

Teachers' Voices When Giving Feedback: Causes of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety and Feedback Strategies to Reduce Students' FLCA

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Abstract

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This study aimed to identify teacher perceptions of the causes of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) through feedback, and what feedback strategies teachers use to reduce FLCA. Feedback can be both a cause of FLCA and help to reduce FLCA. It is therefore important for teachers to understand how their feedback can affect FLCA. In the present study, three non-Thai teachers of English at a university in Bangkok were asked 51 structured interview questions on their perceptions of feedback on FLCA. The questions focused on what types of feedback the teachers perceive to cause FLCA and what strategies they use to reduce FLCA when giving feedback. The data was analysed using a thematic framework. The results show that receiving negative feedback, immediate feedback during speaking activities, individual feedback, feedback that is not understood, and an insufficient amount of feedback, were all perceived to increase FLCA levels. The participants reported three functions of feedback strategies used to reduce FLCA. Firstly, feedback strategies used to create a positive atmosphere were giving praise, giving enough feedback, and using friendly gestures and tone of voice. Secondly, embarrassment avoidance strategies were giving group feedback, giving individual feedback in private, not singling out students, and giving delayed feedback in speaking activities. Finally, strategies used to give understandable feedback were speaking clearly and using L1. The results of this study can be used by present teachers to identify how to reduce FLCA when giving feedback, and, by future researchers to examine the effectiveness of these FLCA reducing feedback strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA) is “a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process” (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 31). FLCA is detrimental to the language learner as it can interfere with the acquisition, retention, and production of the target

language (Macintyre & Gardner, 1991). Students with high levels of FLCA are likely to have lower achievement levels than low-anxious students (Aida, 1994; Macintyre & Gardner, 1989; Tuncer & Doğan, 2015).

Feedback has been shown to have both a positive and negative impact on FLCA levels (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020). Feedback can be split into negative feedback and positive feedback. Negative feedback, also known as corrective feedback, can both cause and reduce FLCA depending on how it is given; whereas positive feedback, also known as praise, can reduce FLCA.

Negative feedback can be anxiety provoking as it puts students on the spot and on the defensive (Krashen, 1985). Furthermore, students' FLCA levels are likely to increase when they are corrected by their teacher (Yahya, 2013). Negative feedback can cause FLCA when: too little feedback is given (Martin & Valdivia, 2017; Zhang, 2011), too much feedback is given (Martin & Valdivia, 2017; Sato, 2003), feedback is given immediately during speaking activities (Shabani & Safari, 2016), and feedback is given in front of other students (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013).

Since negative feedback can be a cause of FLCA, it has been suggested that negative feedback should be avoided (Krashen, 1985). However, more recent studies have shown that anxious students believe that negative feedback is important (Tanveer, 2007; Young, 1991; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). Therefore, teachers need to be aware of how to give negative feedback without increasing FLCA levels. Furthermore, research has shown that both negative and positive feedback can be used to reduce FLCA levels when given correctly.

Teachers can use different strategies to reduce FLCA when giving negative feedback. These strategies include giving group feedback, giving individual feedback in private, giving delayed feedback, and giving feedback that is easily understood. Giving group feedback instead of immediate feedback reduces FLCA by avoiding embarrassment. One way in which teachers can give group feedback is by writing common and serious mistakes on the board and sharing them with the whole class (Inada, 2021). Furthermore, when giving individual feedback, teachers should do this in private when other students cannot hear the feedback to reduce embarrassment (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020). Moreover, giving delayed feedback as opposed to immediate feedback during speaking activities has also been shown to reduce FLCA (Rahimi & Dastjerdi, 2012). Finally, teachers need to give feedback that is easily understood as FLCA is increased when students do not understand their teacher (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020).

