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REDUCING ANXIETY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to find out what the factors that influence adult students' confidence to open up and gain better results in their foreign language acquisition are. It leads to such questions as: What makes adult foreign language learners anxious?; What are the ways of lowering anxiety levels in adult language learners according to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen 1987: 31)?; Do Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL) and Neuro-Linguistic programming (NLP) have proper techniques to help adult learners overcome foreign language anxiety (FLA)?

According to the purpose of the study a qualitative research, namely questionnaires and interviews were carried out. The data was collected from the students of Tallinn University Rakvere College. In order to find out if the students face any anxieties while learning English questionnaires among 51 people were compiled in a period of spring- winter 2014. Based on the given answers semi-structured interviews were carried out among 27 students in the period of December 2014 - April 2015.

This paper has been divided into four parts. The first chapter discusses the variety of anxieties students face in their adulthood, especially while learning foreign languages; the second chapter introduces different humanistic methods that can be used in order to decrease the level of foreign language anxiety; the third chapter gives an overview of the used methodology and procedure and analyses the results of the questionnaire and interviews; the fourth chapter discusses what kind of recommendations the English language learners have in order to create a motivating and anxiety-free learning situation and give an overview of which techniques of humanistic methodology has the author of the paper already used and which are advisable to put in practise in the future.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CLL- community language learning

EFL- English as Foreign Language

FLA- foreign language anxiety

HLT- humanistic language teaching

NLA- neurolinguistic approach

NLP- neurolinguistic programming

INTRODUCTION

More and more language teachers start to understand the importance of taking into consideration the feelings of a language learner. First, there is the question of motivation, as nowadays there is so much more entertaining ways to spend time than dealing with language learning. The modern world brings along quite a lot of stressors which disturb language learners. And even if students cope well with their everyday life outside the foreign language classroom, still many of them face anxieties during their language learning process.

The present thesis focuses on the anxieties among adult foreign language learners in an English language classroom. Therefore, the introduction gives a theoretical overview of the characteristics of contemporary adult learners, discusses how adults learn languages, the importance of the affective variables in language learning according to Krashen as well as anxiety as one of the affective variables and gives an overview of the present research paper.

Adult learners can be much more demanding and self-conscious than children. Grownups have their particular learning needs. Loeng (2012: 248) points out that the importance of having a different approach towards grownup learners was first noted in the 1920ies when Rosenstock- Huessy used the word “andragogy” to refer to adult education. He distinguished between Pedagogy, as the method of learning for children and youth; Demagogy, as the method for miseducating adults; and Andragogy, as the best way for adults to keep themselves intelligent about the contemporary society. It is pointed out that especially adult learners are the ones who have much to offer in order to build up proper conditions for learning. So the very thing instructors have to do is to get to know their students to use their experience, find out their needs, expectations, desires and why not the fears. According to the father of andragogy Malcolm S. Knowles there are at least five factors one should consider while teaching grownups:

Self-concept: As a person matures his self-concept moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being a self-directed human being

Experience: As a person matures he accumulates a growing reservoir of experience that becomes an increasing resource for learning.

Readiness to learn: As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of his social roles.

Orientation to learning: As a person matures his time perspective changes from one of postponed application of knowledge to immediacy of application, and accordingly his orientation toward learning shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem centeredness.

Motivation to learn: As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal (Smith 2002).

According to Hurd (2008: 14), adult learners are “diverse in their needs and aspirations, aptitudes and abilities, motivations and anxieties, personalities and beliefs”. It all leads to the situation when it is impossible to learn in a traditional way, in a classroom, day after day. Working days are long, schedules full, people in a hurry. Hurd (2008: 14) pointed out themes one should keep in mind while teaching adults: “learner autonomy; individual difference, in particular affective differences; learning strategies; and learner support”. Many students are not used to learning by themselves, without any external pressure or command. Contemporary society with its excessive amount of information and disturbing technical equipment produces more and more people with different anxieties. So teachers should concentrate more than ever on the individual approach, teaching how to learn and tool the learners with all kinds of techniques to help them lead their own learning process.

Adult learners need English for specific purposes, whether related to their profession or in order to travel on their own. Grownups mostly have a certain goal for learning English, which keeps them motivated. Kormos and Csizer (2008: 346) carried out a study among three different age groups: secondary school pupils, university students and adult language learners. They found that the university students and adult language learners were ready to work harder to learn the language, they were more patient and considered language learning much more valuable than the secondary school students did. Grownup learners need to be involved in the process of deciding what, how and when to learn. They enjoy the learning process more if their own experiences are included. Hurd (2008: 61) supports the idea of having a specific approach toward adult language learners by maintaining that “adult learners are active, task-

oriented, and approach their language learning with certain assumptions and beliefs which have a bearing on the way they tackle new language. There lies the difference between pedagogy and andragogy. Pedagogy is built on teacher-oriented learning process; andragogy promotes student- centred and cooperative methods.

The adult language learners have the so-called baggage from the past experiences and, because of that, most of the students have certain blocks which do not let them acquire foreign language as easily as, for instance, children do. Adults are afraid that they might lose their dignity, they worry about the learning demands made on them and feel anxious about having the use of their first language banished. The difference is that the younger the learners are the less prejudices and fears they have in connection with language learning. According to Kostyuk et al (2010: 2), the anxiety phenomenon in the field of foreign language learning has been the focus point of different studies and research projects. It has been established that anxiety can occur at any stage of language acquisition and can influence speed and accuracy of learning; language anxiety can be one of the predictors of language proficiency; learners with higher language anxiety avoid interactive communication more often than less anxious learners; anxiety arousal can negatively influence the communication output as it can be interrupted by the “freeing up” moments which learners experience when they are anxious; language learning under anxious circumstances can become traumatic to the identity of the learner.

Another aspect which sometimes is misinterpreted is the fact that even advanced students find foreign language situations rather stressful. According Tóth (2011: 53), one might have an idea that this is only a matter of beginner language learners, but as it is stated in a study based on interviews carried out among some Hungarian university students, many English major students suffer foreign language anxiety (FLA), especially during their college foreign language classes. At first, it may seem strange because those who are gaining

education in English on so high a level are expected to be fluent in it and have enough courage to express themselves, but it is not only about the fluency of English. Students may face, for instance, social anxiety, which can appear as a fear of stage or evaluation.

Some theories say that only children can acquire the second language and that adults can only learn. In spite of the latter, Krashen's acquisition-learning hypothesis (Krashen 1987: 10) claims that adults have the ability to acquire languages. He points out that grownups have an ability to gain their second language competence in two different ways. One of them is language acquisition, which is subconscious and comparable to the way children develop their mother tongue. It is described as an implicit, informal and natural way of learning. The other way of developing competence in a second language is by learning. The latter is a conscious process of gaining knowledge of a second language, being aware of the grammar rules and having the ability to use them. So as acquiring is a subconscious and a more natural way of gaining a better competence in a second language, one could assume it is also a less anxiety evoking activity/process. Therefore teachers and students themselves should ensure the conditions which encourage the acquisition process. As the learning process is said to be more formal and less life-like, then the methods used to acquire a language seem to be much more authentic and enjoyable.

According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, the language learners who receive comprehensible input, but have negative feelings while getting it, have so-called mental blocks, which do not let the learners acquire a foreign language successfully. Krashen (1987:31) points out that in order to succeed in language learning, learners should have high motivation and self-confidence but low anxiety levels. Krashen has stressed that the input received by learners should be optimal or on a favourable level or degree. Krashen (1987: 146) recommends Lozanov's Suggestopedia as an approach which closely meets the requirements of an optimal input by claiming that Lozanov guaranteed the conditions which

help to decrease the level of negative affect and help to acquire language subconsciously in an effective way. Lin (2008:3) in her empirical study into the significance of affective factors agrees with Krashen by claiming that teachers of university foreign language students should use films, songs and games in the classroom situation in order to attract students to study English more willingly. Abukhattala (2012: 130) expresses his support of Krashen's hypothesis as follows:

Understanding a message is not enough to assure language acquisition; one must be open to the message so that it reaches the language acquisition device (LAD) (intake). Not all the input reaches the LAD; somewhere along the way it is filtered, and only part of it is acquired.

A variety of humanistic approaches like Suggestopedia, The Silent Way, Community Language Learning (CLL), Total Physical Response (TPR) and Neuro-Linguistic programming (NLP) have been practised to help students to overcome their psychological barriers. The latter information leads to such questions as: What makes adult foreign language learners anxious?; What are the ways of lowering anxiety levels in adult language learners according to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Krashen 1987: 31)?; Do Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL) and Neuro-Linguistic programming (NLP) have proper techniques to help adult learners overcome foreign language anxiety?

