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FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY AMONG ADULT ADVANCED LEARNERS OF ENGLISH

The article aims to discuss foreign language writing anxiety and present the results of the study which was to investigate whether writing apprehension can be observed among advanced adult learners of English. The analysis of anxiety from a three dimensional perspective proposed by Lang (1971) revealed that advanced adult students most intensely experience cognitive anxiety whose most prevailing symptoms are panic, worry and elements of test anxiety. Somatic anxiety has also been observed in this group of participants with heart pounding, freezing up, mind going blank and jumbled thoughts as the most common symptoms. Finally, the research revealed that avoidance behaviour appears infrequently among advanced writers. The research results have been used as the basis for formulating pedagogical implications on how to reduce students' writing apprehension.

1. Introduction

1.1. Anxiety, foreign language anxiety and writing apprehension

Anxiety is a multidimensional phenomenon, mostly of debilitating nature. Lang (1971) conceptualised it in a model including three independent components: cognitive, physiological (somatic) and behavioural. Being nervous, stressed or forming negative expectations of one's performance are typical cognitive symptoms of apprehension. Physiological consequences make students suffer from upset stomach, experience excessive perspiration or blushing and feel their heart pounding. Behavioural symptoms can be observed in one's tendency for withdrawal, procrastination and avoidance.

Anxiety arising while learning a foreign language in classroom situations was defined by MacIntyre and Gardner (1994: 284) as 'the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening and learning'. Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) contended that foreign language anxiety is combined of three components: communication

apprehension, fear of negative social evaluation and test anxiety. Communication apprehension appears while real or anticipated interaction with others. As a result students may avoid situations in which they are supposed to talk to someone. Fear of negative social evaluation is provoked by students' concern that someone else would evaluate their performance, that evaluation would be negative or that another person would form a negative opinion about them. As a result they also turn to avoidance behaviour which is to escape occasions in which any kind of judgment could appear. Test anxiety is experienced due to students' worry that they will perform poorly during an examination or that they will fail any form of a test. Its most common consequence, as the research revealed (e.g. Horwitz *et al.* 1986, Kitano 2001, Herwitt and Stephenson 2011), is that the quality of students' performance is poorer and they get worse grades than non anxious examinees.

The above presented definitions concern foreign language anxiety experienced mostly in speaking and, in a lower degree, listening situations. This type of fear can be measured with a Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale constructed by Horwitz *et al.* (1986). However, more currently the researchers have started to analyse anxiety as a skill specific construct. As a result Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was developed by Cheng (2004) to investigate writing apprehension, Foreign Language Reading Anxiety Scale (FLRAS) was constructed by Saito, Garza and Horwitz (1999) to analyse fear appearing while reading and Foreign Language Listening Anxiety Scale (FLLAS) was prepared by Kim (2000) to investigate students' stress and worry while listening tasks.

Stress and nervousness connected with writing have been discussed in the literature under different terms: writers block (e.g. Rose 1980, 1984), writing anxiety (e.g. Cheng 2002) and writing apprehension (e.g. Daly and Wilson 1983). Writing apprehension was first presented and investigated by Daly and Miller (1975a) and it refers to 'a situation or subject specific individual difference associated with a person's tendencies to approach or avoid situations perceived to potentially require writing accompanied by some amount of perceived evaluation' (Daly and Wilson 1983: 327). Daly and Miller constructed the Writing Apprehension Test (WAT 1975a), which was the most frequently applied measurement instrument in the research on second writing anxiety (Cheng 2004). However, it should be stressed that the scale was prepared to measure L1 writing anxiety and does not include factors typical for writing in a foreign language.

1.2. Consequences of L1 writing apprehension

Writing apprehension has a negative influence on writing skills. Its consequences can be quite extensive as they affect students' behaviour, their attitude to writing, their written products and the process of writing¹ (Faigley *et al.* 1981,

¹ The first three groups were specified by Faigley *et al.* the last component can be distinguished refereeing to the Rose's study results.