Positive feedback (also known as praise) has also been found to help reduce FLCA. Positive feedback reduces FLCA as it helps to create a positive learning atmosphere. He et al. (2021) found that students' FLCA levels were reduced when receiving praise and helped them to feel at ease. Positive feedback has been also found to reduce FLCA for students on their writing (Cheng, 2002). Finally, praise has also been shown to reduce FLCA and increase students' positive learning experiences during listening tasks (Liu & Yuan, 2021).

Teachers need to be aware of the significant impact that feedback can have on FLCA. First, teachers need to be able to identify the negative effects that certain types of feedback can have on FLCA. Secondly, teachers need to be able to use feedback strategies that reduce FLCA.

Being able to identify how different strategies can reduce FLCA would allow teachers to make informed decisions about how to give feedback in the future. However, few studies have examined the impact feedback can have on FLCA from the teachers' perspective. This study therefore aims to analyse teachers' perceptions of causes of students' FLCA when giving feedback and the use of feedback strategies to reduce FLCA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anxiety is a feeling that prevents an individual from undertaking a task effectively. In simple terms, anxiety is the feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness and worry that prevents people from performing successfully (Spielberger, 1983, as cited in Macintyre & Gardner, 1989). Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is one such form of anxiety. FLA can inhibit an individual from performing a task in a foreign language.

Foreign language classroom anxiety

FLCA refers to "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process." (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 31) There have been suggestions that anxiety can have a facilitating effect learning, rather than a debilitating effect (Eyesneck, 1979, as cited in Macintyre, 1995). However, in regard to FLCA, Macintyre (1995) argues that while this may be true for easy tasks, increased effort cannot overcome the increased cognitive interference caused by FLCA that occurs when students undertake more challenging tasks. Furthermore, the negative effect that FLCA has on achievement in the language classroom has been well established (Aida, 1994; Botes et al., 2020; Macintyre & Gardner, 1989; Tuncer & Doğan, 2015). Therefore, based on the existing literature, FLCA is considered to have a negative effect on language learning.

FLCA is a type of situation-specific anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). This means that FLCA occurs during certain situations in the classroom. Research has identified different situations in which anxiety can occur within the foreign language classroom, notably: speaking in front of the class (Woodrow, 2006; Young, 1991), exclusive use of the target language (Kitano, 2001), speaking to the teacher (Woodrow, 2006), making mistakes (Lileikienė & Danilevičienė, 2016), negative evaluation (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013) and, importantly for this study, being corrected by the teacher (Lileikienė & Danilevičienė, 2016; Mak, 2011). Therefore, language teachers need to be aware of how FLCA manifests itself and how to use effective feedback strategies to reduce FLCA.

FLCA and negative feedback

Negative and positive feedback can both impact FLCA. However, most research in the field focusses on the correlation between negative feedback and high levels of FLCA. In the language classroom negative feedback helps to show "that the learner's utterance lacks veracity or is linguistically deviant. In other words, it is corrective in intent." (Ellis, 2009, p. 3). Negative feedback is important in the language learning process as it helps learners to recognise mistakes

in an L2 form or utterance (Li, 2010). Other studies have similarly shown that corrective feedback helps to increase language acquisition (Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2006; Ellis, 2009). However, negative feedback can be received differently by individual students.

The efficacy of negative feedback differs between high and low anxious students. Anxious students are less inclined to receive corrective feedback than their less anxious peers (Renko, 2012). However, as noted in the introduction, anxious students still recognise the importance of corrective feedback as being part of their learning (Tanveer, 2007; Young, 1991; Zhang & Rahimi, 2014). Negative feedback is therefore necessary in the classroom for anxious students. Nevertheless, negative feedback is unlikely to benefit students if it causes them to feel anxious (Renko, 2012). Therefore, it is important to examine how negative feedback can be a source of anxiety.

Negative feedback can cause FLCA depending on how it is given. This includes the frequency of feedback, the timing of feedback, the positioning of feedback when given to individuals, and whether the feedback is understood. Firstly, the frequency of negative feedback can have an effect on FLCA (Martin & Valdivia, 2017). Too much error correction can cause students to feel overwhelmed and subsequently increase FLCA levels. Furthermore, too much error correction can discourage anxious students from speaking out (Sato, 2003). However, too little corrective feedback leaves students feeling anxious as they are unsure how to correct mistakes that they have made.

