

INTERPLAY OF GOOD TEACHER QUALITIES AND LANGUAGE ANXIETY LEVELS

*Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel**

Opole University, Poland

The paper presents the results of an empirical study devoted to the investigation of the role of the FL teacher in perception of language anxiety in secondary grammar school students. For this purpose five universal characteristics of a good teacher (approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge, and organisation) were correlated with language anxiety levels. The results seem to show that language anxiety is more dependent on the specificity of the language learning situation, than on the teacher. Only his knowledge and approachableness are weak predictors of language anxiety, which can largely be predicted by the final grade expected by the student, as well as by their self-assessment of the FL skills, especially speaking, listening and reading. So the teacher's role appears to influence language anxiety levels only indirectly, by shaping the student's assessment of their language abilities.

Keywords: good teacher qualities, language anxiety, approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm

* Ewa Piechurska-Kuciel, Opole University, Poland; epiech@uni.opole.pl

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to examine the relationship between good teacher qualities and language anxiety levels. For this purpose, first the main characteristics of good teachers are presented, followed by an outline of the main studies on language anxiety. Afterwards, the empirical research carried out for the purpose of this paper is detailed together with a discussion of the major results, as well as recommendations for the English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) classroom. It is speculated that the foreign language (FL) learning process is a social undertaking, especially in the context of formal education. It is also inseparably connected with a significant growth of negative emotions, such as language anxiety. Hence, it is believed that teachers may play a significant role not only in shaping the path of their students' linguistic development, but also in influencing their emotional well-being in their struggle to attain foreign language competence.

1.1. Good teacher qualities

Research on good teachers has usually been described as taking two main paths: *personality* and *ability* (Beishuizen et al., 2001). The first perspective focuses on types of teacher personality characteristics that shape the educational process through their perceptions and behaviour (Mitman, 1985). Within this parameter, a good teacher is described as kind, serious and enthusiastic (Feldman, 1986). There are also other qualities connected with perceived teaching effectiveness, such as energy and vitality (Patric et al., 2000). Frequently mentioned is teaching immediacy, mostly defined as eye contact, smiling, and head nodding – all of which appear to increase student motivation (Brown, 2004). Another quality is extroversion, identified with affiliation, positive affectivity, energy, warmth and gregariousness (McCrae & John, 1992). Basically speaking, an extroverted teacher who is approachable, enthusiastic, outgoing, and has a sense of humour is considered effective (Radmacher & Martin, 2001). According to the personality parameter, a good teacher also needs to be a skilful communicator, friendly, amicable, and sensitive to students' needs (McLean, 2001). Their attractiveness,

specifically physical appearance, may also be taken into consideration (Beishuizen et al., 2001).

Teacher personality characteristics connected with increasing student motivation and correlated with teaching effectiveness may also be analysed from the point of view of the Big Five framework, consisting of five broad domains or dimensions of personality that have been scientifically discovered to define the human personality (McCrae & Costa, 2005). It has been established that students tend to prefer highly conscientious, open, extraverted, stable, and agreeable lecturers (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005). Conscientiousness is connected with the teacher's being efficient and well-organized. Their openness means that they are characterised by intelligence, broad-mindedness, and creativity. Teacher stability means that a good lecturer should feel secure and confident, with low anxiety or depression. Their agreeableness is connected with being friendly and compassionate. On the whole, students prefer lecturers who are emotionally adjusted, clever, and hard-working.

The ability perspective, on the other hand, focuses on the teacher's skills, knowledge and experience (Emmer et al., 1980; Patrick & Smart, 1998). This category comprises several types of knowledge: content (knowledge about language), pedagogical, curriculum, or knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000). The quality of knowledgeability is usually rated highest, because students mostly find it motivating (McLean, 2001). Similarly to knowledge, organisation of subject matter is also found to correlate highly with teacher effectiveness (Trice & Harris, 2001). The teacher's ability to present materials in an interesting way and to provide clear explanations is placed among the most important qualities of a teacher (Fisher et al., 1998). A good teacher is also described as being able to keep order and give clear instructions. Good teachers are subject specialists, skilfully selecting, organising and delivering content; they are also able to reflect on their practice and their experiences are a source of their learning (Minor et al., 2002). Nevertheless, research shows that teacher education and certification is not correlated with student achievement (Jepsen, 2005).