The topic of the present study has stemmed from the author's experience gained while teaching the students of Tallinn University Rakvere College. Before coming to work in Rakvere College, the author taught English to children and occasionally to a couple of adult language learners' groups. Already then, it was evident that adult learners needed much more encouragement to speak up and share their thoughts in English. But the early experience in the College was even more complicated, because many of the university students did not have enough motivation, not to mention the courage, to learn English. If language learners who attend language courses do it because they are interested in language learning then university students mostly learn the foreign language because they have to. The fact that many of the

university students take part in the English classes only in order to graduate from the university made the author of the present paper realise that something has to be changed in the language learning environment. In order to figure out how to motivate the students to learn English voluntarily and to make the foreign language learning process as anxiety free as possible, the students were asked to fill in questionnaires and attend interviews.

This paper has been divided into four parts. The first chapter discusses the variety of anxieties students face in their adulthood, especially while learning foreign languages; the second chapter introduces different humanistic methods that can be used in order to decrease the level of foreign language anxiety; the third chapter gives an overview of the methodology and procedure used in the empirical study and analyses the results of the questionnaire and interviews; the fourth chapter discusses the recommendations the English language learners have in order to create a motivating and anxiety-free learning situation and give an overview of which techniques of humanistic methodology the author of the paper has already used and which are advisable to be put into practise in the future.

CHAPTER 1 Anxieties and foreign language learning

The aim of the present chapter is to give a theoretical overview of the ways different varieties of anxiety influence the foreign language learner. Most people have a kind of excitement before any presentation or performance. Actors have said that little anxiety is normal and gives one “the spark”. Gregersen et al (2014: 575) carried out a study to examine language anxiety, what causes it and how the affective reactions are perceived by the students. They point out that the term “anxious” can be used also in a positive way, for instance, when expressing one’s enthusiasm or thrill. But when a person experiences a specific fear or block in connection with some particular activity or situation, he or she might deal with some kind of anxiety. Draghici (2013: 287) discusses healthy and unhealthy anxiety. She points out that as long as a person feels just some concern it helps them to succeed, but when there appear fears which are based on the person’s imagination, not a real threat (for instance, the fear of riding a roller coaster or flying a plane thinking it might crash) there is a need for some therapy. According to Hanie and Powell Stanard (2009: 50), one can define anxiety as “a subjective sense of fear, distress, or worry that may exhibit both physical sensations (e.g. headaches or nausea) and emotional symptoms” (e.g. fear or nervousness).

There are different kinds of anxieties but the ones which have the major influence on language acquisition and learning are foreign language (classroom) anxiety, social anxiety, test anxiety and speech anxiety. As foreign language classes should be built on communication, students are expected to participate actively and be confident enough to expose themselves. It is said that foreign language anxiety is more common among adults (Aydin 2013: 63). According to Arnold (2014: 777) “[...] adult learners of a foreign language find themselves in the uncomfortable position of trying to express mature ideas in front of their peers in an obviously still immature linguistic vehicle”.

Horwitz et al (1986: 128) defines foreign language anxiety as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. The causes of FLA have been broadly separated into three main components: communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension is the anxiety experienced when speaking to or listening to other individuals. Test-anxiety is a form of performance anxiety associated with the fear of doing badly, or indeed failing altogether. Fear of negative evaluation is the anxiety associated with the learner's perception of how other onlookers (instructors, classmates or others) may negatively view their language ability. Horwitz et al (1986: 128) states that since anxiety can have profound effects on many aspects of foreign language learning, it is important to be able to identify those students who are particularly anxious in foreign language classes.

The most general of the anxieties related to language learning is social anxiety. Common forms of social anxiety include performance anxiety, public speaking anxiety, stage fright and timidity. Leary and Kowalski (1995: 5) point out that according to Holt et al (1992) the most anxiety-producing are situations involving formal speaking and interaction: giving a talk in front of an audience, performing on stage, giving a report to a group, speaking up at the meeting, and the like. The form and range of social anxiety depends on the personality, cultural and social background of the person. The authors of the *International Handbook of Social Anxiety*, Crozier and Alden (2001: 4) claim that society is to blame for the social anxiety of people as “the social and cultural values lead people to imprison themselves within the egocentric predicament of shyness”. Having social anxiety may result in having low quality in the learning process. Hanie and Powell Stanard (2009: 50) point out that the students who have social anxiety are mostly unsuccessful in their studies because they avoid participation in classroom activities. MacIntyre (1995: 91) argues that language anxiety stems

primarily from the social and communicative aspects of language learning and, therefore, can be considered one of the social anxieties. Anxious students are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it. For example, when responding to a question in class, the anxious student is focused on answering the teacher's question and evaluating the social implications of the answer while giving it. To the extent that self-related cognition increases, task-related cognition is restricted, and performance suffers (MacIntyre 1995: 96).

Test anxiety is the uneasiness, apprehension, or nervousness felt by students who have a fear of failing an exam. Test or examination anxiety appears not only in foreign language classes but in connection with any field or subject where testing is involved. Wang (2012: 64) describes test anxiety as the inability to think or remember during the test. While taking the test, examinees fail to read the test content properly or grasp the meaning of test questions, thus causing them to perform less well than expected. Wang adds that a certain amount of test anxiety may motivate students to prepare in plenty of time for their test and, hence, may enhance their test performance. However, for those who have a high level of test anxiety, it may impair their performance. Aydin (2013: 64) explains test anxiety as “apprehension towards academic evaluation, a fear of failing tests and of unpleasant experiences, held either consciously or un- consciously by learners in various situations”.

Speech anxiety is the fear of public speaking or of speaking in general. Horwitz et al (1986: 126-127) stresses that difficulty in speaking in class is probably the most frequently cited concern of the anxious foreign language students seeking help. He adds that people who typically have trouble speaking in groups are likely to experience even greater difficulty speaking in foreign language classes where they have little control of the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored. Derakhshan (2015: 520) states that making language learners speak in class is one of the important problems teachers face, as learners are afraid of simple slips of the tongue and seeing others laugh. Rubio (2007: 17)

explains that when students are learning a foreign language, speaking in the language involves taking risks. In any situation we may be judged by what we say. Since we know that when we speak in the foreign language we cannot yet express ourselves fluently in, we see the self that we present as a limited version of our real self. When reporting her research results about students' perspectives on foreign language anxiety, Wörde (2003: 5) claims that many of the anxiety-provoking factors reported by the participants appeared to be generated by various speaking activities. Gkonou (2013: 54) points out that communication apprehension and fear of negative evaluation are seen as resulting in English language classroom speaking anxiety.

Several educators have researched the ways of lowering FLA. Lin (2008: 115) conducted a study of the impact of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis among freshmen at a University of Taiwan in 2007-2008. The aim of Lin's paper was to prove that in order to lower the anxiety level of adult learners, language teachers should update their approach towards teaching while taking into consideration Krashen's theories. The results of the study mentioned above revealed that 95% of the students felt that their teacher's intention was to lessen their anxiety and boost their self-confidence. More than 80% of the participants in Lin's research found that "games, songs, music, and movies were all motivation- stimulating, relaxing and effective pedagogies". Wheeler (2003: 93) stresses the role of psychological factors in language learning. He rephrases Krashen saying that if teachers do not provide students with the comprehensible input and supportive learning environment, they create a mental block in the students' minds. Wörde (2003: 12-13) carried out a study among students from a diverse set of language classrooms (French, German and Spanish) in order to find out what causes anxiety and how to decrease the level of anxiety. According to the result of Wörde's interviews, language teachers should develop a relaxed learning atmosphere; guide students towards creating a stress-free peer support; help students to face and handle their fears; be sensitive and encouraging while correcting errors; use interactive methods; include

materials and themes of students' interest; try to lessen the load of materials; systematize the materials in a way that it is easy to memorize and acquire; write homework assignments on the board; try not to hurry while talking and with more complex information use mother tongue; take into consideration the needs of the students and cooperate with them. According to Trang et al (2012: 11) and based on the previous studies on FLA, it is stated that motivation plays a significant part in students' determination to study English and manage FLA. Casado and Dereshiwsky (2001: 2) point out that the quality of acquiring a language is influenced by several factors, such as which psychological strategies the teacher uses, on which English language level the students are and if the content of the language classes meets the needs of the learners. Capan and Simsek (2012: 121) claim that, in order to overcome the anxiety in the classroom, students suggest language teachers call the learners by their names.