Secondly, the timing of feedback can cause FLCA. Students that receive immediate feedback have higher levels of anxiety than students that receive delayed feedback during speaking activities (Mak, 2011; Shabani & Safari, 2016). This is because immediate feedback disrupts students' flow of communication and thus increases FLCA levels.

Thirdly, the positioning of where feedback is given can also affect FLCA levels when given individually. Individual error corrections have been found to be anxiety provoking when given in front of other students (Zhiping & Paramasivam, 2013). This is due to the attention from other students causing embarrassment and subsequently increasing anxiety levels. Relatedly, another study has shown that FLCA levels are further increased when students are given error corrections when speaking at the front of the class, such as when giving presentations (Hadi et al., 2020).

Finally, students' anxiety levels are increased when students do not understand their teacher (Horwitz et al., 1986; Liu & Yuan, 2021). Therefore, when students do not understand the feedback given by their teacher, it is likely to cause anxiety in students with high FLCA levels.

Feedback and anxiety reduction

Teachers have an array of different feedback strategies they can use to reduce FLCA in the classroom. These strategies can be split into three groups: embarrassment avoidance strategies, strategies that create a positive learning environment, and strategies that increase understanding.

Embarrassment avoidance strategies include giving group feedback, giving individual feedback in private, and giving delayed feedback. Individual feedback refers to feedback given directly to an individual student, whereas group feedback refers to feedback given to a group or class. Anxious students fear being negatively evaluated in the classroom (Horwitz et al., 1986). This is exacerbated when students are corrected by the teacher in front of other students (Hadi et al., 2020). Therefore, a strategy that teachers can use to reduce FLCA is to give group feedback. A specific strategy that teachers can use to give group feedback is by writing common and serious mistakes on the board and sharing them with the class (Inada, 2021).

Giving individual feedback in private is another strategy that teachers can use to reduce embarrassment. Individual feedback is important in language learning as it allows learners to identify mistakes specific to themselves. In a study on Iranian EFL learners, it was found that uptake of speech acts was greater for students who received individual feedback compared to students who received group feedback (Pourmousavi & Zenouzagh, 2020). To reduce anxiety studies have recommended that individual feedback should be given in private so that do not have to worry about the reactions from their peers (Brookhart, 2017; Pourmousavi & Zenouzagh, 2020).

Another strategy teachers can use is by giving delayed feedback during speaking activities as opposed to immediate feedback. Delayed feedback is found to reduce FLCA levels as it avoids interrupting students' oral communication (Shabani & Safari, 2016). Furthermore, using delayed feedback means that students will not feel like they are 'losing face' due to the negative feedback from the teacher (Vo et al., 2017).

A positive learning environment can be encouraged by teachers giving positive feedback. Anxious students often lack confidence, and positive feedback allows students to feel comfortable and more confident about their work. Wilang and Satitdee (2015) mentioned that positive reinforcement and constructive feedback help to increase students learning development. Furthermore, positive feedback and continued encouragement may lower students' anxiety and frustration, and this will help to improve their self-confidence (Khaldieh, 2000). Regarding a specific skill, Cheng (2002) noted the importance of encouragement and positive feedback in helping students to build self confidence in their English writing.

Students can feel anxious when they do not understand their teacher (Horwitz et al., 1986). Regarding feedback this leaves students feeling confused and anxious as they are unable to identify their mistakes. Therefore, teachers need to give feedback that is easily understood to reduce FLCA (Alnuzaili & Uddin, 2020). When giving feedback teachers need to make sure they speak clearly, at an appropriate speed and volume.