Generally speaking, a good teacher exudes a balanced and mature personality and is said to have developed experience-based knowledge and skills (Beishuizen et al., 2001). It has then been speculated that the qualities of a good teacher as proposed by students fall into five universal categories incorporating the main characteristics of the two traditional perspectives mentioned above: *approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge and organisation* (Sander et al., 2000).

1.2. Language anxiety

The role of the teacher has been acknowledged in the research on *foreign language anxiety*, also called *language anxiety* (MacIntyre, 1999, p. 26). The phenomenon is usually defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 128). It has been recognised as an 'integral variable' in the course of foreign and second language acquisition (Horwitz, 1999, p. xi) because almost every learner experiences this negative emotion when learning a foreign or second language in the classroom context.

It is proposed that the first language lessons may induce transient states of anxiety that are not yet associated with the foreign language acquisition process (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). Yet, it may happen that in the course of time more negative experiences can be identified, because learners are expected to use a language that has not been fully mastered by them. This is the real cause for developing language anxiety, which is a form of *situation-specific* anxiety (Ellis, 1994; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991) connected with the likelihood of becoming anxious in the language learning situation (MacIntyre, 1999), when repeated occurrences of anxiety are associated with the situation of language performance (Oxford, 1999). As soon as language anxiety is formed, its levels continue developing until they reach their culmination, which is student-specific. This is when the learner experiences maximum discomfort, worry and negativity in connection with their FL development prospects. Nevertheless, in most learners proficiency and experience in the FL increase with time, and anxiety starts declining "in a consistent manner" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, p. 111). More positive

experiences and increased achievement start giving way to the regression of negative emotions.

The roots of language anxiety are numerous. Among the most influential ones are personal and interpersonal anxieties, such as: *communication apprehension*, *test anxiety* and *fear of negative evaluation*. The first anxiety type generally refers to a type of anxiety experienced in interpersonal communicative settings (Horwitz, 2001). It is defined as the level of fear associated with real or anticipated communicative outcomes with another person or group of people (Daly, 1991). Test anxiety is "the tendency to engage in self-preoccupying thought when confronted with test-like situations" (Sarason, 1981, p. 110). It is usually connected with emotional reactions accompanying situations where one's performance is being measured or assessed (McDonald, 2001). Fear of negative evaluation is characterised as "an apprehension about others' evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson & Friend, 1969, p. 450). It is associated with being evaluated unfavourably while anticipating or participating in a social situation.

Among other causes of language anxiety are low *self-esteem* and *competitiveness*. Another source is *language learner beliefs*, which affect individuals' experiences and accomplishments as language learners, influencing their behaviour and learning outcomes. The next group of factors recognised as sources of language anxiety are *instructor beliefs about language teaching*, which modify the social context that the instructor sets up in the classroom. Aside from that, *instructor-learner interactions* have a significant role in the growth of negative emotions, mainly concerning error correction and the role of mistakes in the language acquisition process. Anxieties connected with *classroom procedures*, like processes, atmosphere and events, stem from the demand to speak in front of others, which places this group of anxiety sources within the social context of language learning. The last group of anxiety-conducive factors comprises those aspects that are involved with *language testing*.

So far the main results of research on pedagogical and instructional sources of language anxiety have shown that anxiety can be evoked by instructor qualities, in the situations when the teacher: "a. does not see learners in class as part of a social community; b. makes no distinction

between learner competence and performance or recognition and production" (Young, 1999b, p. 243-244). The teacher who considers their role to be less that of a counsellor and a friend, who objects to "a too friendly and inauthoritative student-teacher relationship" (Brandl, 1987; quoted in Young, 1991, p. 428) has been found to create a source of language anxiety.