Rose 1980). As far as highly apprehensive students' behavioural patterns are concerned the research revealed that they may turn to avoid situations in which they are required to produce some written discourse (Daly and Miller 1975b, Cheng 2004), they do not engage into practice which could improve their writing skills (Daly and Miller 1975b, Cheng 2002), they do not care to turn their compositions in due time and exhibit a tendency to procrastinate, they do not enrol into courses which develop writing skills (Daly and Miller 1975b, Daly and Shamo 1978) and they may choose an occupational career which does not require writing skills (Daly and Shamo 1976, 1978).

Faigley *et al.* (1981) studied the influence of writing apprehension on students competency which in this case meant the ability to recognise various patterns as correct or incorrect. The hypothesis that high apprehensive writers would perform worse was confirmed by the study: students gained poorer results in six out of eight measures testing competency.

Writing apprehension results in a negative and pessimistic attitude to writing. It affects students level of satisfaction from a course and from any written tasks undertaken inside and outside the classroom (Daly and Miller 1978b, Faigley 1981). It also influences students self-efficacy (Daly and Miller 1978b) and as You-show (2001) and Anyadubalu (2010) found self-efficacy seems to play a crucial role in reducing language anxiety and as a consequence in performance during tests and examinations.

Referring to the product of writing Faigley *et al.* (1981) found that high apprehensives produced significantly shorter essays which were characterised by less complex and less diversified syntactic structures. They exhibited problems with fluency and they did not develop their ideas as fully as low apprehensive students, which was vivid in the meaningful content of T-units and clauses. Students displayed a limited use of non-restrictive modifiers, which, in the authors' opinion, are typical for skilled writers. It was also found that high apprehensive students performed worse in narrative writing than in argumentative writing. The authors hypothesised that they were more anxious to express their own feelings, attitudes and experiences which is necessary to construct a narrative text.

Rose (1980) analysed the process of writing from a cognitive perspective in order to investigate the patterns of behaviour typical for 'blocked writers'. The study showed that blocked writers lacked flexibility in application of writing rules and strategies: one student would include the paragraph which did not fit to the rest because he felt that 'you must always make three or more points in an essay. If the essay has less then it isn't too strong' (Rose 1980: 394). Some blocked writers displayed also nonconformity in the application of problem solving strategies, they somehow felt 'obliged' to follow the direction their essay took and were uneager to change its parts which resulted in unwillingness to revise a composition. The research also revealed that blocked writers constructed plans; however, they treated them as 'closed systems' with no option for development. Finally, the most serious consequence of writers block was students' resistance to feedback from instructors. They were 'isolated' from comments and not able

to test suggestions offered by the teacher unlike unblocked and successful writers who were eager to benefit from teachers' help and feedback and who were very flexible in the use of problem-solving strategies.

1.3. Components of foreign language writing anxiety

There are several components of apprehension arising while writing in a foreign language. Cheng (2002) systematised them in four categories. The first one is confidence in English writing which is of a double construct: it involves students' perception of difficulty of a writing task and self-assessment of their English writing proficiency. The author found that student writers' perceptions of their competence are of greater significance in experiencing L2 writing anxiety than their actual writing competence. The second set of components concerns motivation and attitude to learning a foreign language. Cheng's study revealed that it is highly probable that students who believe that writing in English is important and who display interest in this area are not prone to writing apprehension and will exhibit lower levels of stress. The third group of factors concerns extracurricular effort to learn English. Students who engage into listening to English broadcasts, maintain contacts with native speakers, read English newspapers and magazines and watch English TV or movies will display a lower degree of writing anxiety. Finally, the achievement in English writing was qualified as L2 writing comprehension component. The grades students received for a writing course and for general examinations in English proficiency and also self-assessment of their linguistic achievements made in their English diaries affected the level of writing apprehension.