FLCA can have a major negative impact on language learning, while feedback can be both anxiety inducing and anxiety reducing. Teachers need to be aware of how anxiety is related to feedback and how they can help to reduce anxiety through feedback. However, studies from the teachers' perspective on this topic have been limited. Therefore, this study aims to analyse what teachers perceive to be the causes of FLCA from feedback, and what feedback strategies teachers use to reduce FLCA. To fill this gap, the following research questions were formed:

1. How do non-Thai teachers perceive the causes of students' foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) in English courses?
2. What feedback strategies are employed to reduce students' FLCA when receiving feedback?

METHODOLOGY

This research employed qualitative research methods to investigate teacher feedback-giving practices and anxiety reduction strategies in the Thai university language classroom. This section includes participant descriptions, the research instrument, data collection procedure, and data analysis.

Participants

The participants in this study consisted of three non-Thai teachers with a minimum of 9 years' experience in teaching English courses, including at least 6 months of teaching at the present university. Non-Thai teachers were selected as they might employ different feedback approaches when using English compared to native Thai teachers. All participants were teaching an elective English course, Oral Communication I, which spanned 15 weeks and carried three credits. The course comprised three sections, with one teacher assigned to each section. Students enrolled in the course exhibited mixed abilities and had an intermediate level of language proficiency. Following the semester's conclusion, the participants were individually interviewed to investigate their perspectives on the feedback they provided and the students' anxiety in the classroom.

Data collection

Data collection for this study entailed conducting semi-structured interviews, employing a set of 51 pre-determined questions. The interviews were conducted in English. In adherence to research validity and reliability principles, measures were implemented to ensure the robustness of the data gathered. The interviews were thoughtfully designed, allowing for flexibility in controlling the flow of conversation, question order, wording, follow-up queries, and communicative strategies, fostering a conducive environment for candid responses.

To address the research questions and maintain alignment with the existing literature, the interview questions primarily focused on the teacher participants' feedback strategies, their underlying reasons for employing such strategies, and their perceptions of anxious students' emotional responses when receiving feedback. The feedback types explored in the interviews included negative feedback, positive feedback, immediate and delayed feedback, as well as group and individual feedback, mirroring those identified in the literature review to enhance the study's comprehensiveness.

To safeguard content validity, the interview questions underwent scrutiny and eventually received approval from an expert in applied linguistics at the university where the research was conducted. Additionally, to assess the quality and reliability of the interview questions, a

pilot study was conducted with a university lecturer from a language centre in Bangkok. The pilot study findings confirmed the appropriateness and effectiveness of the interview questions, lending confidence to their inclusion in the final study. However, in light of valuable insights garnered from the pilot study, further questions concerning feedback based on students' effort and achievement were incorporated into the interview protocol.

Each interview was conducted individually with the participants following the completion of the course, ensuring relevant and timely reflections. The interviews were conducted with utmost attention to detail, lasting approximately 30 minutes each. To maintain data accuracy and thorough analysis, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and subsequently subjected to rigorous examination and interpretation, bolstering the research's reliability and validity.

Data analysis

The data from the interviews was transcribed and subsequently analysed using a thematic analysis. A thematic analysis was carried out as it is useful in identifying opinions, views and experiences which are all relevant to the two research questions. The thematic analysis used in this study followed the 6-step thematic analysis process as set out by Braun and Clarke (2006). This 6-step process involved, familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Familiarisation involved the researcher reading and becoming familiar with the data. Coding involved manually identifying interesting features of the data such as how feedback was given, reasons feedback was given in a particular way, and the perceived emotions students felt when receiving feedback. Generating themes involved sorting the codes into potential themes. Reviewing the themes involved checking that the coded data under each theme had a coherent pattern. Themes were subsequently removed, merged, or split into new themes where appropriate. Defining and naming themes involved specifying the content of each theme and identifying any sub-themes. Finally, writing up involved the presentation of the data which is shown in the results section of this study.

A limitation of this study is that due to the limited sample size the results cannot be extrapolated to other non-Thai teachers of English.

RESULTS

This section presents the results in two distinct parts. Firstly, the teacher perceptions of the causes of FLCA through feedback are presented. Secondly, strategies used by the teachers to reduce FLCA through feedback are shown.

