, and were thus identified as being suffered from some degree of anxiety, with higher scores being associated with higher degrees of anxiety. It should be noted that even though a number of students could be identified after responding to the questionnaire (i.e. to facilitate sample selection for autobiography writing and interviews), the researchers asked them to use pseudonyms instead of their real names, and the means of contact was email. By doing this, their names would not be revealed to any other people, and their anonymity was protected and guaranteed by the researchers.

For selecting participants for autobiography writing, invitations were sent out to 95 of the most highly anxious students in the sample, following a critical case sampling scheme (i.e. choosing students based on specific characteristics so that their inclusion provided compelling insights about the phenomenon—see Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). A sample of 49 students (21 males, 28 females) with the average FLA score of 4.04 was selected. Subsequent to students’ giving consent, they were invited to attend an information session to facilitate and/or enhance their ability in autobiographical writing.

Figure 2. Data collection procedures.



A group of 18 students, including six high-anxiety, six medium-anxiety and six low-anxiety students were randomly selected from their groups for semi-structured interviews, following a maximum variation sampling scheme to allow for obtaining reasonably stable findings when commonalities were found across diversity contained in the sample (Dörnyei, 2007). This group consisted of 10 males and 8 females. Data were also collected from student responses to the open-ended question in the student questionnaire (351 out of 419 students answered this question). Figure 2 illustrates the data collection procedures.

2.4. Data analysis

Data were analysed taking content analysis approach, using NVivo qualitative data analysis software. As a numerical process (Neuendorf, 2002), content analysis seeks to analyse texts in terms of the presence and frequency of specific terms, narratives or concepts, and involves counting items and then categorising them into different themes. This provides one means of identifying or confirming regularities and variations within the data (Dey, 1993). Content analysis can be a blend of qualitative and quantitative analyses, in which the descriptions of the quantitative analysis help determine mindsets, themes and categories grounded in the data (Berg, 2009). The combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses allows content analysis to go beyond simple processes of counting to take in issues of meaning and context (Tonkiss, 2004).

In order to enhance validity and reliability of the coding process, both intra-coder reliability and inter-coder reliability (Révész, 2012) were taken into account by conducting multiple coding rounds and double-coding the data from four students and two teachers, and by having the coding frames given to three peers for discussing and obtaining consensus.

In examining the research questions, the coding process developed five coding frames: one for general views of FLA management approaches, one for factors/activities leading to FLA with positive effects (hereinafter referred to as factors/activities facilitating FLA), one for FLA management strategies, one for students' perspectives on how their teachers managed student FLA and one for factors affecting students' success in managing FLA.

The first coding frame, general views of FLA management, was based on the data from students' and teachers' interview transcripts. Within this category, two subcategories were identified which included students' and teachers' perceived optimal approaches to FLA management, and their perceived key stakeholders in managing FLA. The use of NVivo queries enabled extraction of students' views and teachers' views separately for analysis.

The second coding frame, factors/activities facilitating FLA, was drawn from 18 student interview transcripts and eight teacher interview transcripts. Nine student factors and ten teacher activities were identified.

The third coding frame, FLA management strategies, was based on the data from students' interview transcripts, autobiographies and responses to the open-ended question in the questionnaire, and teachers' interview transcripts. Descriptive coding for FLA management strategies identified 67 strategies which were mainly related to students and teachers. These strategies were classified into two categories, *strategies for students* (28 strategies) and *strategies for teachers* (38 strategies), accordingly. The factors that did not belong to these two categories were subsumed into another category—*other approaches*. Within strategies for students, relationships were identified and factors were grouped into four subcategories: *immediate coping strategies*, *attitudes to EFL learning*, *EFL learning strategies* and *problem-solving strategies*. Similarly, teacher strategies were grouped into three subcategories: *teaching strategies*, *relationships with students* and *problem-solving strategies*. This coding frame included the factors that were identified from both the perceptions of, and the reported actions in, managing FLA of the students and teachers. Based on this coding frame, the use of queries in NVivo was applied to extract relevant categorisations for analysis of each matter of concern. The analysis of these data also enabled the identification of commonalities and differences between students' and teachers' views of specific FLA management strategies.

The fourth coding frame, students' perspectives on teachers' FLA management, was based on the data from students' interview transcripts; whereas the fifth coding frame, factors affecting students' success in managing FLA, was based on the data from students' autobiographies.