Most of the data on teacher qualities have been collected by interviewing and observing teachers (Beishuizen et al., 2001). It is important to take into consideration students' opinion on teacher evaluation, as the current climate in education places students in the position of customers whose expectations must be met (Sander et al., 2000). It seems suitable then to shed more light on the role of universal characteristics of a good teacher in relation to language anxiety.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The aim of the present study is twofold. First, it attempts to find evidence for a relationship between good teacher characteristics and language anxiety within the context of the Polish secondary grammar school, which has not been researched thus far. Second, it is designed to analyse the predictive power of teacher characteristics (*approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge and organisation*) when confronted with other influential variables such as final grades, self-assessment of FL skills, or the student's attitude to the foreign language in relation to language anxiety levels. It is expected that the teacher characteristics selected may not have such strong explanatory value as FL achievement, as confirmed by the literature of the field (e.g., Alfalay, 2004; Liu, 2006). For this purpose, two research questions are proposed:

- RQ1: *What is the relationship between good teacher qualities and language anxiety levels?*
- RQ2: *What is the predictive power of good teacher characteristics for language anxiety levels, when compared to FL achievement measures (grades and self-assessment of the four skills)?*

3. METHOD

3.1. Participants

The subjects of the study were students (N=495) from 16 classes of the six three-grade secondary grammar schools in Opole, south-western Poland. This type of schools in Poland accommodates students aged 16-18; in other educational contexts such schools may also be called high schools or senior schools. There were 157 boys and 338 girls in the sample. Their average age was 16.7 years with a minimum of 15 and a maximum of 18. They all attended the first grade at their schools, with a basic amount of English classes (three to five hours a week), which placed them at the upper-elementary level.

3.2. Instruments

The primary instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. Its first part explored demographic factors like age, gender, place of residence, students' attitude towards English, length of study, and their taking extra classes of English outside school. Additionally, the participants assessed their FL competence in reference to the four skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening). They also gave their final *gymnasium* grade in English, the grade they received the previous semester, and the grade they expected to get at the end of the present school year. The participants were asked to evaluate their English teacher in reference to the 5 universal characteristics of a good teacher (approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge, and organisation), e.g., *My teacher is very approachable*. For this purpose they used a 5-point Likert scale (1 – *I strongly disagree* to 5 – *I strongly agree*).

The last part of the questionnaire included the 33-item language anxiety scale designed by Horwitz et al. (1986) called *the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale*. Its purpose is to assess the degree to which students feel anxious during language classes. Sample items on the scale are as follows: *I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in language class* or *I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am*. The minimum number of points that could be obtained on the scale was 33, the maximum 165. The scale's reliability, assessed in terms of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, was .94.

3.3. Variables

There are three kinds of variables identified in the study. The dependent one is language anxiety. The independent variable is universal good teacher characteristics defined as approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge and organisation, while the moderator variables are age, gender, place of residence, students' attitude towards English, length of study, self-assessment of the four skills, their final grades. All the variables are operationally defined as questionnaire items.

The design of the study is correlational, as it quantifies the direction and strength of a relationship between the variables (Graziano & Raulin, 1993). The analyses included comparing means obtained on the language anxiety scale with the means of other variables.

3.4. Procedure

The data collection procedure took place over the month of April and the beginning of May, 2003. In each class, the students were asked to fill in the questionnaire. The time slotted for the activity was 15 to 45 minutes. The participants were asked to give sincere answers without taking time to think. Each part of the questionnaire was preceded by a short statement introducing a new set of items in an unobtrusive manner.

The data were computed by means of a statistical programme called STATISTICA, with the main operations being descriptive statistics (means and *SD*) and inferential statistics, like nonparametric correlation, indicated by the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient *R*. It assesses the relationship between two variables (language anxiety levels and good teacher characteristics). Another procedure was a sign test, a non-parametric test used in the case of the paired sample, for the comparison of pairs of good teacher qualities. Its results are represented by the *Z* value. The last procedure was step-wise hierarchical multiple regression. The aim of this operation is to predict levels of language anxiety (criterion variable) on the basis of the predictor variables, such as good teacher characteristics, self-assessment of the four macro-skills, and different types of grades (*gymnasium*, semester and prospective final),

allowing for the establishment of causal direction (Hinkle et al., 1994). In this procedure predictor variables are introduced into the regression model in consecutive steps, and during the course of each a significance test is carried out. The indicator of the significance of variables is the range of the explained variance R^2 , as well as the value and significance of the β (beta) weights.