1. Causes of FLCA through feedback

The teacher participants identified causes of FLCA across two themes. These were negative feedback on students' FLCA, and the manner in which feedback is given.

1.1 Negative feedback on students' FLCA

From the teacher participants' perceptions, students' FLCA levels increased when receiving negative feedback. The teacher participants asserted that this was due to the students being sensitive. Extract 1 one was given by one participant when asked how their students felt when receiving negative feedback.

'Students are very sensitive and vulnerable. [So] some would become more anxious.'
(Extract 1)

Relatedly, the teacher participants stated that there were two types of negative feedback that could be a cause of FLCA due to a fear of negative evaluation: immediate feedback during speaking activities, and, individual feedback.

In the teachers' perceptions, immediate feedback caused anxiety when given during speaking activities. Extracts 2 and 3 were given when asked how their anxious students felt when receiving immediate feedback during speaking activities. Their responses demonstrate the negative effect that immediate feedback had on their anxious students.

'For me as a teacher, it's a constructive feedback, [but] it might be destructive for some [students].'
(Extract 2)

'I think they feel discouraged. They're usually shy, right? So, it takes a lot of courage for them to say anything.'
(Extract 3)

Individual feedback was similarly perceived to be anxiety-provoking by the teacher participants. Extract 4 exhibits how receiving individual feedback in front of other students was identified as the source of this anxiety. The participants stated that the biggest worry would be that other students could hear the feedback that was being given such as during presentations. Extract 5 shows that the teachers perceived that anxious students may have felt worried and questioned why the teacher wanted to give them feedback individually.

'The attention from other students [can cause FLCA] so probably that can be when those anxious students are standing in front of the classroom after having done a presentation or something when the whole class is watching and I'm giving feedback to them, that can be extremely anxiety provoking.'

'They... first of all they feel that they will be evaluated either positively or negatively and that evaluation would be heard by the whole classroom. That would be scary.'
(Extract 4)

'You ask them to come to you individually and talk to them they might be more anxious. Because they might think why did the teacher call me and want to talk to me individually.'
(Extract 5)

1.2 The manner in which feedback is given

The participants articulated that FLCA levels were increased when feedback was not understood and an insufficient amount of feedback was given. Extract 6 shows that the teacher participants perceived that when feedback was not understood, students were unable to correct their work and their anxiety levels rose. Extract 7 was given in response to a question on how their students would feel if they received less feedback. The participant pointed out that students would have felt more anxious if the amount of feedback they received was reduced.

'You know the most anxious situation is when they receive feedback but they still don't know what they are doing, they don't understand, or what the teacher asked them to do. I think that is the worst situation they will face. Like sometimes I give them feedback and they come back and revise their work and they submit their work again to me. And I've found that there's not much difference like they didn't really understand what I told them to do. Yeah, so maybe they feel more anxious in that situation.'

(Extract 6)

'I think they would think 'oh my teacher doesn't care about us.'

(Extract 7)

2. Feedback strategies used to reduce FLCA

Three general themes were identified by the teachers in their interviews as helping to relieve students' FLCA through feedback: Creating a Positive Learning Atmosphere, Embarrassment Avoidance, and Understandable Feedback.

2.1 Creating a positive learning atmosphere

This study showed that there were three main strategies identified by the teacher participants to create a positive learning atmosphere through feedback. These were giving praise, giving more feedback, and using gestures and tone of voice.

The teacher participants stated the importance of giving praise in helping to build confidence and motivation for anxious students and improve their overall emotional state. Extract 8 shows how praise was seen as helping to build good rapport between anxious students and their teacher. While the teacher participants noted the benefits of praise in helping to reduce FLCA, the teacher participants had concerns about how and when to give praise. Extract 9 presents the teachers views on how praise needs to be explained and connected to what they are learning, while Extract 10 shows effort was a focus of the teachers' praise.