3. Results

In this section, students' and teachers' perspectives on FLA management and the extent to which their perspectives were aligned (RQ1), how they had managed student FLA (RQ2) and the factors affecting students' success in managing FLA (RQ3) are presented. In-text citations are used with S = Student, F = Female, M = Male, Int = Interview transcript, Aut = Autobiography and T = Teacher. All names are pseudonyms.

3.1. Students' and teachers' perspectives on FLA management

The analysis of students' and teachers' perspectives on FLA management identified five issues: (i) general views of approaches to FLA management; (ii) key people in managing FLA; (iii) factors/activities facilitating FLA; (iv) suggested FLA management strategies; and (v) the extent to which EFL students' and teachers' perspectives match.

3.1.1. General views of approaches to FLA management

There was a consensus between the students' and the teachers' perceptions that the "ideal" solution should be to take advantage of positive effects and minimise negative effects of FLA. Trong (M, Int)'s response is typical of the students:

From my experiences, I find that anxiety about studying English exists, but we have to manage it in a way that it is beneficial for us. About the negative side, anxiety creates depression and pessimism, making us unwilling to communicate, impeding our activeness in studying. However, assessing from another angle, anxiety has certain positive effects. It pushes us to make every effort to study English; the more we feel anxious the more we realise we have to try, urging us to study tirelessly.

Trong distinguished positive effects of FLA from its negative effects, and believed FLA management should take into account its positive effects. Similarly, all of the teacher participants believed that in addition to seeking solutions to reduce negative effects of FLA, it was also important to enhance its positive effects so that students would be motivated to study English. Their argument was that "anxiety has some positive effects that teachers should make use of" (Nhi, T).

This finding was also supported by the students' and the teachers' responses to the question whether efforts should be made to eliminate FLA, which was raised with the students and the teachers only to understand their perceptions rather than to offer a solution for managing FLA. In response to this question, 17 of the 18 students interviewed perceived that radical elimination of FLA was not advisable. For example, Thanh (M, Int) explained:

Anxiety can make us lose control and confidence in certain situations. However, in some cases it can be a good motivation for us to study better.... So I think we should not find ways to eliminate it completely. It is important that every student try to manage or to reduce the level of anxiety so that it does not negatively affect the learning result.

The teacher participants had a similar view, saying that FLA should not be radically eliminated, because "If students eliminate their anxiety totally, it means that they do not feel like learning English anymore because they think they are perfect at this subject or they need not learn it" (Nguyet).

3.1.2. *Key stakeholders in managing FLA*

Key stakeholders in FLA management were identified from the students' and teachers' perspectives to include students themselves, teachers, friends, families and the university, in which students themselves were expected to be the most responsible in this matter. Lien (F, Int)'s response is typical of the students:

I think students themselves are the most capable in managing student anxiety, because anxiety originates from students' psychology. Our problems can only be solved by ourselves, other factors only play a supportive role ... It is difficult if we expect others to solve our problems for us. However, teachers play a significant role in this matter because they are the direct stakeholders. And the encouragement from family and friends is also important.

Of the 18 students interviewed, 16 asserted that students were the most capable in managing their anxiety because anxiety originates from students, and it was students themselves who were most aware of the sources of their anxiety. Four teachers had similar views with these students, stating that "The problem originates from students, so only students themselves can solve it. Teachers cannot manage it for students" (Chau).

In addition to the most important role of students, the role of teachers was also highly acknowledged by both students and teachers. Nhien (S-F, Int) emphasised the active role of students, but she also recognised the important role of teachers: "I think students ourselves are the most capable in managing our anxiety. Besides, teachers play an equally important role in this matter". Two of the students emphasised the role of teachers, rather than students, as the most capable in managing student anxiety. They argued that although students were responsible for managing their anxiety, it was teachers, not students, who were the most capable in this matter because teachers played a role in precluding students from becoming anxious and could relieve students' anxiety.

In their discussion of the role of teachers in managing student FLA, the remaining four teachers valued it as equally important as that of students. Their arguments were that students spent more time at school than at home, that teachers still played the key role in creating the class atmosphere which affected students' emotions and that students might not be able to find ways to manage anxiety, whereas teachers with their experiences and managing role could help them.