It can be concluded that foreign language learners may face a variety of anxieties depending on the situation and activities in the language classroom. In order to support anxious students, teachers should take into consideration the needs of the learners. Language learners ought to be equipped with tools that encourage them to open-up and give a chance to associate the learning environment with positive emotions.

CHAPTER 2 Using humanistic language teaching methods in order to lower foreign language anxiety

According to the previous chapter it can be concluded that there are various situations in a foreign language classroom which block foreign language learners' ability and motivation to acquire the language successfully enough.

One way of creating an efficient language learning environment and supporting the personal growth of learners is using a humanistic language teaching (HLT) approach. As the author of the thesis finds that Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning and Neurolinguistic Programming cover most of the features which help to increase foreign language learners' confidence and motivation, lower negative affective factors and encourage students to interact with their peers, a discussion about putting the above-mentioned approaches into practise follows.

2.1 (De) suggestopedia

According to Lozanov (2005: 11), Suggestopedia is a teaching system which makes use of all the possibilities tender suggestion can offer. Larsen- Freeman et al (2011: 71) refer to Lozanov's method saying that students set up psychological barriers to learning: They fear that they will be unable to perform, that they will be limited in their ability to learn, that they will fail. As noted by Larsen- Freeman et al (2011: 71), desuggestopedia, the application of the study of suggestion to pedagogy, has been developed to help students overcome the barriers of learning. Based on their study- visit to a university English class in Egypt they analyse how desuggestopedia can be applied to language teaching. Larsen et al (2011: 71- 83) conclude that the principles of the method are as follows:

- The language teacher ought to be trustworthy and respected enough in order to make the students feel secure and ready to express themselves spontaneously

- The learning environment should be bright and cheerful, posters displaying grammatical information about the target language on the walls in order to take advantage of students` peripheral learning
- Students select target language names and choose new occupations. During their course, they create whole biographies to go along with their identities
- The text they work from are hand-outs with dialogues in the target language and next to it is a translation in the students` native language
- The teacher presents the dialogue during two “concerts”(the receptive phase)
- Students engage in various activities designed to help them gain facility with the new material (the active phase). There are dramatizations, games, songs, and question-answer exercises.

Though suggestopedia has a lot to offer, especially to the students who face FLA, there are always some language learners who this way of learning does not suit. Mateva (1997: 29), when discussing using role-plays in FL settings, claims that there are always students as well as teachers unwilling to change their personality and project themselves in a new role and reality. Presumably such people are less open to and inclined to accept suggestions. They are predominantly analytic thinkers, left-hemisphere dominant and grammatically-minded learners who do not believe that a language can be learned through any kind of dramatic activities. Some teachers consider role-playing a time-consuming job which not only wastes time and effort, but does not show readily and measurable results.

2.2 Community language learning

Community language learning (CLL) advises teachers to consider their students as “whole persons”. Whole- person learning means that teachers consider not only their students` intellect, but have some understanding of the relationship among students` feelings, physical reactions, instinctive protective reactions, and desire to learn as well. The CLL method takes

its principles from the more general counselling-learning approach developed by Curran (1976). Larsen- Freeman and Anderson (2011: 85) discuss the approach according to the principles of Curran saying that adults often feel threatened by a new learning situation. They are threatened by the change inherent in learning and by the fear that they will appear foolish. So, in order to help language learners cope with their anxiety, Curran suggested teachers become language counsellors. The idea of such teachers is to be aware of the fears students face and to be ready to handle negative emotions.

According to Koba et al (2000:3), CLL has a variety of traits which help to deal with anxiety. The way of organising the class as a conversation circle makes students feel safe. It lowers the competitive attitude and supports the feeling of equality. The most appropriate number of students in the conversation circle is fewer than ten. The size of the group gives more possibilities to personalise the materials and provides all learners with enough time to reflect.

The most common CLL activities are the conversation circle, transcription, the human computer, card games and the reflection session. In the first part of the conversation circle students just listen and repeat after the teacher. Students brainstorm the topics they would like to speak about and they may do it in their mother tongue. For instance, a student says something in his or her own language, the teacher says it in the target language and the other students repeat after the latter. The conversations are recorded so students have a chance to analyse them later on. After that the teacher and the students discuss the feelings related to the recorded conversation, listen to the tape and transcribe their conversation. Finally, with the help of the transcript they analyse the use of the language. CLL supports creating language learners with an independent, analytical and cooperative personality. Koba et al (2000: 6) point out that CLL is great for practising listening and speaking skills and they emphasise that it is especially suitable for adult learners. Biju (2013: 3) agrees with the idea of using community language learning as it is believed to reduce language anxiety of many learners.

In spite of the advantages discussed above, according to some specialists CLL has also its drawbacks. As Rahman (2008: 85) admits some critics say that this method has no specific learning objective or syllabus; moreover, it focuses only on introvert students. More traditional educators consider an explicit structure of the lessons important; they are for lesson plans, using student books and having a control over the situation in the language classroom. So it is understandable that such teachers are not fond of student- oriented classes where the responsibility is shared with learners or even given entirely to the latter.

2.3 Neurolinguistic programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) – developed in the 1970s by Bandler and Grinder – is an approach that aims to enhance the effectiveness of communication and facilitate learning and personal development. It is becoming increasingly familiar in formal education, professional development, and informal learning“(Tosey and Mathison 2008).

Yoell and Youell (2011: 1) explain the meaning of the term Neuro- Linguistic Programming (NLP) as follows:

Neuro: this relates to the brain and the things that go on in your mind. It also covers the rest of your neurological system, including your five senses: sight, hearing, feeling, taste and smell.
Linguistic: this concerns the language, both spoken and non-spoken (body language) communication systems that you use to code, order and understand the representations that you get from your senses (sight, sound, feeling etc) as well as your thoughts and how you make meaning or sense of what you experience.

According to Youell and Youell (2011: 1), NLP is concerned with the basic building blocks and functions of our mind-body system that enables us to think, feel, experience and imagine the world around us. As it is well known that language acquisition should work spontaneously and subconsciously then teachers and learners need some strategies to make it happen. According to Netten and Germain (2012), the key to successful use of NLP lies in the following:

The NLA to second-language learning provides a new paradigm for the effective acquisition of communication skills in a second language in a classroom setting. The defining characteristic of the approach is the need to develop independently in the classroom the two components of effective communication: implicit competence, or the ability to use spontaneously an L2/FL, and explicit knowledge, a conscious awareness of how

the language works, grammar rules, and vocabulary. In order to help teachers conceptualize these two components, we have used the terms internal and external grammar.

And yet even NLP is not without its critics. Stanton (1994: 234) quotes to the words of Conway and Seigelman (1983): “The technique threatens to become a hazardous tool for personal manipulation, and in the wrong hands, a dangerous instrument of social control. “

Despite the fact that HLT has plenty of supporters according to Rahman (2008: 81) some educators still think that such teaching methods might appear too “non-threatening”, that in the process the purpose and need of learning might disappear. Gadd (1998: 232) critiques the views of romantic humanist (he has divided humanism into two sub- categories: pragmatic and romantic) educators in EFL. According to Gadd the principles of romantic humanism are, firstly, based on a misguided, culturally- biased view of the English teacher which foregrounds the role of nurturer of the private self, and assumes that being human entails being a private and introspective individual; secondly, the language of the private self is limited in the number of registers and types of text which enables students to learn.

To sum it up, it can be said that humanistic methods take into consideration all the features of a human being- the physical, emotional, social and cognitive (Tanemura and Miura 2011: 83). The term “foreign language education” is described by Kohonen (2000:4) as meaningful learning based on personal experience and supporting the growth of a student as a whole person. He considers such aspects as student`s autonomy and own goals, personalising the learning process, student initiative and responsibility, meaningful learning, emphasis on reflection and self-assessment, integration of social, affective and cognitive learning goals particularly important. Kohonen (2000:7) adds that students should learn how to reflect on their experiences, beliefs and assumptions. Cormon (1986: 278) compares such humanistic approaches as Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning and the Silent Way and points out that they all have a very important common principle: “language learning is at its best when teachers teach the students, not the syllabus. [...] students are people [...] different

personalities, feelings, and interests should be taken into account.“ Cormon (1986: 278) using the words of Moskowitz sums it up saying that: “affective teaching is effective teaching“.