'We can build their confidence. Yeah, it's more like, if we encourage them to do this then maybe they will not be afraid of you. You're building a good rapport between you, the teacher, and the students. (...) And they might feel that the teacher isn't harmful, when they do a good job, the teacher will praise them. You know, in that case, they might feel less anxious.'

(Extract 8)

'So for me I give feedback from the bottom of heart, it's not just giving it for no reason, like 'good job', 'great job', 'well done' but if you explain why this is good then it's relevant to their learning'

(Extract 9)

'(...) I definitely praise their effort to speak out or try anything, take actions, anything, regardless of the quality or even frequency.'

(Extract 10)

Another strategy identified by the teachers to reduce anxiety was to give enough feedback to students. The teacher participants explained that by giving enough feedback the students would have felt that the teacher cared about them, it would help build rapport, create a positive learning atmosphere, and show the students that the teacher valued their work. This is shown in extracts 11 and 12 given in response to a question about how their anxious students would have felt if they received more feedback.

'I think they will feel happier and maybe more connected to me. (...) Because that shows that I do pay attention to what they do.'

(Extract 11)

'(...) they might think that the teacher cares more. And they will have more motivation to study and feel what they are doing has value.'

(Extract 12)

Another feedback strategy used by the teacher participants to reduce FLCA was through their voice and gestures. Extract 13 shows how the teachers changed the tone of their voice when giving feedback to anxious students to make them sound friendlier. They also stated that using gestures such as smiling made them seem more amiable and helped to reduce stress. Along with smiling, one of the participants stated in Extract 14 that she tried to reduce the power dynamic between her and the students by positioning herself similarly to that of her students.

'I'm trying my very best as a teacher to be kind, be careful of the words I speak. The choice of words and the tone. Students are very sensitive and vulnerable (...)'

'(...) I just give them a smile I would then smile and laugh. I think it's a good way to release the stress from students.'

(Extract 13)

'First of all, I try to smile so that they can feel relaxed regardless of the content of the feedback. One thing that I do a lot is when I give them feedback I try not to have too much difference between the height of their eye sight and mine, so if you're a student and you're sitting, I try to talk to you like that. (...)'

'(...) I don't want to look or sound intimidating. And I want them to feel that I'm not in a high position to have control over their learning, I'm here to support or help you in

your English learning. And then [I] smile just to help them relax.'

(Extract 14)

2.2 Embarrassment avoidance strategies

The teacher participants in this study identified three anxiety reducing feedback strategies that they used to avoid embarrassing their students – giving group or whole class feedback, giving individual feedback in private, and not calling out students individually.

Group feedback was identified as a strategy used to reduce FLCA. In Extract 15 a teacher participant remarked that students felt more comfortable when they received group feedback as they felt less targeted and, therefore, less stressed and more relaxed. They also stated that group feedback helped students to feel more comfortable as they were receiving feedback with their peers.

"I think for the group feedback they feel comfortable. They feel comfortable because it's not directed to them. And they don't feel the weight of stress. They think 'oh this is group work and this is for all of us and it's not only me.'"

(Extract 15)

Extracts 16 and 17 illustrate how the teacher participants avoided giving individual feedback to anxious students in front of others. Despite avoiding giving individual feedback in front of other students, one teacher participant mentioned on numerous occasions during their interview that they gave individual feedback in private to anxious students as shown in Extract 18.

"I don't point out that these are the weaknesses or the mistakes of others in the class. I would say it [give feedback] in a way that doesn't affect the emotions or feelings of others."

(Extract 16)

"(...)seeing the classroom and being pointed out by the teacher, you call their name or point them out they might be more anxious."

(Extract 17)

"So [when] giving feedback to anxious students you really have to be careful about how to deal with it. And for me I've learnt to give [feedback] individually and private[ly]. And not shouting out the names in the class."

(Extract 18)

One of the strategies used by the teachers to alleviate anxiety caused by a lack of confidence was to avoid explicitly correcting the students when they made mistakes. Extract 19 shows that one of the participants did this by using recasts rather than directly pointing out that the student made a mistake.