The role of friends was also seen to be important, because "friends are good sources and hands on experiences for them [students] to learn from" (Vy, T). Many students and teachers reported that students usually came to friends for support when they were anxious about studying English. They claimed that "it is easier talking and discussing with friends than with teachers" (Xuan, S-F, Int), because "we can only meet teachers once or twice a week, but we can meet friends anytime, anywhere" (Phi, S-M, Int).

The role of family was acknowledged with Bang (T) asserting “family plays the role of emotional support for students, thus is important in supporting students to manage their anxiety.” However, whereas 13 students appreciated the role of family, five perceived that family did not play an important role in managing student FLA, because, for example, “students mainly have full responsibility in learning, so the role of family in this issue is not very important” (Hung, S-M, Int). A similar finding was found in the teachers’ responses with five out of eight believing that the role of family was important and three judging that family’s role was not important, asserting “at the university level, students are adults” (Que).

3.1.3. Factors/activities facilitating FLA

Out of 18 students interviewed, 16 believed teachers were able to create FLA with positive effects on students. As for the teachers, they all believed EFL teachers were capable in this matter. Each student and teacher pointed out one or more factors or strategies that they considered useful in making use of positive effects of FLA. Table 1 presents nine student factors and ten teacher activities identified from their perspectives.

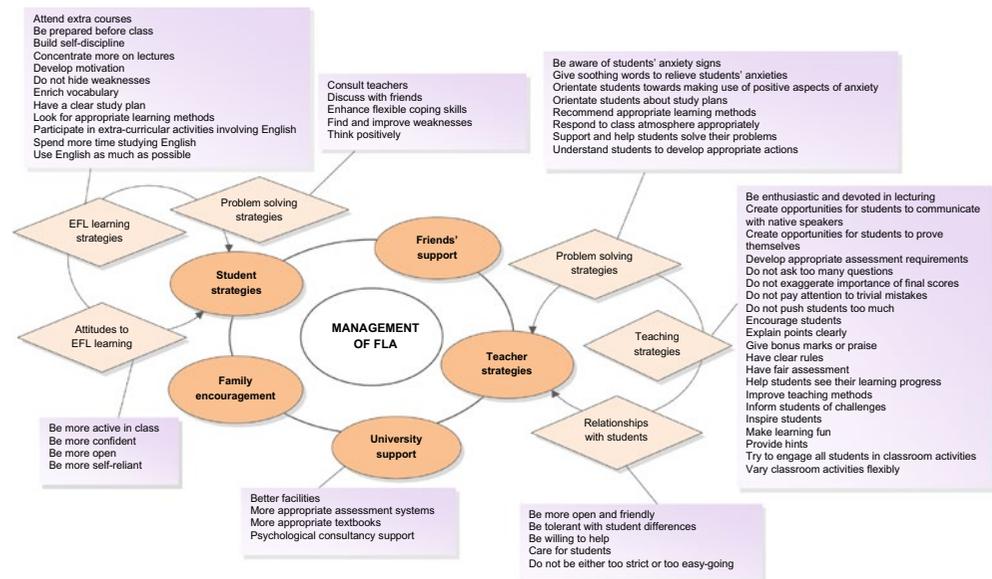
3.1.4. Suggested FLA management strategies

Most of the participating students and teachers perceived improvement of English proficiency as highly necessary in managing student anxiety. Although they understood that anxiety might still exist once student English proficiency was improved, they believed the anxiety then would not negatively affect students. Therefore, in suggesting strategies for managing FLA, the students and the teachers focused more on the strategies to improve English proficiency. The strategies they suggested for students were mainly about adopting appropriate learning strategies (12 strategies)

Table 1. Factors/activities facilitating FLA perceived by students and teachers

	Descriptors	Students’ perceptions	Teachers’ perceptions
<i>I</i>	<i>Factors facilitating FLA</i>		
1	Competition with peers	3	3
2	Endeavour for a certain goal	10	-
3	Family expectations	4	1
4	Job requirements	8	2
5	The need to improve English proficiency	3	-
6	The need to satisfy one’s own interest in English language	5	-
7	The need to prove oneself	3	2
8	The need to understand lectures	4	-
9	Worry about low scores	11	1
<i>II</i>	<i>Activities facilitating FLA by teachers</i>		
1	Ask questions	5	-
2	Emphasise course requirements	2	3
3	Emphasise importance of English	3	1
4	Give bonus marks to active students	1	2
5	Give demanding tasks	2	1
6	Gradually increase difficulty level of tasks	-	1
7	Induce competition among students	1	1
8	Inform students of challenges	1	-
9	Organise group work activities	3	2
10	Require students to work hard	5	1
11	Speak in English	1	-
12	Use of tests	5	2