1.4. Teachers writing anxiety

The level of writing apprehension observed among teachers was shown to influence the way teachers tutor students in writing skills. Claypool (1980) found positive correlation between the level of writing anxiety and the number of writings administered during classes: highly apprehensive tutors asked students to write fewer compositions. Bizarro and Toler (1986) measured writing apprehension of 20 tutors teaching writing classes in L1 (English) to undergraduate students at East Carolina University. The research revealed correlation between writing anxiety and specific behavioural patterns. Teachers who believe that their own writing skills are poor tend to avoid appreciating strengths of students' compositions and prefer a front-to-student position while giving feedback instead of sitting next to students', which was suggested by the authors as the most preferable position for this activity. Furthermore teachers who suffer from evaluation apprehension and lack confidence in their writing skills do not look for the sources of errors in students writings and do not encourage students to make discoveries about their compositions. They also avoid interaction with students and do not stimulate them to discuss their work

which limits the opportunities to discover their errors. There were also tutors who admitted that they do not enjoy writing. They were observed to avoid writing together with students which could be useful in setting an example to tutees and showing that writing can be an enjoyable activity.

Highly apprehensive teachers tend to overstress some criteria in assessing students writing: these who avoid writing and who admit that they have problems with a text organisation while giving feedback focus mainly on errors at a word and sentence level (Bizarro and Toler 1986), those who generally exhibit high writing apprehension tend to be overcritical about style and self-expression (Gere, Schuessler and Abot 1984). On the contrary, low apprehensive tutors tend to be more flexible about assessment rules. They appreciate students invention and creativity and do not pay so much attention to mechanical aspects of writings (Daly, Vangelisti and Witte 1988).

Bishop (1989) reported that writing apprehension and aversion to writing are quite common among teachers conducting writing classes. 'I really don't like writing very much' or 'I know what a blood-sweating activity my writing can be so why not postpone the agony' are some of the journal entries made by teachers of writing who took part in the author's research (Bishop 1989: 31). Bishop found that encouraging teachers to write a literacy autobiography on their reading and writing experience, a 'How I Write' essay in which they discussed metacognitive aspects of their writing and allowing them to discuss findings about their writing with a tutor made the teachers change their attitude to writing and lowered their writing apprehension.

2. Method

2.1. Purpose of the study

The aim of the research was to analyse whether advanced adult students of English as a foreign language experience writing apprehension. In detail, the study was to investigate three aspects of anxiety in a writing context: somatic anxiety, avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety. The research results were to be discussed in the context of the current studies concerning foreign language anxiety and finally pedagogical implications concerning reducing writing apprehension in a foreign language classes were to be formulated.

2.2. Research questions

The research was carried out in order to gather the data which would allow to answer the following research questions concerning writing apprehension experience by adult advanced students of English as a foreign language:

1. Do advanced adult students experience somatic anxiety while writing in a foreign language?

2. Do advanced adult students apply avoidance behaviour in the context of writing in a foreign language?
3. Do advanced adult students experience cognitive anxiety while writing in a foreign language?

2.3. Participants

Forty students of the third year of BA studies at the English department were asked to fill in a questionnaire anonymously. They were all students of a teaching specialisation on the verge of graduation as they had just completed writing their BA dissertations. Fourteen of them were full-time students, 24 attended extra-mural studies. There were 37 female and 3 male participants in the group. Eighteen respondents were aged 21-25, ten were aged 26-30, nine were aged 31-35, and three were aged 36-40.

2.4. Instruments

The students were asked to fill in the Second Language Writing Inventory constructed by Cheng (2004). It is based on Lang's three-dimensional model of anxiety, which is composed of cognitive, physiological and behavioural factors. As a result the inventory comprises three subscales which measure somatic anxiety with seven questions (Items 2, 7, 9, 13, 15, 18, 23), avoidance behaviour with seven points (Items 4, 6, 12, 14, 19, 22, 27) and cognitive anxiety with eight questions (Items 1, 3, 8, 10, 17, 21, 24, 26)².

The measurement instrument adopted a 5-point Likert scale format which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Seven of the points were negatively worded.

3. Results

3.1. Somatic anxiety

Advanced students tend to experience several symptoms of somatic anxiety. As far as bodily reactions are concerned 26 (65%) respondents agree with the statement 'I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint'. Trembling and perspiration also appear in this group although

² Cheng in his publication "A measure of second language writing anxiety: Scale development and preliminary validation" presents a preliminary version of SLWI consisting of 27 items which after validity and reliability measurement and assessment were reduced to 22 points. This version, unlike the preliminary one, has not been presented in a 'ready to copy' form in any of his publications. As a result the numbers of the items in this chapter and in tables presenting the research results are inconsistent. They range within 1-27 scale with five items missing.

they are not very common: 12 (30%) writers admit to experience them while 16 (40%) do not complain about this type of impediment. Respondents were also asked whether their bodies become rigid and tense while writing. This reaction seems to be rare as 24 (60%) students do not experience it. However, it cannot be stated that it does not appear in this group of subjects: it still can be observed in the case of 10 (25%) advanced writers.