“I don’t say ‘oh that’s wrong’, I would just say it [the correction] out loud and I think they understand they made a mistake and then they will follow me.”

(Extract 19)

Giving delayed feedback during speaking activities was also highlighted as a strategy to reduce FLCA by one of the teacher participants. In Extract 20, the teacher participant reported that her students felt anxious during speaking activities. To address this problem, the teacher participant stated that they gave delayed feedback after speaking activities to give the students time to calm down and relax.

“(…) at the moment [during a speaking activity] they were very anxious and maybe [after] they’ve cooled down and calmed down and then they are in their neutral feelings, emotions, then probably they would appreciate it if it’s delayed.”

(Extract 20)

2.3 Giving understandable feedback

The causes of anxiety showed how a perceived lack of ability and not understanding feedback caused FLCA for anxious students when receiving feedback. Two strategies used by the teachers to help increase understanding when giving feedback were used: speaking clearly, and using L1.

Speaking clearly and slowly was one of the strategies used by the teacher participants to reduce FLCA when giving feedback. Extract 21 highlights how one of the participants identified that anxious students have a negative reaction to feedback that they could not understand. Therefore, they gave feedback clearly, slowly and with clarity.

‘And [speak] clear, clarity and speed, I hope that they... in my opinion they tend to feel bad about their English or they have sensitive reaction, negative reaction to something that is challenging. So if I speak fast they might think that oh my English isn’t good enough to understand my teacher. And I don’t want them to feel bad because of that.’

(Extract 21)

The teacher participants commented that they sometimes use the students L1 (Thai) in the classroom when giving feedback to increase understanding. They also sometimes had students repeat their feedback back to them in Thai to check that the students had understood the feedback that was given as shown in Extract 22. One of the participants stated that they used the students’ L1 when the students were scared. They revealed that using L1 when giving feedback helped students to feel more comfortable. In Extract 23 they asserted that using L1 helped to create humour in the classroom as students might laugh at their own mistakes when they saw their mistakes in their own language.

“I might ask them ‘kao jai mai’, do you understand? Are you sure that you understand what I said? Or I might even ask them to explain again what I require them to do.”

(Extract 22)

'I would change the way that I give feedback. Once I see the students are really scared, sometimes I would speak in Thai. That's the only think I could do to make them feel comfortable.'

(Extract 23)

DISCUSSION

Teachers need to be able to identify how feedback can cause FLCA and use feedback strategies to reduce FLCA. The findings of this study show that the teacher participants' perceptions of feedback and anxiety are similar to those of students from previous studies. These findings therefore serve as a reminder to both novice and experienced teachers the importance of good feedback strategies in reducing FLCA. This section discusses the findings of this study in relation to previous studies.

Causes of anxiety for anxious students when receiving feedback

For teachers to use anxiety reducing feedback strategies effectively it is essential that they recognise how feedback can be a cause of FLCA. The results of this study show that the teachers perceived many different causes of anxiety for students when receiving negative feedback. The teachers noted that students felt worried, shy or scared when receiving negative feedback. These results are similar to findings from other studies in which students have identified negative feedback as being a cause of anxiety (Lileikienė & Danilevičienė, 2016; Mak, 2011; Yahya, 2013). This shows that the teacher participants perceptions of negative feedback on FLCA are shared by students. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the significant impact negative feedback can have on FLCA. However, negative feedback can be given in different ways and certain types of negative feedback can be more anxiety provoking than others.