CHAPTER 3 Anxieties among the students of Tallinn University Rakvere College

In order to find out how anxious the students of Tallinn University Rakvere College are, if they struggle with foreign language anxiety and whether they have any ideas how to decrease the level of anxiety in the English language classroom, a questionnaire and interviews among the students were carried out. The basis for the questionnaire and interview design was the reviewed literature in the area of anxieties, particularly of FLA (Krashen 1982, Horwitz 1986, Arnold 2000) and various humanistic approaches (Cormon 1986, Lozanov 2005, Larsen et al 2011).

The main research questions that the empirical research aimed to answer were:

Do the generally not anxious language learners face any foreign language anxiety?

What are the main anxiety triggers in a foreign language classroom according to the students?

Do the aspects of Suggestopedia, CLL and NLP match the expectations of the language learners?

3.1 The method

According to the purpose of the study, a qualitative research, namely questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, was carried out.

First, the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire. The questionnaire contains 42 questions, three of which are open-ended and all the rest multiple-choice questions. The questionnaire begins with short demographical questions to collect statistical data about the participants: name, age, form of study, course, speciality and work experience. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to figure out the levels of social anxiety among the students. The third group of questions was designed to point out the aspects that make the students feel anxious in the English language classroom.

The questions of the second part of the questionnaire (about social anxiety) were taken from the book “Overcoming Social Anxiety and Shyness Self- Help Course” by Butler (2007: 5- 8). The questions for the third part of the questionnaire (about anxiety in the English language classroom) were compiled by the author of the thesis. The results were compared to find out if the students who are not anxious in any social situation can be anxious in a foreign language classroom.

As interviewing and the analysis of interviews are time consuming, group interviews instead of individual interviews were carried out. The interview consisted of 18 open-ended questions. First, the interviewees were asked questions about their past and present experiences in connection with foreign language learning. Next, the participants had to discuss what influences their feelings towards language classes and how. After that, the respondents were asked to comment on different aspects related to HLT methods. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed using a thematic approach. In order to do that, the author identified the themes, developed the coding scheme and started looking for patterns across the data. For ensuring the validity of the findings the author of the paper used member checking strategies.

3.2 The procedure

Data elicitation began in spring 2013. Firstly, the main problematic areas that were identified by the author as a practitioner were outlined. That is, the problems connected to the psychological blocks English language students face, the aspects to keep in mind while teaching adults and different ways to support motivated and stress-free language learning were listed. Secondly, the questionnaires for students were designed and delivered via the internet as an electronic questionnaire in Google Drive in spring 2014. The data from the questionnaires was elicited from 51 students of Tallinn University Rakvere College from the

end of April 2014 till the beginning of December 2014. The responses were automatically analysed and data tables generated.

The majority of the students were female and only one of the participants was a male student. The average age of the students was 31.2 years, most of them (54%) were distance learners, 24% cyclical learning and 22% full-time students. The majority of the respondents were studying in the third year (42%), 36% of them were first-year and 22% second-year students. Most of the participants (78%) were the students of early childhood pedagogy, 12% of social pedagogy and 10% of public and business management. The majority of the respondents (44%) had 0-5 years of work experience, 26% of the students had had only an experience of professional placement.

After the analysis of the questionnaire results the interview questions were compiled in December 2014. Some of the interview questions were taken from the study "*Students' Perspectives on Foreign Language Anxiety*" carried out by Wörde (2003: 3). A few of the questions were adapted and a few were added by the author of the present paper. The interviews were carried out among 27 students in the period of December 2014 - April 2015. There were fewer people interviewed than there had been participants in the survey. The participants were chosen according to their study form, but the timetable of Rakvere College is not fixed so the English lessons cannot take place regularly either. The first group of the interviewees were the second-year full-time students, the second group consisted of distance learners and the last group of participants were the cyclical learning students. Patterns in the interview transcript were identified and the data were analysed accordingly.

3.3 Results of the questionnaire

The second part of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) consisted of 11 questions about a variety of social situations, which can be grouped into five most stressful themes according to the participants. The respondents find most stressful when they are expected to: perform in

front of people they do not know well (Q2), start or continue a conversation (Q4), give a speech in public (Q8), participate in a job interview (Q10) or be the centre of attention (Q11). 49-87% of the participants gave to these questions an answer: “yes, definitely”, “yes, mostly” or “yes, sometimes”.

Q13 aimed to find out what the participants are most afraid of while performing or speaking to strangers. The most common worry was that they would talk nonsense (mentioned by 59%), start blushing (47 %), become tongue-tied (45%) and be clumsy (27%).

Next, the students had to evaluate how uncomfortable they would feel if they talk nonsense, start blushing, become tongue-tied or be clumsy. 73% of the participants would feel quite anxious in such situations. Most of the respondents are not worried about their behaviour resulting from their anxiety (61%), quite a few of them considered themselves somewhat too anxious (31%).

92% of the responders thought that the best way to support people with social anxiety is trying to understand them, giving them time to collect themselves and giving them a chance to get used to the frightening situations. A considerable proportion of the students get information about self-help techniques from lectures (39%). Most of the respondents (55%) do not think that the college has provided them with enough self-help information. More than half of the students (55%) consider adding subjects which give a chance to practise self-help techniques the best way to support their mental wellbeing. Quite a large number of the participants (41%) think that the students should have a possibility to get some free advice and/ or therapies from a specialist. 31% of the respondents are of the opinion that making the relationship between students and the staff more informal would be the solution.

59% of the students have practised self-help techniques, 35% of the participants have been practising/ playing through fearful situations, trying to find reasons, reading about it, reading the Bible and praying, taking drugs. 86.3% of the students believe that people can

influence their own success and self-confidence. The minority of them do not agree with the idea and few have no idea how to assure success in life and a positive self-image.

Though the results of the second part of the questionnaire (social anxiety and how to deal with it) were quite positive, the data about the English language classroom situation appear to be more problematic. Eight out of eleven questions (Q2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) about anxiety in the English language classroom give us evidence about most of the students facing stressful moments while expected to speak in English. The majority of the participants do not mind speaking in the English classroom (62%, Q1), though 25 % of the respondents answered that they mostly do not feel comfortable in such a situation. At the same time, 86 % of the students are worried about making mistakes while speaking in English. Almost half of the participants (46%) pointed out that it makes them tremble when they know that they are going to be called on in a language class.

The others are not so worried and claim that they used to have such problems in the past. To the question "Do you feel relaxed during the English classes?"(Q32), 35% of the students responded that mostly they do not feel relaxed. The majority of the students are sure that the other learners are better than them (88%). Approximately half of the participants find it stressful when they are expected to speak up in English without any preparation time. 29% of them do not mind it much.

Not surprisingly most of the respondents (75%) fear to fail in their English examination. A little more than half of the students admit that they may become so nervous in language classes that they forget even the things they have known so far. 57% of the participants feel that the more they prepare for the test the more confused they get. Still, there is quite a considerable number of those (31%) who mostly do not have such a problem. Only 27% of the participants think that the language class moves so quickly that they worry about getting

left behind. More than half of the students (54.9 %) feel in the English classes more uncomfortable than in the other lectures.

The students were asked to recommend the ways how to make the English learning environment safer. 61% of them considered working in small groups most important, 39% are for the idea of helping the so-called weaker ones outside the compulsory English classes, 33% admit that they feel better when watching comedies, quite equally were mentioned music and singing along, breathing exercises, positive statements and mantras.

According to the results of the second part of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that not many of the students are socially anxious. Those who still face the problem have trouble speaking up in front of a big audience and feel uncomfortable while having a job interview or being in a centre of attention. The third part of the questionnaire revealed that FLA seems to be more widespread among the participants as most of them are afraid of making mistakes in English and consider the peers better students and more competent in English than they are.

3.4 Analysis of the interviews

While the results of the questionnaire gave a more general overview of the social and foreign language anxieties among the college students, the interviewing process (see appendix 2 for the interview questions) added some extra details and examples from students past and present foreign language classroom experiences related to anxiety.

According to Q1, most of the interviewees have suffered from foreign language related anxiety, many of them feel stressed during the present English classes. In response to Q1, the students pointed out that they have experienced foreign language anxiety during their Russian (6 students), German (1) and English (6) classes. One of the interviewees has felt anxious in all the foreign language classes during her lifetime.