4. RESULTS

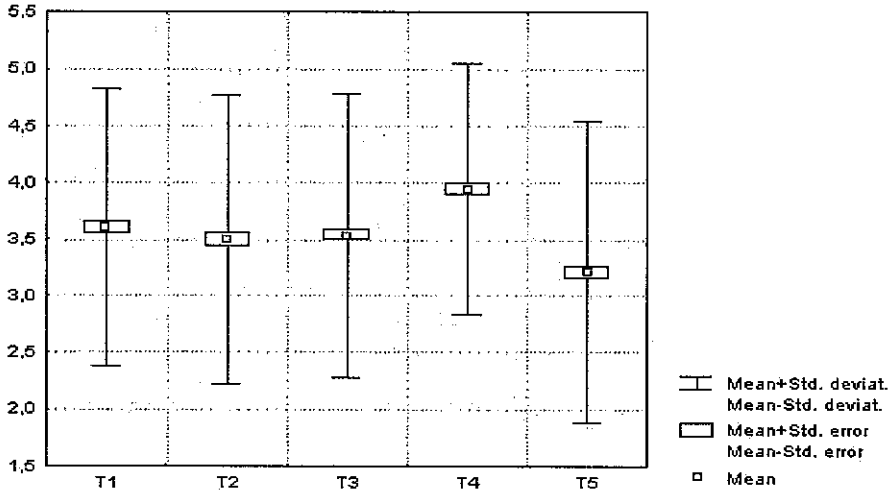
4.1. Descriptive statistics

The results obtained from the questionnaire items comprising demographic factors showed that a slight majority of the students (278 students: 56%) lived in the city, while the rest lived in small cities and in the country (64: 13%, and 135: 27% respectively). A vast majority of the participants declared that they liked English (402 students: 81%). 387 students (78%) declared they did not take any extra English classes outside school. As far as the length of their experience of learning English as a foreign language is concerned, 68 students (14%) reported not more than 2 years of study, 105 (21%): 2 – 4 years, 144 (29%): 4 – 6 years, 69 (14%): 6 – 8 years, 85 (17%): 8 – 10, 20 (4%): 10 – 12 and 4 students (1%): 12 – 14 years.

As far as the participants' self-assessment of the four skills is concerned, the means for speaking, writing, reading and listening are 3.63; 3.58; 4.17 and 3.72 respectively. On the other hand, their mean grade from the previous school year when they were *gymnasium* students was 4.32. The last semester mean grade and the grade they expected to obtain at the end of the present school year were slightly lower: 3.72 and 3.86 respectively.

The five teacher qualities assessed by students resulted in the following data: the quality assessed highest was knowledge with a mean of 3.94, then approachableness ($M=3.60$), enthusiasm ($M=3.53$), and teaching skills ($M=3.50$). The quality assessed lowest was organisation with a mean of 3.21. In order to confirm these results, a sign test was performed. Its findings showed that the characteristic of knowledge was assessed highest ($Z=-7.11$, $p=.000$ when compared to approachableness). There was no significant difference between teaching skills and

enthusiasm levels, while there was a significant difference between teaching skills and organisation ($Z=5.65, p=.000$). In Figure 1 there is a visual representation of these results.



T1 – approachableness; T2 – teaching skills; T3 – enthusiasm;
 T4 – knowledge; T5 – organisation

Figure1. Qualities of a good teacher

Table 1. Summary of descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD
Self-assessment		
Speaking	3.63	1.01
Listening	3.72	1.09
Writing	3.58	.98
Reading	4.17	.98
Grades		
Final <i>gymnasium</i>	4.32	1.63
Semester	3.72	1.00
Prospective final	3.86	.91
Good teacher qualities		
Approachableness	3.60	1.22
Teaching skills	3.50	1.27
Enthusiasm	3.53	1.25
Knowledge	3.94	1.11
Organisation	3.21	1.33
Language anxiety	86.62	24.54

The results of the measurements of the language anxiety scale showed that the mean was 86.62 with a minimum of 37 and maximum of 61. The summary of the descriptive statistics analyses can be found in Table 1.

4.2. Inferential statistics

Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient R was used to detect relationships between language anxiety, good teacher qualities, and the remaining variables: different types of grades and self-assessment of FL skills.

The characteristics correlating with language anxiety levels in a statistically significant manner were personality ones: approachableness, teaching skills, and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, these correlations, though statistically significant, were quite modest ($R=-.16$, $p=.00$; $R=-.12$, $p=.01$; $R=-.11$, $p=.02$ respectively). The self-assessment of the writing and listening skills seemed to be equally strongly correlated with language anxiety levels ($R=-.55$, $p=.00$ for both).