Figure 3. Possible strategies to manage FLA.



and developing positive attitudes to EFL learning (4 strategies) towards improving English proficiency, and problem solving (5 strategies). The strategies suggested for teachers focused on developing teaching strategies towards accommodating to students' proficiency levels and arousing their interest in studying (i.e. 21 teaching strategies), and caring (i.e. eight problem-solving strategies and five strategies to develop relationships with students). The teaching strategies suggested for teachers mainly aimed to make EFL learning interesting (e.g. making learning fun, inspiring students, encouraging students and giving bonus marks or praise), input comprehensible (e.g. explaining points clearly, providing hints and varying classroom activities flexibly) and not to overwhelm students with requirements that go beyond their ability (e.g. developing appropriate assessment requirements, do not ask too many questions and do not push students too much). Teachers were also suggested to be tolerant with student differences, not to pay attention to trivial mistakes, be more open and friendly, be willing to help and care for students. In addition to the role of students and teachers, the students and the teachers also expected or recommended other support from friends, families and the university. Figure 3 encapsulates these strategies.

3.1.5. The extent to which students' and teachers' perspectives on FLA management match

The students and the teachers in this study shared many similar views of FLA management. They both suggested that the optimal approach to FLA management should be to both reduce negative effects and take advantage of positive effects of FLA. Both students and teachers perceived that key stakeholders in FLA management included students themselves, teachers, friends, families and the university. They both acknowledged that the most vital role was played by students and the second most important role by teachers, while friends and families played supportive roles, and school was also involved through issuing appropriate requirements and policies.

The students and the teachers also had some common views about possible factors/activities facilitating FLA, and other possible FLA management strategies for students and for teachers. Table 2 presents these details.

As seen in Table 2, 61.9% of the factors/strategies facilitating FLA, 71.4% of the student strategies and 41.2% of the teacher strategies recommended were shared between the students and the teachers. In terms of factors/activities facilitating FLA, both students and teachers

Table 2. Students' and teachers' suggested FLA management strategies

	Suggested by both students and teachers	Additionally suggested by students	Additionally suggested by teachers
<i>Factors/activities facilitating FLA</i>	13/21 (61.9%)		
Factors facilitating FLA	5	4	0
Activities facilitating FLA	8	3	1
<i>Suggested student strategies</i>	15/21 (71.4)		
EFL learning strategies	10	2	0
Attitudes to learning	2	1	1
Problem-solving strategies	3	1	1
<i>Suggested teacher strategies</i>	14/34 (41.2%)		
Teaching strategies	8	7	6
Problem-solving strategies	3	1	1
Relationships with students	3	1	4

perceived five factors and eight teacher activities as facilitating FLA; four additional student factors and three additional teacher activities were independently suggested by the students; and one additional teacher activity was identified from the teachers' perceptions. In terms of student strategies, out of a total of 21 strategies integrated from the students' and the teachers' suggestions, 15 strategies were suggested by both students and teachers, and the students and the teachers each suggested four and two additional strategies, respectively. In terms of teacher strategies, 14 out of 34 strategies were suggested by both students and teachers, 9 additional strategies were suggested by the students and 11 additional strategies were identified from the teachers' perceptions. In considering the factors/activities/strategies separately suggested by the students and by the teachers, these factors/activities/strategies added to the list they both suggested without creating any conflicts, and thus should be better understood as additional factors/activities/strategies.

3.2. Students' and teachers' reported management of FLA

Based on their reports, anxious students could not do much to manage their anxiety in the classroom, but mainly found ways to avoid it. The focus of student management of FLA thus was on the strategies they used outside the classroom. In the classroom, teacher management of student FLA was more focused.

3.2.1. Teachers' management of student FLA in the classroom

The student and the teacher data provided alternative perspectives from which to explore how FLA was managed by the teachers in the classroom. By exploring how the teachers reported managing student anxiety and how the students viewed their teachers' efforts in this issue, what had been going on in the classroom in terms of managing student FLA from their perspectives could be revealed.