There is also a possibility that students may have the tendency to 'freeze up when asked to write English compositions unexpectedly'. It is not a rare anxiety symptom as it can be observed among 16 (40%) students while the same number of respondents do not experience any 'mind paralysis' in this context.

Writing apprehension results in concentration difficulties. Nineteen (47.5%) respondents admit to have this problem as they contended that they their mind goes blank when they start to work on their writing. When asked to assess the following statement 'My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraint' a similar number of writers, 16 (40%), agreed with it, which may suggest that problems with concentration and focusing on the task mainly appear during initial stages of writing. It can be also added in this context that 19 (47.5%) students do not have any problems with their mind going blank and 12 (30%) respondents do not have their thought jumbled while writing.

Students were also asked about the extreme level of anxiety: panic. The questionnaire results show that it is a common feeling among advanced writers. More than a half of respondents, 22 (55%), feel panic at some point of the writing process whereas only 12 (30%) of them do not experience this emotion.

The details of the questionnaire's results concerning somatic anxiety are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The number of students experiencing somatic anxiety measured in a 5 point Likert scale

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No strong feelings | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| | Σ | | | Σ | |
| 2. I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint. | 0 | 8 (20%) | 6 (15%) | 26 (65%) | 0 |
| | 8 (20%) | | | 26 (65%) | |
| 7. My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition. | 6 (15%) | 4 (10%) | 11 (27.5%) | 15 (37.5%) | 4 (10%) |
| | 10 (25%) | | | 19 (47.5%) | |

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No strong feelings | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Σ | | | Σ | |
| 9. I tremble or perspire when I write English compositions under time pressure. | 5 (12.5%) | 15 (37.5%) | 12 (30%) | 12(30%) | 0 |
| | 16 (40%) | | | 12 (30%) | |
| 13. My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraint | 4 (10%) | 12 (30%) | 12 (30%) | 8 (20%) | 4 (10%) |
| | 16 (40%) | | | 12 (30%) | |
| 15. I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint. | 2 (5%) | 10 (25%) | 6 (15%) | 17 (42.5%) | 5 (12.5%) |
| | 12 (30%) | | | 22 (55%) | |
| 18. I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions. | 4 (10%) | 6 (30%) | 8 (20%) | 10 (25%) | 6 (15%) |
| | 16 (40%) | | | 16 (40%) | |
| 23. I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions. | 9 (22.5%) | 15 (37.5%) | 6 (15%) | 10 (25%) | 0 |
| | 24 (60%) | | | 10 (25%) | |

3.2. Avoidance behaviour

The Second Language Writing Inventory aims to analyse students tendency to avoid situations in which they are to write compositions in English. The research revealed that the majority of the respondents do not evade writing. Twenty eight (70%) students do not accept the point 'I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English', 24 (60%) writers comply with the item 'Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions', 20 (50%) respondents do not agree with the statement 'I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions', and 16 (40%) writers agree with the sentence 'I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions'.

The questionnaire's aim was also to investigate students willingness to write in a foreign language. The answers are not completely unanimous. Half of the respondents (20) declared that they often choose to write down their thoughts in English and 24 (60%) agreed with the statement 'Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write compositions'. However, when faced with the item 'Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions' half of the respondents did not agree with the point and only 6 (15%) gave a positive answer. However, if all the statements measuring avoidance behaviour were to be

summed up, six out of seven points reveal that students do not display tendencies to avoid writing in English.

The details of the questionnaire's results concerning avoidance behaviour are presented in the Table 2 below.