The respondents mentioned different factors as the triggers of FLA. These factors could be categorised as teacher-, knowledge- /skills- and motivation related, connected to

future worries or organisational problems. The interviewees find that their feelings and attitude towards language learning depend on the behaviour and attitude of the language teacher as evidence such comments: *“The Russian teacher shouted at me because I was coughing and I had a cold”*; *“Already in the third class we had a snobby, nasty and young English teacher. In other subjects I got only “fours” and “fives” but in English I got “a two”, I was so angry”*; *“The teacher was in favour of the smarter ones and said that I am not going to graduate the basic school”*; the lack of possibilities to practise the language (Russian, German) in their everyday life (*“Not enough practising possibilities”*); their inability to use the language (*“I was the only one who had not been abroad practising English”*; *“When I have to express myself in English my mind goes empty and I forget every word”*; *“I have always been one of the weakest”*); the reason for learning the language, whether it is a free will or compulsory (*“I felt very bad in Russian because every year we started to learn the same things with what we finished the previous year”*; *“After being expelled from the university because of German I did not want to learn any foreign language for 25 years, starting with English in 2013 needed a lot of strength”*); the timetable, the organisation of the lectures and the level of the language group (*“Different language level of the students”*; *“Lectures rarely and too long hours in a row”*; *“Not systematic enough lectures”*).

Q1- 6 and Q10 also focused on the experience of the language learners in order to find out if the foreign language anxiety has been permanent during their language studies. The students discussed their past and present feelings towards foreign language learning and shared their future worries (*“In comparison with the other subjects English is the worst, because if I do not pass the exam I will not graduate the college”*; *“I am so afraid of failing the exam”*; *“I am not so sure about my language skills, especially in connection with the exam”*).

The aim of the question number 7 was to find out how well can the students manage in anxious situations. One of the interviewees said: *“I approach the situation with humour. Additionally, I get help from taking deep breath and having an eye-contact with the teacher or with a good group-mate.”* Another participant commented: *“I start daydreaming, forget the useful words, get stuck.”* One of the students pointed out: *“I try to stay calm and use as easy vocabulary as possible.”*

It can be concluded that few of the interviewees have some ideas how to manage stressful situations but most of the participants did not even give any answer to that question. As the bigger part of the students did not comment on the Q7, it may be assumed that they have no idea of how they act in an anxious situation or they do not consider it important enough to discuss. Hence the need to introduce the students the different self-reflexion techniques and self-help tools in order to lower their foreign language anxiety and support their language studies.

Q 8 was compiled in order to find out how self-confident the language learners are (*“My past experiences have lowered my self-confidence extremely”*; *“I did not believe that I could be successful in English, but I am surprised that I have improved so far”*). Q9 was asked to gather some extra information about the English students` feelings related to making mistakes and to find out if they are afraid of being judged by their peer students (*“When I say something incorrect, then some people look at me in a way like: “What kind of nonsense are you talking about”*; *“It is so easy, how is it possible that you do not know it!”* ; *“Once I translated a word in English and the others seemed not to know it and laughed at me, after that incident I thought that I would not want to translate anything orally anymore”*). Both of the last questions reflect the confidence of the language learners in connection with foreign language learning.

While the results of the questionnaire gave a better picture of the students who struggle with FLA, the analysis of the answers collected via interviews gives a closer look at the very personal feelings students have had during their language studies. The results of the interviews show that many language learners have mental blocks from past foreign language learning experiences. The negative feelings picked up from the language classes of their basic and secondary school years have a strong influence on their present confidence in language learning. Many of them are aware of more humane ways of teaching/learning a foreign language and are ready to suggest some ideas like working in small groups of the same level, using a variety of entertaining methods and taking into consideration their expectations and life-experience. They see that the personality, behaviour and attitude of the teacher and peer students play a very important role in their motivation and courage to express themselves in a foreign language.

CHAPTER 4 Recommendations for anxiety-free foreign language classes

The aim of the present chapter is to give an overview of the aspects of the humanistic approach the author of the thesis has used so far, to discuss the recommendations received from the language learners and to point out the possibilities for organising the foreign language classes according to the findings of the present research paper.

Without even being aware of the different humanistic approaches in foreign language teaching the author of the thesis has subconsciously used many of the above-mentioned techniques. Having recognised the problem of anxieties among adult language learners about five years ago, the author did some research and started to practise something different. The students were asked to fill in feedback questionnaires; discussions on the content of the English classes began. The first steps of fighting FLA were quite chaotic but with the trust of the students it was a positive challenge to try something new and exciting. Already back then the language learners were eager to use more music and films in the English language classroom, to create role-plays and discussions in connection with their speciality. With the help of the internet resources it has been quite easy but time-consuming to collect materials on more innovative and modern activities. As the author of the present thesis wrote her bachelor`s thesis on the topic “Using Music in an English Language Classroom” and the feedback from the students after putting the created lesson plans into practise was positive, there was no doubt that adding some songs into the language classroom is essential. Since then different lyrics have been used to introduce the topic of the lesson, to revise certain grammar structures or just as energisers. Therefore the positive effects of using music as an element of (de)suggestopedia in a somewhat modernised way have found proof from the English learners of the author of the present thesis.

Additionally, the author of the thesis has compiled herself or let the students create some materials in order to integrate some grammar structures or vocabulary with discussing

students' professions. For instance, to practise the meaning of modal verbs (should/ shouldn't and must/mustn't) and discuss the proper behaviour of kindergarten teachers, a list of do's and don't's of the kindergarten teachers was created (Appendix 3). Many of the oral discussions and essay topics have been related to the students' present or future professions. For example, for the preschool education students there have been topics like "How to help the children to find their passion" or "Are you for or against the same sex schools?" and so on. A lot of the discussions have been inspired by Tedtalks, especially by Sir Ken Robinson.

In order to help the students to get over their fear of expressing their opinion in English in front of their peers, the author of the paper provided for the students a learning situation when first they have a possibility to think about a topic on their own, then in pairs and finally altogether. The latter gives them enough time to get used to the idea and to exchange ideas with each other, additionally they are encouraged to provide constructive feedback to their group-mates and to try to finish each other's sentences if needed.

Even the correction of errors made by students is handled cautiously. While the students speak the teacher makes notes and afterwards writes the sentences which need correction randomly on the board without saying particularly whose error these are. Then the students are asked to try to correct the mistakes.

Though the author of the present paper had already before the previous study used a variety of humanistic and, therefore, anxiety lowering methods there was still a need to get some extra proof of the students' needs and preferences as according to the questionnaire results many students still face FLA. So in order to create the language learning environment which supports the language learner's motivation best and decreases the anxieties, a few interview questions were dedicated to finding out what the students like about their present English lessons, what kind of solutions they offer to deal with the problem and how they feel about different methods used in the humanistic teaching approach.

In response to the interview question “*What do you like the most related to your English classes?*”(Q5), the students pointed out the following: “*Anxiety-free atmosphere*”; “*Playing games, for instance Alias in English as it makes you react quickly and makes you speak spontaneously on a topic you do not know well. It makes you think in English and I think as I played it also with friends it helped me to succeed in my oral part of the examination*”; “*When we study then thoroughly till we acquire it, we do not have to hurry*”; “*We discuss the topics which are currently in news*”; “*Lots of new methods*”; “*Revising grammar with the help of songs, everybody seemed to take part in it*”; “*Direct interaction, that somebody corrects, when you make mistakes*” ; “*I like that the teacher has time for us and she takes into consideration our level and needs*”. The students` answers prove their need for variety, authentic materials and creative activities. They consider the free interaction among the peer students and with their teacher important.

The students responded to the question ”*Do you have any ideas how to make the English classes more relaxed?*” (Q11) as follows: “*Playful approach, common goal, teacher-student in an equal relationship, both are assessed and getting feedback, cooperation*”; “*First, the students should get used to the language with the help of role-plays, alphabet songs and some other simple activities*”; “*Jokes and humour create an anxiety-free environment*” ; “*Theoretically, physical activities should create a more relaxed atmosphere*” ; “*Discussion on a profession- related topic first in small groups, later a presentation*” ; “*More lessons taking place more regularly*”; “*The lessons, topics, students and the teacher should be exciting, challenging, fun, humorous and youthful*”. According to the students` responses to the Q11, it is possible to conclude that the interviewees enjoy the English classes the most when the learning material is challenging but not too complicated, the lesson-plans are designed in an cooperative way considering the needs and interests of the students and the learning process is creative and innovative.

Questions 12- 16 focused on finding out the language learners` attitude towards using different methods in order to lower their anxieties and therefore improve their possibilities to acquire the language in a possibly painless way. As the present thesis suggests that using different humanistic approaches in language learning supports best the anxious foreign language learner, some traits of Suggestopedia, CLL and NLP were being introduced to the interviewees.