3.2.2. Teachers' reported management of student FLA

Six out of eight teachers reported having paid attention to managing student anxiety in the classroom. Based on their reports, their management of FLA had a twofold aim, which was to both create a certain degree of anxiety in students so that they focused on EFL learning, and keep students from being highly anxious or stressed about studying English. For example, Chau's strategy was to manage student anxiety through pedagogy. She reported using various activities aiming to create anxiety in students, but with an intention that such anxieties would benefit students through pushing them to endeavour in their learning. She flexibly used pair work and

group work activities, and gradually increased the difficulty level of tasks in order to push students to study, but avoided making students highly anxious. Meanwhile, Ngoc's strategy was through using a "big stick" approach, specifically through creating extrinsic motivation for students by telling them about the exams: "At the beginning of a course, after introducing a bit about the subject, I kind of threaten my students by telling them about the exams and the bad effects of laziness in studying" (Int, L60–62). As for Vy, she created extrinsic motivation for students by warning them about the importance of English for their future career so that they felt anxious and focused on studying English.

These teachers reported using various activities to make students anxious with positive intentions, including emphasising course requirements, emphasising the importance of English, giving bonus marks to active students, giving demanding tasks, gradually increasing the difficulty level of tasks, organising group work between good and weak students, and inducing competition among students. They reported trying not to make students feel highly anxious and using different strategies to reduce students' anxiety if they found it existed.

The remaining two teachers claimed that although they had not intentionally taken FLA management into account, they might have done so instinctively due to their teaching experiences and/or their love for students. For example, Nhi stated:

Actually, it [FLA management] is not an objective or a step in my lectures, but I might have done it unconsciously, unintentionally. Because... with the experiences of a teacher who has taught English for many years, and with my love for students, I have done it completely unintentionally ... instinctively.

As such, all of the teachers asserted that they had taken FLA management into account, either intentionally or unintentionally, in their classes. The question was whether their students had the same view.

3.2.3. *Teachers' management of student FLA from students' perspectives*

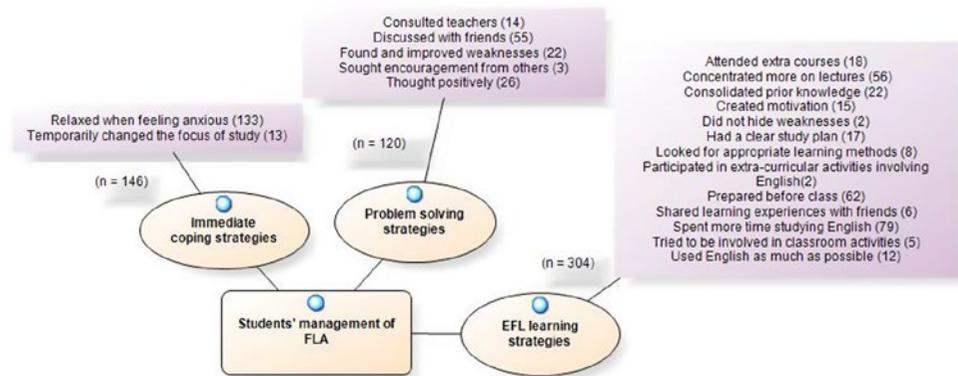
The students had different views regarding the degree of attention their teachers had paid to FLA management. Of the 18 students interviewed, three reported that their teachers had paid much attention to FLA management. For example, Thanh (M, Int) was convinced about his teacher's attention to FLA management:

My current English teacher has paid attention to managing student anxiety or avoiding causing anxiety in students by many ways, for example using more listening exercises to help students practise listening skill. She also keeps a part of the blackboard for students to paste notes on which they write their questions, and then she usually exposes those questions to the whole class for solutions. She always encourages students to volunteer answering questions in English by giving good marks. And she usually provides topics for students to explore.

Six students considered the level of attention of EFL teachers to managing student anxiety to be "so so." They found that their teachers cared about managing student anxiety, but the level of attention was not high. For example, Nhien (F, Int) stated: "Among the English teachers that I have studied with, most of them have paid attention to this issue, but their attention was not enough to reduce tension in the class. Most of the teachers simply let students play a game before lectures in order to reduce anxiety."