Table 2: The number of students displaying avoidance behaviour measured in a 5 point Likert scale

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No strong feelings | Agree | Strongly agree |
|--|-------------------|------------|--------------------|----------|----------------|
| | Σ | | | Σ | |
| 4. I often choose to write down my thoughts in English. | 0 | 12 (30%) | 8 (20%) | 20 | 0 |
| | 12 (30%) | | | 20 (50%) | |
| 6. I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions. | 0 | 20 (50%) | 10 (25%) | 10 (25%) | 0 |
| | 20 (50%) | | | 10 (25%) | |
| 12. I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English. | 8 (20%) | 20 (50%) | 10 (25%) | 2 (5%) | 0 |
| | 28 (70%) | | | 2 (5%) | |
| 14. Unless I have no choice. I would not use English to write compositions. | 10 (25%) | 14 (35%) | 4 (10%) | 12 (30%) | 0 |
| | 14 (60%) | | | 6 (30%) | |
| 19. I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions. | 4(10%) | 12 (30%) | 16 (40%) | 8 (20%) | 0 |
| | 16 (40%) | | | 8 (20%) | |
| 22. I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class. | 3 (7.5%) | 15 (37.5%) | 16 (40%) | 6 (15%) | 0 |
| | 18 (45%) | | | 6 (15%) | |
| 27. Whenever possible. I would use English to write compositions. | 0 | 20 (50%) | 14 (35%) | 6 (15%) | 0 |
| | 20 (50%) | | | 6 (15%) | |

3.3. Cognitive Anxiety

The results of the questionnaire indicate that advanced students experience some degree of nervousness in writing situations. As far as the statement 'While writing in English, I'm not nervous at all' is concerned 26 (65%) respondents do not agree with it and only 6 writers chose the answer 'I agree'. Moreover, students find the idea that they are going to be evaluated stressful: 28 (70%)

respondents feel worried and uneasy when they know that someone will assess them. Advanced writers display also testing apprehension understood in this context as the possibility of having their writing assessed in a negative way: 31 (77.5%) stated that they would worry about getting a very poor grade for their compositions and 26 (65%) of respondents do not agree with the point: 'I'm not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor'.

As far as fear of negative social evaluation is to be analysed the majority of advanced writers do not seem to suffer from it extensively. More than a half of students are not concerned about what other people, students or the teacher, think about their writings. In detail, 24 respondents stated that they are not worried at all about what other people would think of their English compositions and the same number of respondents are not afraid that the other students would deride their English compositions if they read them. On the other hand, it cannot be stated that fear of negative social evaluation disappears at the advanced level of writing. Still, 16 (40%) students are concerned about others' opinions about their writing and the same number of participants fear that other students would ridicule what they have written.

The research shows that the respondents are stressed by the option that their writing would be publicly discussed in class. Twenty four (60%) writers find this situation disturbing whereas 10 (25%) do not mind their compositions being chosen as a sample for discussion during a lesson.

One of the most common sources of anxiety is students' inclination to compare themselves to others. This tendency was also measured by the questionnaire which shows that 20 (50%) respondents complain about this problem: they do not agree with the issue 'I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others' while only 8 (20%) students are not stressed by the possibility of performing worse than other writers.

The details of the questionnaire's results concerning cognitive anxiety are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: The number of students experiencing cognitive anxiety measured in a 5 point Likert scale.

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No strong feelings | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| | Σ | | | Σ | |
| 1. While writing in English. I'm not nervous at all. | 0 | 26 (65%) | 8 (20%) | 6 (15%) | 0 |
| | 26 (65%) | | | 6 (15%) | |
| 6. While writing English compositions. I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated | 4 (10%) | 24 (60%) | 8 (10%) | 0 | 8 (20%) |
| | 28 (70%) | | | 8 (20%) | |