To the question (Q12) *“What do you think about using different entertaining methods like music, films and games in an English classroom?”* the students gave the following answers: *“It should be related to language learning- listening practise, comprehension of the text, later retelling with one`s own words”* ; *“Using entertaining methods is a great change, it improves listening ability and concentration very well”*; *“I enjoy all of it, our English classes have all the elements”* ; *“The more interesting and attractive the language learning the more motivate the learners”* ; *Board games help to express oneself and gives courage to speak in English”*; *“The series/films should have interesting topic, then it keeps interested and gives a chance to learn some new expressions”*. The findings of Q12 suggest that the language learners value a variety of amusing activities in the language classroom as long as the activities are reasonable and purposeful.

All the interviewees agreed with the question *“Do you consider cooperative activities like role-plays, discussions, self-made dialogues important? Give reasons!”* (Q13). The students were for the cooperative methods owing to the following reasons: *“Having a conversation with peer students is interesting and fun, we know each other quite well so there are plenty of conversation topics for us”*; *“These activities create a supportive atmosphere for learning”*; *“It is essential as in an exam we need the skills”*; *“Useful, you learn to interact and speak properly, it improves your vocabulary”*.

When asked whether the learners consider it essential that they have a choice which topics and in what way are discussed in an English language classroom (Q 14), the students gave answers like *“It is essential as we all have topics we know about more or less”* ; *“It helps to create the learning process more productive and useful”* ; *“Yes, as I know my weak spots which need to be improved”*. Koba (2000:4) supports using methods of CLL by saying that the learners create their own materials; therefore, it makes the learners feel not only belonging but also gives them more responsibility.

Q15 was compiled to get the language learners` opinion on using their life experience, knowledge, interests and not talking about some fictional characters and situations. The interviewees expressed their thoughts as follows: *“It is essential to talk about topics which are related to real life. It would be great to learn to use the terms for introducing oneself and to talk about work, because these things could be useful in the future”*; *“If my life experience, knowledge and interests are taken into consideration, I feel more motivated to speak up”*; *“It is not important, it is okay to talk about fictional characters as well“*; *“I prefer imaginary situations as it sometimes gives more possibilities to speak up. For instance, when someone does not have any brothers or sisters she or he cannot talk about this topic at all. While using fantasy it is possible to use more vocabulary and build extra sentences”*. According to these responses it is possible to conclude that there are two kinds of learners: those who prefer acting out fictional situation and those who prefer real life-like conversation or role- play topics.

Next the interviewees were asked if they support the idea of recording the conversations in English classes and analysing the recordings altogether (Q16). Most of the respondents were against it supporting their opinion by saying that *“Definitely not, because I am not as good at English that there could be something to analyse. Additionally, I do not like to listen to my voice from the tape”*; *“I do not mind recording, but I find that it is a waste of time. It is*

possible to analyse the usage of language just after the conversations"; *"It could make the weaker learners anxious"*. These responses indicate that the students are not used to being recorded so this does not seem to be the best trait of CLL to use with the participants of the present study. Still, surprisingly one of the interviewees replied with a positive attitude saying: *"It would be useful in order to improve the pronunciation"*. Hence the need to improve the language learners' confidence and inform them of the advantages of analysing oral texts produced by themselves.

The last two questions (Q17 and 18) were asked to get some feedback on the interview. The aim was to lead the students towards self-reflexion and to find out if they are able to and consider it important to analyse their learning situation. Here are some examples of the language learners' feelings after the interviewing process: *"I feel and still cannot understand why it is not possible to graduate the university without passing the English exam. I do not like that it is compulsory, I like English but I prefer that it would be a free choice whether to learn it or not"*; *"I came to a conclusion that I improved a lot in English during my university studies, finally I understood the things I had not before and I got some proof that I am able to learn languages and that I can count on that"*; *"It is haunting me all the time that without passing the English exam I will not graduate the school"*; *"I feel good, the interview questions were interesting and made me think more about language learning"*; *"The questions made me thinking and helped to understand my behaviour"*. To sum it up, the interviewing process was useful and educating for all the participants. It is sad to realise that the compulsory final examination in English makes the students feel anxious, and therefore, distracts them from enjoying the learning process. On the other hand, it is a pleasure to know that several students find such an analysis of the learning process helpful.

According to the results of the questionnaire and interviews, it can be concluded that many language learners have so called blocks from the past foreign language classes and, in

order to help them get over their negative feelings towards language learning, the support of the teacher and the peer students is needed. Wörde (2003: 4), whose interview questions were used to collect data for the present paper, compiled a similar research with foreign language students and similarly to the evidence described above, the participants in Wörde's research cited as sources for their anxiety negative classroom experiences, fear of negative evaluation and the teachers themselves.

There are surprisingly many examples of the teachers who, because of their negative attitude, kill the curiosity and inner need to learn the subject already before the students get a chance to figure out whether they would be good at or interested in the field or not. Tew (2006) carried out a study among teenagers in order to find out how youngsters get over blocks which hinder them from succeeding in their studies. To sum up the study results by Tew, we can point out a few intriguing aspects; for instance, one girl who used to be fun and social did not succeed in mathematics and due to that showed the negative side of her personality by being aggressive. Tew suggested dealing with her in a way that she would get tasks in Maths starting from easier ones in order to be motivated and move on step by step. Another student found out that the success in the subjects depended on the way he thought of the teachers. So he might have been fond of a field but when he did not favour the teacher, he just did not acquire the material well enough. According to the study discussed above one can realise how important the factor of personalising the materials is and how much teachers should work on their relations with students. Finally, it all boils down to emotions, how confident learners in the studying situation feel and how safe and attractive the microclimate of the classroom is.

After working through a selection of articles about foreign language anxiety and humanistic ways to help learners to lower their affective filters and analysing the results of the

questionnaire and interviews, it is possible to compare the information of the theoretical and empirical part of the paper and draw some conclusions.

According to the empirical findings of the present thesis, in order to relieve the anxieties of foreign language learners and give them more motivation it is advisable to integrate various methods of the humanistic approaches discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis. Suggestopedia, CLL and NLP all promote creating positive atmosphere in a foreign language classroom. The teacher acts as a counsellor and is an equal member of the group not the leader. Suggestopedia and NLP use music, drama and games to help the students relax and strengthen their self-confidence to overcome their past negative experiences. Additionally, the latter ways of teaching encourage students to reflect and mirror which again helps them to find their blocks from the past and share the experiences with their peers. CLL and NLP both promote a lot of discussion and analysing which leads to self-directed learning and helps to share the responsibility of the subject matter. One of the most mentioned stressors seem to be having too big language groups with too varied levels of students. CLL suggests working in small groups where every member of the group has equal rights and possibilities to improve. As most of the students who were interviewed considered speaking and exam situation the most anxiety provoking, then the author of the thesis carried out different activities to relieve the stress and encourage the students to speak up and get over of their exam anxiety.

In order to improve the communicative skills and in the same time to help the language learner prepare themselves for the examination the cards “A Problem Includes a Possibility” (Kriisa and Murrik) for developing open- mindedness were used. The aim of the cards is to help to solve the problems and find solutions while using creativity and intuition. There are three different colours of cards in the pack: metaphor-/picture cards (orange), cards of beliefs (blue), cards of resources (green). The students have to concentrate on the problem, in our case the English exam, and try to find ways how to prepare themselves mentally and

psychologically. First, every student has to draw a picture card without looking at the picture. Then they have to figure out what does the picture say about their situation. For instance, if one of the language learners takes a card with two gingerbread men, it can be interpreted that the key is cooperation. Next, the wanted aim should be formulated. A card of beliefs is picked and it guides the learner towards the solution. For example, when on the blue card there is written “All the resources necessary for succeeding are there, inside a person”, it could be interpreted as everybody should make the most of it to achieve their goals, because the resources that are outside and around us are of secondary value. It should make the students understand and analyse the resources they already have and that they themselves are responsible for their actions.

The cards of beliefs lead to discussion, maybe even to debate. The latter adds some excitement to the speaking practise as everybody has a chance to fight for their ideas. During the speaking part of B1 and B2 level English examination, students have to discuss different statements and quotes. Therefore practising some philosophical and analytical thinking patterns is absolutely essential. Additionally, this is the time they can analyse the situation even more open-mindedly, by adding to the list who, how and when can support their preparation for the exam, how to plan the daily routine of the last revision time, in what way to keep themselves happy and healthy in order to have the best conditions to succeed. Last but not least the students discuss the required resources. They point out all the things what should be done to be as ready as possible for the exam. During the whole process the students evaluate their situation individually and later on share their thoughts in a group. It all takes place in English and is suitable for the English learners who are at least on the intermediate level. When I practised the cards with my B2 level students I realised that they are not used to such things and it should be taken into consideration. In order to be confident and motivated language learner one ought to be able to analyse the learning process, one`s abilities and skills.