Five students judged that their teachers had not cared much about managing student anxiety. According to Phuc (M, Int), for example, the level of attention his teacher paid to FLA management was limited. He explained:

Figure 4. Students' reported management of FLA outside the classroom.



I find that my teacher has not ... has not organised kind of activities to enhance teacher-student interactions. She only comes to class and gives lectures, then asks questions. She provided hints for students to answer questions sometimes, but she has not created a friendly teacher-student relationship, and has never organised friendly teacher-student meetings.

The remaining four students did not recognise their teachers' attention to FLA management, and assumed that they had not cared about managing student anxiety.

One reason accounting for the invisibility and/or inefficacy of the teachers' efforts in managing student FLA, which was pointed out by both students and teachers, was the crowded classroom. They both acknowledged that with an average number of 50 students or more in an EFL class, it was difficult for EFL teachers to apply FLA management strategies.

3.2.4. Students' reported management of FLA outside the classroom

Out of 351 students, 28 reported that they did not know what to do to overcome FLA, or had done nothing to address FLA. Some students, despite their awareness of possible solutions to manage FLA, could not apply them or rarely applied them. The remaining students reported having tried to manage their anxiety in some ways. Figure 4 presents the strategies that were reported to have been used by these students.

The students' reported anxiety experiences, shown in Figure 4, indicated that they had tried to manage their anxiety both for the short term and for the long term, using various strategies. According to their reports, they had tried to manage their anxiety by themselves rather than seeking support from others.

Outside the classroom, most of the students reported listening to music, watching TV, going out for a short walk and/or chatting with others as immediate strategies to cope with their anxiety. When they had limited time, they studied another subject and then came back to English when they felt better. Based on the students' reports, not only had they taken these actions as immediate strategies to cope with FLA, but they had also taken long-term strategies to manage their anxiety. On the one hand, they tried to tackle their problems; on the other hand, they reported having used various strategies aiming to improve their English proficiency, to develop intrinsic motivation about learning English (i.e. listening to English music, reading novels and newspapers in English and browsing English websites) and/or to motivate themselves with extrinsic motivation (i.e. well-paid jobs), altogether as to keep themselves from being negatively affected by their anxiety.

3.3. Factors affecting anxious students' success in managing FLA

Given that the students investigated perceived students themselves to be the most capable in managing FLA, the identification of the factors affecting their success in managing FLA was focused on internal factors rather than external factors. In analysing the autobiographies of 49

anxious students, it was found that as a result of their anxiety, four students wanted to abandon EFL learning altogether, 15 were currently reluctant to pursue EFL learning although they still kept in mind the need to study it and 30 students were still determined to study English. The students were accordingly grouped into three groups in order to facilitate identification of patterns in their management of FLA. The analysis indicated that the three groups distinctively differed in their volitional control. Specifically, the four students in the first group showed a very weak volitional control. They were impatient, easy to surrender to difficulties and thus wanting to abandon their English learning when suffering from anxiety, failing to manage it. The students in the second group had some degree of volitional control, trying to manage their anxiety in some ways. However, they did not show an all-out effort in their actions, doing things halfway and thus were believed to possess a fairly weak volition. The students in the third group, on the contrary, showed a very strong volition. Despite the anxious feelings they had in learning English, they were still strongly determined to overcome their difficulties to persist in EFL learning. In addition to the impact of volition, it was also found that if these students had not recognised the importance of English to their future career, there was no doubt they would have abandoned EFL learning. Based on these analyses, the degree of success in managing FLA was positively associated with the degree of awareness of the importance of English and the strength of volitional control.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The students' and teachers' perspectives on the optimal approach to managing FLA, key stakeholders in managing FLA, factors/activities facilitating FLA and other FLA management strategies reflect the extent to which they were aware of FLA management.