Table 2. Correlations between language anxiety and other variables

Variable	Language Anxiety	
	R	P
Skills		
Speaking	-.60	.00
Writing	-.55	.00
Reading	-.50	.00
Listening	-.55	.00
Grades		
Final <i>gymnasium</i>	-.22	.00
Semester	-.46	.00
Final prospective	-.55	.00
Good teacher qualities		
Approachableness	-.16	.00
Teaching skills	-.12	.01
Enthusiasm	-.11	.02
Knowledge	-.05	.31
Organisation	-.06	.23

Of the four skills that correlated strongly with language anxiety, speaking seems to be the most anxiety-breeding ($R=-.59$, $p=.00$), while reading appears to be a comparatively safe skill ($R=-.50$, $p=.00$).

All types of grades correlate with language anxiety, although the last semester grades and the prospective end-of-the-school-year grades given by the present teachers correlate in the strongest manner ($R=-.46$, $p=.00$ and $R=-.55$, $p=.00$ respectively). A summary of correlational operations can be found in Table 2.

A further interpretation of the results obtained in the present study can also be based on hierarchical multiple regression, where predictor variables are introduced in blocks. The indicator of significance of variables inserted in this manner is the range of the explained variance R^2 , as well as the value and significance of the β weights.

Consequently, in the first step the items chosen for predicting the level of language anxiety were the five good teacher qualities: approachableness, teaching skills, enthusiasm, knowledge and organisation. It can be seen in Table 3 that only approachableness can be considered a language anxiety predictor ($\beta=-.15$; $p=.02$). The validity of other teacher characteristics is insignificant. The whole block of variables, i.e., mainly approachableness, was responsible only for 4% of the variance in the language anxiety results in the equation of $F(5,489)=3.67$, $p=.00$.

The second step allowed for the introduction of a set of new predictors: various grades (final *gymnasium*, semester and prospective final ones). Of the three variables, prospective final grades serve as a powerful predictor of language anxiety levels ($\beta=-.45$; $p=.00$). With the R^2 change of .29, it explains 30% of variance of language anxiety levels, independently from the variables included in the first block, with $F(8,486)=29.95$, $p=.00$.

In Step Three there was an attempt to relate the language anxiety levels to the participants' self-assessment of FL macro-skills. This block also seems to influence language anxiety results to a great extent, with the following calculations: $\beta=-.18$; $p=.00$ for speaking, $\beta=-.06$; $p=.21$ for writing, $\beta=-.11$; $p=.01$ for reading, and $\beta=-.24$; $p=.00$ for listening. It follows that the self-assessment of the three skills (speaking, reading and listening) explains 17% of the variance in the dependent variable, where

$F(12,482)=40.59, p=0.00$. The summary of multiple regression results is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression predictors of the language anxiety levels in secondary grammar school students (N=495)

	R^2 change	β	p
Step 1 ¹ :			
approachableness		-.15	.02
teaching skills		-.09	.28
enthusiasm		-.08	.33
knowledge		.16	.02
organisation		.05	.47
Step 2:			
<i>gymnasium</i> grade	.29	-.07	.06
semester grade		-.09	.14
prospective final grade		-.45	.00
Step 3:			
speaking	.17	-.18	.00
writing		-.06	.21
reading		-.11	.01
listening		-.24	.00

¹ $R^2=.04, p=.00$

5. DISCUSSION

The basic aim of the present study was to shed more light on the relationship between good teacher characteristics and language anxiety levels. The results are presented according to the research questions proposed above.

5.1. RQ1: What is the relationship between good teacher qualities and language anxiety levels?

From the point of view of the participants in the study, their FL teachers had a good command of the subject, because knowledge was the characteristic of their English teachers assessed highest. Nevertheless, this teacher quality does not seem to be correlated with

language anxiety levels at all, which means that teacher expertise, irrelevant of its quality, cannot be directly related to this negative emotion. This observation is corroborated by the lack of any relationship to the other ability characteristic investigated in the study – organisation. This might bring about the conclusion that the ability perspective on teacher qualities does not offer a sufficient background for the interpretation of the language anxiety results, because the teacher's skills, knowledge and experience do not interact with the student's language anxiety experience in a direct manner.