Another resource to help language learners to express themselves in English and to encourage them to share their experience with their peers is the book “Unlocking Self-expression through NLP” by J. Baker and M. Rinvoluceri (Baker and Rinvoluceri 2005). It provides numerous activities on different levels of English to encourage students express themselves and help them to gain proper foreign language learning strategies not to mention break the ice between the learners who do not know each other well enough. In order to help the B2 level English learners to manage their exam anxiety two kinds of activities were introduced to them. The first was an activity called “A Good Feeling” which introduces the students such self-help techniques like anchoring and creating resource states. The teacher asks the students to shut their eyes and listen to a passage (see the appendix) about feelings. Then the teacher reads a text about one person who makes one feel good. The students try to visualise the description of the person who arises positive feelings in them and develop a code word to bring back the scene from the story told by the teacher. The code word helps the students to remember the feelings felt during the story telling which again lowers their exam anxiety. The teacher encourages the students to practise bringing the word and the good feeling to mind as much as they can before the exam, so that their response becomes automatic. Finally the students share any other way of getting themselves into a good, positive state before exams.

Another activity from the above-mentioned handbook, which was tested on the English learners of Rakvere College, was the activity called “Oh, How I worry!”. Its aim is to share experience of how different students deal with their anxieties. The students, according to the questionnaire (see the appendix 1), tell their worry stories, next they compare their experiences and finally try to figure out the best ways to fight their anxieties. The activity has an extra value as it gives the language learners a chance to practise asking and answering questions while using different tenses. As most of the participants of the present research are

future to be or already practising kindergarten teachers or social pedagogues the above-discussed activities help to integrate their pedagogical subjects and English. They get a chance of self-reflexion and evaluation, learn to share feelings and different solutions to handle anxieties. It is all essential to deal with children and various people with social problems.

As the students repeatedly mentioned that boring topics and the pressure to learn English only because of the examination as the main stressors, the author of the paper used with the students` profession- related topics and news to show the learners the essence of being able to speak and understand English. Different speeches from Tedtalks were used and afterwards discussed in connection with the students` experience, our society and educational system, for example. Additionally the language learners were provided electronic lists of so-called good links where various apps, vocabulary and grammar revision homepages, youtube channels and profession-related links were included. The students were given much more freedom than they were used to and it appeared that it confused them as nobody had cared about their opinion before. When the learners were given with different materials on grammar in context, some of them admitted that it does not work on them and they just want to drill the grammar structures.

Comedy watching has been one of the activities used by the present thesis author for years as it is obvious that humour and laughter help to reduce anxiety. The series are always followed by discussion on the characters, storyline and the environment, comparison with real-life situations and more creative activities which improve the imagination like *“If you were the character what would you do?”* and so on.

The feedback collected from the English learners of Rakvere College after practising various techniques from Suggestopedia CLL and NLP shows that the participants consider having conversations on every day topics important, they prefer that materials are

personalised and that the teacher integrates the learners' experience and knowledge into the classroom discussions. The language learners appreciate the innovative approach and the way of taking into considerations the fact that the students are personalities with their own background, feelings and hopes. Some of them were not ready to share their emotions with the others, so the teacher suggested those students to deal with self-reflexion and evaluation in a written form and if needed at home. As there are students who tend to be introverts then it should not be forgotten that sharing tasks have to be voluntarily done or it may create even newer blocks and anxious situations. On the other hand, with the help of metaphors and role-plays it is possible to create imaginary situations which is safer way to discuss more emotional matters. Those who tend to be shy and reserved need a more individual approach, so for such students the possibility to attend private consultations is crucial. The author of the present thesis has had the possibility to have one-on-one classes with such students and it has helped to find the triggers of anxiety and guide the students towards more confident and self-directed learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis set out to investigate the issues connected to teaching adult language learners who face FLA. It was designed to determine the causes of FLA among the adult language learners, to discuss the possibilities of decreasing the anxieties in a language learning environment and to find out if the theoretical findings meet the needs of the language learners in Tallinn University Rakvere College. The topic stemmed from the author's concern for the English language learners in Rakvere College. As a considerable amount of the language learners seemed to be stressed out in a variety of situations during the language classes it was rather complicated to accomplish all the goals of the learning process. The present study summarises the ideas found in literature and presents the results of the primary study about students' perceptions of their feelings towards language learning and their suggestions in order to increase their motivation and lower their FLA.

The first chapter of the thesis gives an overview of the anxieties which interfere the learning process of the language students. It discusses how FLA, social anxiety, test anxiety and speech anxiety influence the performance of the language learner and introduces several ways of solving the problem.

The second chapter points out the aspects of the humanistic teaching methods suggestopedia, community language learning and neurolinguistic programming, which are advised to put in practise while teaching the anxious language learners. The foreign language teachers are encouraged to share the responsibility with the students, to concentrate on the more emotional level of teaching the language and to be open to varied and innovative methods.

The third chapter reveals the results of the questionnaires and interviews carried out among the students of Tallinn University Rakvere College. According to the analysis of the questionnaire results it is possible to conclude that although the majority of the students are

not very anxious in general still they struggle the FLA. The questions related to social anxiety were asked to figure out if having social anxiety results in having a FLA. Although the findings of the empirical part of the present study cannot prove any certain links between the more general social anxiety and the FLA, still the theoretical part refers to the association between social anxiety and FLA as they both are caused by communication apprehension, test anxiety and the fear of negative evaluation. Of course the social anxiety can be triggered by many more situations but these three components relate the social and foreign language anxiety quite tightly together. So, it can be suggested to research the correlation between the two even further.

The fourth chapter introduces the implementations of different elements of the humanistic methods by the author of the thesis. Based on the recommendations by the interviewees further ideas how to put in practise more aspects of the humanistic approach are being discussed. Finally, the findings from the literature and the empirical study are compared and it can be concluded that in order to have a supporting language learning environment all the participants of the language learning process should invest in it. The teachers ought to guide the learners towards self-directed, cooperative and therefore anxious-free learning. The students should be ready to analyse their own feelings, reflect others` emotions and act as supportive team-members. Methods of suggestopedia, CLL and NLP promote integrating language learning with contribution of the students` personal growth. According to the educators referred to in the theoretical part of the study, taking into consideration all the aspects of the human beings while teaching them a foreign language (their feelings, experience, values, expectations et cetera), it is possible to guarantee the best conditions for a successful language learning. Therefore, it is really important to research and publish the information in connection with FLA and evaluate the reasons and possibilities to deal with the problem.

It is obvious that the small scale research cannot provide reliable data to prove the successfulness of using humanistic methods for reducing FLA. Nevertheless, the thesis has provided some evidence of the benefits as well as drawbacks of the humanistic approach. Therefore, it can be useful for teachers of foreign language who intend to implement the approach. The teachers could use the information presented in the thesis in order to design their own activities while using the elements of HLT. Further investigation in the field could be focused on the wider range of studies discovering the causes of anxieties in a foreign language classroom and finding the solutions to fight FLA.

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APPENDIX 1. Questionnaire

Reducing anxiety in English language classes

The questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will be only used for the research in the MA thesis “Reducing anxiety in English language classes”. The questions of the second part of the questionnaire (about social anxiety) were taken from a book “Overcoming Social Anxiety and Shyness” Self- Help Course (Part one) by Butler (2007: 5- 8).