Both students and teachers recommended a dual-task approach to management of FLA, that is, efforts in managing FLA should not only focus on reducing its negative effects but also work towards making the most of its positive effects. This approach is in accordance with Bigdeli and Bai's (2009) view on anxiety management. According to Bigdeli and Bai, anxiety "holds a rich and valuable learning possibility" because it "alerts a person to possible challenges and difficulties in matters that are nonspecific, pervasive, and/or inarticulate" (p. 104). Although they did not deny the detrimental aspect of anxiety, they acknowledged its positive aspect, thus arguing that an understanding of the positive aspect of anxiety "will depathologize, hence *normalise*, anxiety and make working with anxiety (as opposed to *getting rid of it*) [italics in the original] an integral part of the challenge of learning and teaching" (p. 104). Given that anxiety is unavoidable in learning a FL, this study found that both teachers and students reported that it was better to accept it and make it serve learning and teaching purposes as much as possible rather than seeking solutions to eradicate it, which is both impractical (because it is impossible if learning is to occur) and illogical (because anxiety does have some positive aspects).

Five key stakeholders in FLA management were identified from the students' and teachers' perspectives to include students themselves, teachers, friends, families and the university. Although research in the literature has emphasised the vital role of students by suggesting various student strategies (e.g. Carrell, 1989; Oxford, Lavine, & Crookall, 1989), or teaching students techniques of anxiety reduction (Schlesiger, 1995), and has acknowledged the important role of teachers by recommending various teacher strategies (e.g. Arnold, 2000; Horwitz & Young, 1991; Palacios, 1998; Price, 1991; Tallon, 2009), few studies have explored students' and teachers' perspectives on their roles in managing FLA. Also, the supportive roles of family and friends have not been acknowledged. These findings, hence, both support previous research in acknowledging the important roles students and teachers play in managing FLA, and raise awareness of the supportive roles of family and friends. This finding implies that FLA management should not be seen to be the sole responsibility of its insiders (i.e. students and teachers), but it requires coordination of all stakeholders who are involved in EFL education.

The students and the teachers suggested a variety of strategies for students, for teachers and other approaches (i.e. family's encouragement, friends' support and school's support). Fundamentally, these strategies mainly included efforts to improve English proficiency with appropriate EFL learning strategies, positive attitudes to EFL learning and willingness to seek support on the side of students and caring on the side of teachers, family, friends and others. Both students and teachers believed that the improvement of English proficiency, although this would not free students from anxiety, was very helpful in reducing negative effects of FLA. A significant relationship between proficiency, achievement and English language anxiety has been found in previous research. Specifically, as EFL achievement increased, English language anxiety decreased (Pappamihel, 2002), and the more proficient in English students were, the less anxious they felt (Liu, 2006). The belief that students could reduce their anxiety by improving their proficiency is therefore supported.

This study found that the students and the teachers shared many similar views of FLA management. This finding is worth particular attention, as it signals favourable conditions for successful coordination between students and teachers in managing FLA, if they mean to implement it. By suggesting a wide range of strategies to manage FLA, these students and teachers appeared to be aware of how to manage it. However, although no serious conflicts were identified between the students' and the teachers' perceptions of FLA management, it is possible to foresee challenges and tensions that may result from the strategies per se, the diversity of views of the students and the teachers, coupled with the complexity caused by student differences. In total, the students suggested 19 student strategies and 23 teacher strategies. With a long list of strategies suggested for teachers, it can be seen that although most of the students perceived they had agency in solving their own problems, they placed much of the responsibility on teachers or saw teachers as highly responsible for managing student anxiety, indicating a very high expectation of students for their teachers.

Challenges were found in the suggested strategies for students per se, which resulted from student differences. For instance, it was suggested that students should not conceal their weaknesses in order to be able to learn from their mistakes. And yet, many students admitted having their weaknesses exposed to their teachers and classmates resulted in their feeling of losing face. In turn, the feeling of losing face made some students more determined to improve, but in some cases, it worsened student anxiety. Challenges may also be caused by misconnections between strategies. For example, although students were advised to consult their teachers about their problems, and the teachers emphasised that students should consult teachers when they had difficulties in learning English, many students admitted being reluctant to seek help from their teachers. This was mainly because they did not want to expose their weaknesses to their teachers, or because they felt uncomfortable discussing their problems with their teachers. In turn, this was related to the teacher-student(s) relationship, in which teachers were advised to be more open and friendly, and be more willing to help. Therefore, there is a misconnection between the suggested strategies in that a strategy may not be used effectively if another is not realised.