Contrary to the ability characteristics, the personality characteristics seem to play a significant role in the student's experience of language anxiety. The results show that the teacher's enthusiasm, approachableness and teaching skills are significantly, though moderately, correlated with language anxiety levels. Thus the student's level of language anxiety is lower when their teacher is found to be capable of being approached, accessible and easy to meet and know. This is the reason why the personality perspective may become a more reliable point of reference for the analysis of language anxiety effects.

There are several explanations for the above claim. The SLA process involves the communication of messages that are supposed to be meaningful and acceptable through unfamiliar and unskilled systems of phonology, semantics, syntax, and sociolinguistics. This all creates a significant threat for the learner's "self-perception of genuineness in presenting themselves to others" (Horwitz, 1999: xii), because of the restricted repertoire of meaning and affect to be communicated. Consequently, language anxiety as an affective factor is directly connected with the personal perspective, which justifies the validity of approachableness, teaching skills and enthusiasm for language anxiety effects.

Moreover, although the basic roots of language anxiety lie within the personal domain of the student, the effects of communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are also affected by the individual's social relationships, because language anxiety concerns performance evaluation "within an academic and social context" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127). The teacher-learner interaction is at the heart of the learning experience, because anxiety also involves apprehension about others' evaluations in a variety of social-evaluative

classroom situations. The FL classroom brings about the potential threat of social evaluation, which may be negative especially in the case of an inexperienced learner for whom the language learning situation is quite new. The prospect of such evaluation induces mounting levels of language anxiety, leading to creating a possibly false or discouraging picture of one's linguistic abilities. In effect, no communication attempts, if any, will be endeavoured, which may eventually ruin the anxious learner's chances for optimal linguistic development. This danger indicates the importance of personality characteristics for the explanation of language anxiety levels.

5.2. RQ2: What is the predictive power of good teacher characteristics for language anxiety levels, when compared to FL achievement measures (grades and self-assessment of the four skills)?

As far as predictors of language anxiety are concerned, among the most powerful ones are the grades the students expect to get at the end of the school year. Their prognostic strength originates from teacher-student interaction, because learner expectations are based on the feedback they get from their instructors. As other research shows, there is a strong correspondence between teacher and student grades (Sullivan & Hall, 1997). It then can be inferred that the social climate in the classroom is the basis for student estimation of their FL progress. What is more, language anxiety levels are a product of one's personal anxieties (communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation) within the FL classroom environment, which, again, stresses the importance of social relationships therein. It follows that, although negative feedback received from the teacher may not necessarily lead to negative responses from classmates, but in general it may likely lower one's expectations concerning prospective final grades.

A similar conclusion can be drawn about the role of student self-assessment of the FL macro-skills, which also stems from the social interaction in the classroom – hence its high correlation with language anxiety levels. It seems worthwhile to stress the importance of the highly predictive power of self-assessment of the listening skill in the foreign language, when compared to self-assessment of the skills of speaking

and reading (which are slightly less powerful). The information processing model of language anxiety proposes that at each stage of language processing (input, processing, and output) processing problems cause a respective anxiety type: input anxiety, processing anxiety, and output anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994). Input anxiety causes problems with the student's ability to attend to, concentrate on, and encode foreign language messages. Processing anxiety leads to difficulties with performing cognitive operations, memory demands, and the organisational level of the presented material. Output anxiety impairs the ability to demonstrate the previously learned material; it affects the use of productive skills, like speaking or writing in the foreign language. Processing problems at each stage cause even greater difficulties at the next level, hence the input stage appears to be crucial for effective language processing. Therefore a well-developed listening skill may be the key to successful language acquisition, because it allows not only for high-quality encoding of language material, but also for efficient management of cognitive operations, and, finally, for capable language production. On the whole, prospective final grades and students' self-assessment of their language skills, especially listening, seem to constitute powerful predictors of language anxiety, which can be explained by the validity of the evaluation procedure for the external and personal perception of student abilities.

From the point of view of universal teacher characteristics, it can be seen that only approachableness and knowledge (assessed highest) can be regarded as predictors of language anxiety, though disappointingly weak ones. Therefore the question arises as to why teacher qualities are not a significant predictor of language anxiety. The students' assessment of their English teachers gives a picture of a competent, well-educated professional who, on the other hand, is unable to reduce language anxiety levels. It seems that it is not directly the teacher, but personal and other situational aspects of language learning that have a crucial impact on the development of language anxiety. It may then be concluded that, globally, the foreign language acquisition process is a personal experience, shaped by both individual and classroom factors, among which personal and ability characteristics play a more minor part than expected. The teacher's role seems to be mainly indirect, shaping the

student's self-assessment, and giving priority to the learner's personal anxieties.