This questionnaire contains 42 questions and consists of three parts:

1. Demographic Information Questionnaire
2. Questionnaire on Social Anxiety
3. Questionnaire on FLA (foreign language anxiety)

I Demographic information questionnaire

1. Name
2. Age
3. Form of study
4. Course
5. Speciality
6. Work experience

II Questionnaire on social anxiety

1. Do you fear going to social events?
2. Do you fear speaking up at meetings or amongst a group of people you don't know well?
3. Do you find it difficult to eat or drink in front of people you don't know well?
4. Do you find it hard to start a conversation and continue it?
5. Do you find it difficult to talk on the telephone?
6. Do you dislike entering a crowded room by yourself?
7. Do you find it difficult to talk to an attractive person?
8. Do you fear having to give a speech in public?
9. Do you fear having to do things like sign your name or fill in a form while other people are watching?
10. Do you have a fear of job interviews or performance reviews?
11. Do you dread attracting attention?
12. Are there any other situations that make you feel uneasy?
13. In the social or performance situations, do you fear you will
 - become tongue-tied

- stammer or stutter
- blush
- sweat
- be clumsy
- talk nonsense
- other (write in)

14. How anxious do you feel during the above-mentioned situations?

15. Do you think your reaction to the social situations you fear is (tick whichever applies):

- Unreasonable or excessive
- A little over- the- top
- Normal under the circumstances
- Other(write in)

16. If a situation arises that you fear do you:

- Do anything to avoid the situation
- Get through it but feel terrible
- Get through it and find it wasn't as bad as you imagined
- Other(write in)

17. How can other people support the socially anxious person?

18. Where have you got the information about how to cope with anxiety?

19. Does our school offer enough information about self-help techniques?

20. What could be done to support students' mental wellbeing in our school?

21. What have you done to cope with anxiety?

22. Do you believe that people have an influence on their own success and wellbeing?

III Questionnaire on foreign language anxiety

23. Do you feel fine when you have to speak up in our English class?

24. Are you worried about making mistakes when you speak in English?

25. Does it make you tremble when you know that you will be asked in an English class?

26. Do you feel relaxed in our English classes?

27. Are you convinced that everybody else is better in English than you are?

28. Does it make you panic if you have to speak up without preparation time in English?

29. Are you worried about failing the English exam?

30. Can you get so nervous in the English class that you forget even the things you knew before?

31. Is it true that the more you prepare for the English test the more confused you get?
32. Does the English class move so quickly that you worry about getting left behind?
33. Do you feel more insecure in English classes than in other lectures?
34. Are you afraid of being laughed at by the peers when you speak in English?
35. Can you recommend how to change the English language learning environment more motivating and anxiety-free?

APPENDIX 2. Interview questions

- 1) Have you felt anxious in all the foreign language classes during your studies? Which were more stressful? Try to give reasons!
- 2) Has it always been more anxious in a foreign language class compared to any other class? Try to give reasons!
- 3) Have the feelings towards English classes changed within the years? Try to give reasons!
- 4) Could you please describe your feelings towards our English classes!
- 5) Please tell me what you like best about our English language class.
- 6) Please tell me what disturbs you the most in our English language class.
- 7) How do you act in a stressful situation, do you primarily worry, or do you actively seek a solution?
- 8) Do you believe that you are good at your English language studies (that is, are you confident of your ability)?
- 9) How do you think people in your English language classroom will react if you make mistakes?
- 10) Have your instructors played a role in your feelings, either good or bad, about your English language classes? Try to give examples!
- 11) Do you have any ideas of the ways how to make the English language classes less stressful? Give examples!
- 12) What do you think about using music, films, games and other entertaining methods in the English language classes? Do you have any good experiences?
- 13) Do you consider important using cooperative activities, like role-plays, discussions, self-made dialogues in the English classes? Give reasons!
- 14) Do you find that it is important that the language learner can choose which topic and with the help of which method will be discussed in a lesson?
- 15) Is it essential to take into consideration the life experience, knowledge and interests of the language learner and talking about real-life situations not about some fictional characters?
- 16) Does it suit you if we record our conversations and later analyse them altogether? Give reasons!
- 17) How to you feel after answering the questions?
- 18) Did the questionnaire and interview have any positive impact on you?

APPENDIX 3 Activity

Modal verbs in context

B1 level English

Use SHOULD, SHOULD`T, MUST, MUSTN`T!

The List of DO-s and DON`T-s of a kindergarten teacher

- Present materials step-by-step
- Be flexible and understanding with young children
- Motivate with enthusiasm and curiosity
- Help children describe what they've learned
- Take lots of breaks
- Don't treat your students like robots or pets
- Don`t swear in front of the children
- Don't compare your students to each other
- Don't take away their joy
- Don`t take advantage of their naivety

Discuss the rules in pairs! Add at least two extra rules!

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Mari Kongi

ENG: Reducing Anxiety in English Language Classes

EST: Inglise keele tunnis esinevate ärevuste vähendamine

Magistritöö

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Antud uurimustöö eesmärk on välja selgitada, mis põhjustab võõrkeeleõppes ärevust ja kuidas toetada täiskasvanud õppijaid omandamiseks võõrkeel võimalikult stressivabalt. Sellest lähtuvalt esitatakse järgnevad uurimisküsimused: Mis muudab täiskasvanud võõrkeele õppijad ärevaks? ; Kuidas vähendada ärevust täiskasvanud keeleõppijate seas, toetudes Krashen'i affektiivse filtri hüpoteesile (Krashen 1987: 31)? ; Kas suggestopeedia, koostöökeskne keeleõpe ja neurolingvistiline programmeerimine hõlmavad endas sobivaid tehnikaid aitamaks täiskasvanud keeleõppijail üle saada võõrkeeleõppega seotud ärevusest? Lähtudes antud uurimustöö eesmärgist kasutati kvalitatiivseid uurimismeetodeid, vastavalt küsitlust ja intervjuusid. Intervjuuerimine võimaldas saada parema ülevaate üliõpilaste emotsionaalsest ja vaimsest taustast ning peegeldada nende hirme ja vajadusi seoses võõrkeeleõppega.

Andmed koguti Tallinna Ülikooli Rakvere Kolledži üliõpilastelt. Selleks, et teada saada, kas antud tudengid kogevad inglise keele tundide ajal ärevust, küsitleti ajavahemikus kevad-talv 2014 51 tudengit. Esmalt pidid üliõpilased vastama küsimustele seoses sotsiaalse ärevusega, järgnevalt aga võõrkeeleõppega seotud ärevuse kohta. Detsembris 2014 kuni aprillis 2015 viidi 27 üliõpilasega läbi avatud vastustega intervjuud. Kuna intervjuuerimine ja selle analüüs on pikaajaline protsess, viidi intervjuud läbi gruppide kaupa. Intervjuud analüüsiti kasutades temaatilist lähenemist.

Antud töö on jagatud nelja ossa. Esimeses peatükis käsitletakse erinevaid ärevusliike, mis esinevad täiskasvanud keeleõppijate seas; teine peatükk annab ülevaate erinevatest humanistlikest meetoditest, mida kasutada vähendamaks ärevusi täiskasvanud keeleõppijate seas; kolmandas peatükis kirjeldatakse antud uurimuses kasutatud metoodikat ja protseduuri ning analüüsitakse küsitluse ja intervjuude tulemusi; neljandas peatükis tuuakse välja uurimuses osalenud keeleõppijate soovitusel muutmaks keeleõpe motiveerivamaks ja stressivabamaks. Lisaks antakse viimases peatükis ülevaade humanistliku metoodika elementidest, mida antud töö autor on juba keeleõppes kasutanud ning jagatakse soovitusi tuleviku perspektiivis.

Lähtudes küsitluse tulemustest, võib järeldada, et paljud keeleõppijad ei ole sotsiaalselt ärevad. Need, kes siiski kannatavad teatud sotsiaalse ärevuse ilmingute all, kardavad avalikult sõna võtta, tunnevad end ebamugavalt tööintervjuul või lihtsalt olles tähelepanu keskpunktis. Võõrkeeleõppega seotud ärevus paistab olevat levinud suurema hulga vastanute seas. Enamus küsitletud tudengitest muretsevad vigade tegemise pärast inglise keeles ja peavad kaasõpilasi võõrkeeles paremaks kui iseennast. Küsitluse tulemusena saadi ülevaade võõrkeeleõppega seotud ärevuste olemasolust küsitletud tudengite seas.

Intervjuu tulemuste põhjal saadi täpsem informatsioon tudengite tunnete kohta seoses võõrkeeleõppega. Tulemused näitavad, et paljudel keeleõppijatel on negatiivsed mineviku kogemused seoses võõrkeele õppimisega. Ebameeldivad tunded, mis pärinevad tudengitel põhikooli ja gümnaasiumi ajast, mõjutavad negatiivselt nende enesekindlust praegustest keeletundides. Intervjuu tulemustest saab välja lugeda, et mitmed keeleõppijad on teadlikud humanistlikest keeleõppe meetoditest ning nad toovad välja aspekte, mida kasutada

vähendamaks ärevust ning tõstmaks motivatsiooni keeleõppes. Intervjueeritavad toovad sobilike tegevustena välja õppimise samatasemelistes väikestes gruppides, mitmekesiste meelelahutuslike meetodite kasutamine ning õpilaste ootuste ja kogemustega arvestamine. Tudengite arvates mängib motiveeriva ning pingevaba keeleõppe keskkonna loomisel väga tähtsat rolli nii õpetaja kui kaasõpilaste isiksus, käitumine ning suhtumine.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

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(31.03.1982)

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Rakveres, 19.mai 2015.a.