| | Strongly disagree | Disagree | No strong feelings | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Σ | | | Σ | |
| 8. I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'. | 7 (17.5%) | 13 (32.5%) | 12 (30%) | 7 (17.5%) | 1 (2.5%) |
| | 20 (50%) | | | 8 (20%) | |
| 10. If my English composition is to be evaluated I would worry about getting a very poor grade. | 0 | 8 (20%) | 1 (2.5%) | 23 (67.5%) | 8 (10%) |
| | 8 (20%) | | | 31 (77.5%) | |
| 17. I'm afraid that the other students would deride my English composition if they read it. | 8 (20%) | 16 (40%) | 0 | 12 (30%) | 4 (10%) |
| | 24 (60%) | | | 16 (40%) | |
| 21. I don't worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions. | 0 | 24 (60%) | 0 | 13 (32.5%) | 3 (7.5%) |
| | 24 (60%) | | | 16 (40%) | |
| 24. I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample for discussion in class. | 6 (15%) | 4 (10%) | 6 (15%) | 14 (35%) | 10 (25%) |
| | 10 (25%) | | | 24 (60%) | |
| 26. I'm not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor. | 3 (7.5%) | 23 (57.5%) | 12 (30%) | 2 (5%) | 0 |
| | 26 (65%) | | | 2 (5%) | |

4. Discussion

The research results show that writing anxiety still exists among adult advanced students of foreign languages. This observation goes along with the studies of Kitano (2001), Ewald (2007) and Marcos-Llinas and Garau (2009) who concluded that foreign language anxiety is common among advanced learners and that it has the tendency to increase together with development of linguistic proficiency.

To start with a somatic aspect of apprehension it can be concluded that the most serious anxiety symptom, panic, is experienced by more than a half of students in a writing situation. Moreover students still experience some physiological symptoms of fear and stress as heart pounding was detected among 60% of them. As far as other somatic apprehension components are concerned,

e.g. freezing up, mind going blank, jumbled thoughts, they can be observed among 40% – 50% of advanced writers. These somatic symptoms have been observed to accompany foreign language apprehension also by Haskin, Smith and Racine (2003), von Wörde (2003), Onwuegbuziel, Bailey and Daley (2000) and Andrade and Williams (2009).

Referring to the second analysed aspect of anxiety it can be stated that among advanced students writing anxiety does not seem to result in an intense application of avoidance strategies. Six out of seven points in the questionnaire concerning this issue show that students do not seek to evade writing in a foreign language and they do not mind taking notes in English. On the basis of these results it can be concluded that students can and will benefit from writing classes and they have chances for progress and development of writing skills. This is contrary to students who apply avoidance strategies. The researchers (e.g. Ely 1986, Horwitz *et al.* 1986, Argaman and Abu-rabia 2002, Gregersen and Horwitz 2002, Gregersen 2003) found that these learners do not actively participate in lessons, sit in last rows in order to avoid being engaged by a teacher in a lesson, they do not hand back their assignments on time and even resort to skipping classes. As a result a vicious circle situation is created: they do not make any progress in their linguistic education and feel that they are left behind other students. As a consequence their language anxiety increases which makes them apply a greater number of avoidance strategies in a more intensive way.

Cognitive anxiety was found to be experienced by the respondents in a greatest degree. The majority of them (75%) feel worried and uneasy and 60% of them feel nervous in a writing class. Furthermore one of the major stressors common in this group is testing apprehension as 77.5% of writers are concerned about getting poor grades and 65% are afraid that their composition would be assessed as very poor. These results comply with the studies (e.g. Horwitz 1986, Herwitz and Stephenson 2011) which revealed that tests and the possibility that a student may not get a positive grade for the course are major anxiety causing factors in learning a foreign language. It should be also added that testing apprehension in this case may result from the fact that students' compositions are subject to assessment as 70% of students feel worried and stressed due to this fact.

The studies by MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) and Yan and Horwitz (2008) show that some portion of stress in this case can result from students' extensive concern with academic evaluation and academic achievement. Pressure to get the best possible grades or to impress significant others positively correlates with language anxiety. Moreover, apprehension may in some cases result from students' strive for perfectionism. Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) discovered that students suffering from high levels of foreign language anxiety exhibit the features typical for perfectionists: they build too great expectations of themselves and incline towards procrastination; they are overconcerned about the opinion of others and pay too great attention to errors.