The reasons for this observation may be rooted in the teacher's inability to reduce stress during the FL lesson, which may be connected to the student's lower assessment of teacher approachableness when compared to teacher knowledge. Moreover, the data was collected three months after the beginning of secondary grammar school education, which may suggest that language anxiety had started to form and approached its peak values. It may be speculated that the study's data would be more informative if repeated, as soon as language anxiety scores started to decrease due to the learner becoming more familiar with the FL acquisition process in the secondary grammar school setting, as well as their ability to identify more positive experiences in their learning progression.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE EFL CLASSROOM

The results of the study shed more light on the quality of the foreign language acquisition process performed by beginner secondary grammar school students. It seems that although their primary sources of language anxiety experience come from their personal zone, there are still good chances for the FL teacher to intervene in order to lessen the most serious effects of language anxiety. Furthermore, teacher involvement is necessary due to the indirect connection between feedback and the student language anxiety levels, grounded in self-assessment.

It then seems worthwhile to introduce viable classroom practices, like group work or pair work with a focus on meaning, not on mistakes, which allows students to avoid public humiliation and develop realistic expectations. This recommendation is especially valid in situations where students with various foreign language experience and social backgrounds are placed together.

Anxiety can as well be dealt with directly and explicitly. One of the simplest techniques that does not involve implementing any professional psychotherapeutic endeavours is keeping a diary of feelings about language learning. Then students can share their thoughts and emotions,

which may help them to find personal ways of combating anxiety and develop positive emotions connected with the foreign language learning process. In order to help, teachers can also implement a variety of stress-relieving techniques, whose therapeutic value has already been acknowledged (Krampen & von Eye, 2006). They range from simple physical exercises, like desk yoga, through relaxation exercises to more complex meditation tasks that can be instructed in the foreign language during the course of the lesson.

Last but not least, it is necessary to mention the value of direct teaching techniques that allow students to develop FL mastery in unthreatening ways. An array of such tasks is described in a book by Young (1999a) entitled *Affect in foreign language and second language learning. A practical guide to creating a low-anxiety classroom atmosphere*. There one can find techniques proposed for teaching the four skills, as well as various diagnostic tools and clues helping the teacher identify students with high language anxiety levels.

This study is, however, not free from limitations. The collected data came from first-grade secondary grammar school learners, which narrowed the focus of the study to novice FL students. It would be more informative to contrast the sample with another group with significantly longer language school experience. Apart from that, the study would also benefit from a deeper insight into the learner profiles. Consequently, its results would be more comprehensive when accompanied by broader information about the participants' gender, length of FL study, and place of residence. Finally, more knowledge about teachers should render valuable input into the study of the relationship between good teacher qualities and language anxiety.

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ZWIĄZEK POMIĘDZY CECAMI DOBREGO NAUCZYCIELA A POZIOMEM LĘKU JĘZYKOWEGO

Artykuł przedstawia opis badania empirycznego, służącego zbadaniu roli od nauczyciela j. obcego w odczuwaniu lęku językowego przez ucznia szkoły średniej. W tym celu pięć uniwersalnych cech dobrego nauczyciela (przystępność, umiejętności nauczania, entuzjazm, wiedza i organizacja) zostały skorelowane z lękiem językowym. Wyniki badania zdają się wskazywać, że lęk językowy zależy bardziej od specyfiki sytuacji uczenia się języka obcego, niż od nauczyciela. Jedynie jego wiedza i przystępność są słabymi predyktorami lęku językowego, który w głównej mierze pozostaje zależny od oczekiwanej przez ucznia oceny końcowej, jak i jego samooceny trzech z czterech sprawności (mówienia, słuchania i czytania). Zatem rola nauczyciela wydaje się pośrednio kształtować odczuwany lęk językowy, poprzez swój wpływ na samoocenę ucznia.

Słowa kluczowe: cechy dobrego nauczyciela, lęk językowy, przystępność, umiejętności nauczania, entuzjazm