The strategies suggested for teachers hardly imply any conflicts between the students and the teachers; however, the diversity of views and student differences may create challenges for teachers. For instance, although it was suggested that teachers should create opportunities for students to contribute to lectures or to prove themselves, teachers could not do so without asking questions, which would make some students feel scared. With the strategy that teachers should not be either too strict or too easy-going, it is difficult to determine how strict is suitable because it is contingent upon student differences. There was also evidence that although in some instances teachers' strictness worsened anxiety about studying English in some students, other students admitted benefiting from such strictness. Given that there are always some students who come to class with a coping rather than a serious attitude to learning, the anxiety caused by teachers' strictness may be beneficial for them. This thus puts another challenge on teachers, because it requires them to understand their students to be able to use appropriate strategies.

Tensions could also be seen in the students' and the teachers' views of family encouragement. Some suggested that parents should pay attention to students' learning to make them focus on EFL learning; whereas others argued parents should not push students so as not to make them stressed. A "fair" solution may be that parents should put pressure on their children at an appropriate level that makes them try to learn without feeling too stressed, which is, in reality, not without challenge for parents. Similarly, friends' support in managing FLA was valued, yet there was evidence that outstanding performance in English of friends served as a positive challenge for some students, but created tension for others.

These tensions indicate that one should not expect a one size fits all model for FLA management; rather, the list of strategies identified in this study should be used appropriately and selectively on the basis of a consideration of student differences and specific contexts.

With regard to their management of student FLA in action, the analysis of the students' and the teachers' reports revealed a positive picture of how FLA had been managed, yet challenges were found to exist. The teachers' reported FLA management efforts were found to be not visible to many students. The different opinions between the students and the teachers, or the lack of visibility of the teachers' efforts in managing student anxiety, might imply that the teachers' efforts, either intentionally or instinctively, had not helped anxious students much in managing their anxiety. In addition, while the students reported having used various strategies to manage their anxiety, whether they were successful or not was influenced by many factors with two important internal factors being their awareness of the importance of English and their volitional control. It was, however, clear that with the students and the teachers both reporting having actively used various strategies to manage FLA, management of FLA was definitely not ignored in their learning or teaching processes. As such, tension was not on whether the students and the teachers paid attention to managing FLA, but on whether they managed it effectively. With 15 out of 49 students admitting being reluctant to study English despite their decision to study it, and four students tending to abandon EFL learning, FLA was still far from being managed effectively, requiring more efforts from students and support from teachers and other stakeholders.

This study concludes that an effective solution to deal with FLA is to accept it and find ways to make the best out of it. It is suggested that in addition to focusing on reducing student anxiety, arousing some degree of anxiety in students tactfully might be a good way to make them learn, especially in contexts where students are not actively involved in EFL learning. Since students were found to possess some degree of autonomy in managing their anxiety, it is necessary that teachers should try to make EFL learning context less stressful, but more importantly, teach learners how to learn, including how to deal with FLA. For this to be effective, teachers should focus less on making students master specific bodies of information and more on enhancing their skills to learn. That is, teachers should shift from the transmitter role to the awareness-raising role (Ellis, 2010).

This study also found that students' awareness of the importance of English strongly affected their management of FLA. Once students are convinced about the value of English, they can develop and maintain strong motivation to study English. This substantiates the need for teachers to convince students of the importance of English.

This study used an autobiographical approach to obtain an important data source for analysis. The findings corroborate the thesis that autobiographical narratives allow learners to "put their past into perspective, to make sense of their experiences" (Atkinson, 1997, p. 21), i.e. they provide learners with opportunities to reflect on and learn from their experiences (see, Tran et al., 2013b). Autobiographical approach is therefore an effective approach to be adopted in similar future studies. In terms of data analysis, the use of content analysis proves to be suitable for analysing texts derived from autobiographical data and interview data, as shown in the present study.

It should, however, be noted that this study relied on self-reports to examine how students and teachers managed student anxiety. Future research that involves classroom research is recommended to generate more evidence and validate the findings. Also, given that motivation plays an important role in language learning, and that it was specifically found to assist the anxious students in this study in managing their anxiety to persist in EFL learning, future research should address the role of motivation in managing FLA. This focus will assist in finding ways to reduce the affective consequences of FLA, which in turn will be helpful in promoting success in FL teaching and learning.

Funding

The authors received no direct funding for this research.

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Citation information

Cite this article as: Management of foreign language anxiety: Insiders' awareness and experiences, T.T.T. Tran & K. Moni, *Cogent Education* (2015), 2: 992593.

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