The third major component of language anxiety is fear of negative social evaluation. The study by Horwitz (1986) shows that students feel stressed

and frightened because they are worried that other students or a teacher will perceive them as uneducated and not skilled enough and as a result they will form a negative opinion about them or even laugh at them. The questionnaire results indicate that although the majority of respondents do not have problems with negative social evaluation there are still some advanced students who suffer from this component of apprehension: 40% are concerned about others' opinion about their compositions and 25% are afraid that someone else could mock them. Fear in this context may also result from or be intensified by students' tendency to compare their linguistic abilities to others and by concluding that their knowledge and skills are inferior to these of other students (Young 1991; MacIntyre and Gardner 1991; Kitano 2001; Yan and Horwitz 2008). This tendency can result also from problems with self-esteem. The research shows (e.g. Matsuda and Gobel 2004, Liu and Jackson 2008, Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham 2008) that students who are characterised by low self-esteem assess their linguistic knowledge as low and as a result their language apprehension increases. Consequently they perform poorly during tests and examinations and achieve worse grades than students who do not suffer from a high level of apprehension (Herwitt and Stephenson 2011). Moreover, this behaviour can be caused by problems with self-efficacy, which in this context means students' beliefs that they can cope with a problem, they can succeed in performing a task and that they are able to continue performing challenging assignments (Bandura 1977). You-show (2001) and Anyadubalu (2010) found that students who have low self-efficacy are prone to experience higher levels of language anxiety.

All types of anxiety can also result from low trait emotional intelligence (EI), which was defined by Dewaele, Petrides and Furnham (2008) as a combination of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy. It is self-evaluation of one's own ability to control, manage and express emotions, to empathise and to adjust to different situations. The negative correlation was observed between trait emotional intelligence and foreign language stress. The researchers found that students who have high EI are able to manage emotional reactions, better cope with stress and act in a more assertive manner.

Furthermore, stress connected with writing can be caused by students beliefs about a learning process (Young 1991) or creating myths (Piechurska-Kuciel 2008). Students frequently form some unrealistic opinions about language learning which do not comply with theories of language teaching and learning. As a result students have too great expectations of themselves and formulate too challenging aims which are the cause of their frustration and apprehension. In a context of writing they can have false assessment of what is vital in a composition, e.g. they may prefer correctness over content, organisation and linguistic variety or they may not believe that planning or editing phases are important.

5. Pedagogical implications

Young (1991) points out that half of the most common stressors in learning foreign languages are connected with the teacher. Therefore it is of utmost importance that teachers are aware of anxiety provoking elements which are dependent of them and try to act in the way that does not build anxiety among their students.

Teaching style can be qualified as one of major stressors in this context. Young (1991) found that an autocratic style in which the teacher dominates over students, controls them and is unwilling to share control over a teaching process raises the level of students anxiety. Ewald's (2007) studies also revealed that the teacher who acts as an authority whose main aim is to control and assess students increases learners' apprehension. This style of class management causes anxiety also among advanced adult students who took foreign language classes willingly. Therefore it is very important to apply such a conduct during writing classes that students are not afraid to discuss their problems with teachers and they feel that they can consult them at every stage of writing and ask them about any issue. The studies by Young (1991), Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) and Ewald (2007) promote cooperation as the most beneficial style of teaching in the context of eliminating foreign language anxiety and the teacher's role of consultant, someone who supports students and is eager to share with them control and responsibility for the teaching process.

The role of teachers support has been investigated by Abu-Rabia (2006), Huang, Eslami and Hu (2010) and Piechurska-Kuciel (2011). All the researchers found that it negatively correlates with foreign language anxiety. Huang *et al.* (2010) analysed two types of support the teacher can offer to students: academic, which makes students feel and know that the teachers care about their academic achievements, want them to do their best and are interested in their progress and ready to offer help (Johnson and Johnson 1983) and individual, which means that students have the impression that the teacher likes them, wants to be their friend and treats them in the same way as other students (Johnson and Johnson 1983). The first kind of support was found to play a highly significant role in reduction of students stress: it decreases speaking anxiety, fear of negative social evaluation and testing apprehension. As a result teachers should consider application of such a teaching style and teacher's roles during writing classes which will offer learners academic support and consequently positively affect students comfort and feeling of safety in a classroom. Individual support also negatively correlates with apprehension, although not in such an intense manner: it reduces test apprehension and fear of negative social evaluation. Therefore once again the application of appropriate teaching style and teacher's role, e.g. being a support, a consultant, a partner seems to be of crucial value in reducing writing anxiety.

The kind of classroom interaction was found to correlate with students stress (Horwitz *et al.* 1986). The most stressful for students is talking in front of

students and the teacher, less stress-provoking is pair work (von Wörde 2003) and group work (Gregersen and Horwitz 2002). Although writing is an individual task sometimes teachers ask students to read their compositions aloud publicly. Woodrow's (2006) study revealed that it can be extremely stressful for some of them. This stress is intensified if they are asked to present their work in front of the classroom (von Wörde 2003, Woodrow 2006). It seems also beneficial to let students plan their compositions in pairs or discuss what they are going to write about in groups. Moreover, instead of discussing presentations and discussion of students' writings in public the teacher can introduce peer review and students can present their work in a more intimate way: in pairs or in groups and after peer review give their compositions to the teacher for assessment.

The techniques and methods preferred by teachers have been also qualified as major stressors in a foreign language classroom (Young 1991). Of utmost importance in this context seems to be error correction as getting one's paper all red due to teacher's corrections is highly demotivating and stressful (Ur 1996) teachers should consider selective correction in the case of some students. Moreover, discussing students' errors in front of the class, putting them on the blackboard or asking other students for public peer correction have been qualified as highly stress provoking (Woodrow 2006).

The way errors are corrected in the context of writing development is strictly connected with feedback and with assessment. It can be assumed that excessive stress on accuracy of compositions and consequently too much emphasis on students errors will intensify students stress connected with writing. As a result a balanced assessment based on several criteria should be applied. Consequently feedback that will appreciate students for the content, inventiveness, organization and originality may alleviate the stress caused by errors. The research revealed that in the case of tests, examinations and their assessment the most anxiety causing factor is surprise (Young 1991). If students are tested from the material which has not been covered during classes or if they are assessed in the way which is not familiar to them they will feel higher levels of apprehension.

All the teacher related factors discussed so far: teaching style, teacher's roles, teacher's support, the kind of classroom interaction preferred by the teacher, error correction, feedback and compositions' assessment build classroom atmosphere which plays a significant role in increasing or decreasing students anxiety. The research by Yan and Horwitz (2008) shows that stress free and informal atmosphere correlated with students anxiety, feeling of safety and their comfort during classes.

The teacher is also in power to help students build their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Task self-esteem connected with writing in a foreign language can be strengthened by appropriate feedback, gentle error correction and fair and balanced assessment. Praising students and appreciating them for small successes may be beneficial in this case. Moreover, choosing writing tasks in a way which will enable learners to successfully complete them can be efficient both in increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy. In the context of self-efficacy,

which also means ability to cope with threats, Cheng (2002) stresses that except for instilling in students positive perception of their writing competence teachers should also prepare students to face difficulties and help them to cope with failures without losing self-confidence, which is one of subcomponents of self-efficacy.

Instructing students in writing strategies was also found efficient in eliminating numerous anxiety provoking factors (Yan and Horwitz 2008). Dividing writing into stages, showing students how to search for information, plan their compositions and edit them may ease the pain of writing and make students more successful which will raise their self-esteem and self-efficacy as they will believe that they can cope with writing tasks.

Finally the teacher can help students to dispel some myths they built up in the context of their writing and as a result help students eliminate frustration and decrease anxiety. Explaining to students what being able to write in a foreign language means, discussing with them components of writing skills and criteria of assessment of their compositions should be beneficial in this situation.

6. Conclusion

The article was to investigate whether advanced adult writers exhibit writing apprehension defined by Lang (1971) as a construct combined of three relatively independent components: somatic, cognitive and behavioural. The study revealed that cognitive anxiety was the most prevailing among participants, who reported to experience panic and nervousness while composing. Moreover they exhibit elements of test anxiety as they are afraid that their compositions would be poorly evaluated. Fear of social evaluation is less intense in this group as the majority of respondents are not concerned about others' opinions about their writing. Somatic anxiety was also reported to arise in a writing context with heart pounding as the most common symptom followed by freezing up, mind going blank and jumbled thoughts. Despite these apprehension consequences participants did not show extensive avoidance behaviour as they reported to be willing to write compositions in English and to seek occasions to write in a foreign language.

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