Teachers should recognise that negative feedback can be embarrassing for students when they feel they are being negatively evaluated by their peers. In this study, negative feedback was perceived to be anxiety provoking when given immediately during speaking activities and when given individually. First, the participants noted that students are usually in an anxious state during speaking activities and any feedback given during this time may increase anxiety. This is similar to other studies that have identified immediate feedback as being anxiety provoking for students due to its disruptive nature (Rahimi & Dastjerdi, 2012; Shabani & Safari, 2016). Next, individual feedback was similarly perceived to be a cause of FLCA. The participants stated that students feared receiving individual feedback as the other students could see them and hear the feedback that was being given. This is similar to the findings of Zhiping and Paramasivam (2013), who noted that students feared the humiliation of being corrected in public. With Thai students, Hadi et al. (2020) also found that receiving feedback after giving a presentation at the front of the class was anxiety provoking for students. Therefore, it is important that teachers are aware of the potential embarrassing and anxiety causing nature of immediate and individual feedback.

Teachers also need to consider the comprehensibility of their feedback and the amount of

feedback that they give. Feedback that is not understood and an insufficient amount of feedback were also perceived to be causes of FLCA. Feedback that is not understood is linked to a perceived lack of ability. Anxious students often perceive themselves as having a low ability level and have been shown to have lower achievement levels than their non-anxious peers (Lileikienė & Danilevičienė, 2016). In this study, not understanding feedback given by the teacher was perceived to cause anxiety. This was due to students feeling that they were unable to correct their own mistakes and subsequently improve their language skills. Therefore, corrective feedback can be anxiety provoking when students do not understand what is being said. Next, the findings of this study support the notion that too little feedback can be anxiety provoking. Martin and Valdivia (2017) found that both too much and too little feedback can be detrimental for anxious students. Similarly, the teacher participants in this study asserted that an insufficient amount of feedback would show that the teacher did not care about the students and subsequently increase anxiety.

The findings of this study show that the teachers' perceptions of the causes of FLCA through feedback were similar to the students' views from previous studies. Teachers need to avoid giving immediate feedback during speaking activities and avoid giving individual feedback in front of other students. Furthermore, teachers need to be aware of how anxiety can be caused when students struggle to understand feedback, or an inadequate amount of feedback is given. Feedback strategies that teachers can use to reduce FLCA are discussed below.

Anxiety reducing feedback strategies

It is important that teachers not only recognise the impact that feedback can have on FLCA but also have knowledge of the strategies they can use to reduce FLCA when giving feedback. The results of this study demonstrate that a wide range of feedback strategies were employed by the teacher participants to reduce students' FLCA. These strategies reduced anxiety through creating a positive atmosphere, avoiding embarrassment, and making feedback understandable. These strategies can be used by teachers looking at methods to reduce FLCA in their classrooms.

The first set of strategies that teachers need to be aware of is how to create a positive learning atmosphere when giving feedback. Creating a positive learning atmosphere is important as it can help reduce anxiety for students (Hashemi & Abbasi, 2013; Young, 1991) The teachers in this study revealed that they created a positive learning environment through giving praise, using their voice and gestures, and giving enough feedback. First, the teachers stated that they gave praise to increase motivation, develop self-confidence, and increase student-teacher rapport. These results support the findings of previous studies that have found that students see praise as a useful strategy in reducing anxiety (Cheng, 2002; Khaldieh, 2000). Given the similarities in the findings of this study with previous studies, teachers need to recognise the important role that praise has in reducing FLCA.

Next, teachers can reduce FLCA by using gestures and a friendly tone of voice to create a positive learning atmosphere when giving feedback. The teacher participants stated that they smiled and changed the tone of their voice when giving feedback so that they seemed more friendly. This supports the findings of other studies that have found that by being friendly and

approachable in the classroom, teachers can help to reduce anxiety (Chinpakdee, 2015; Young, 1991). Finally, the teacher participants illustrated that by making sure that they gave enough feedback the students would feel that the teachers cared about them and had taken an interest in their work, thus reducing their anxiety. Teachers should therefore be aware of their tone of voice, body language and make sure that they give an appropriate amount of feedback to create a positive learning environment and reduce FLCA levels.

Teachers also need to consider what feedback strategies can be used to reduce embarrassment when giving feedback. Teachers can give individual feedback in private, give delayed feedback in speaking activities, and give feedback on effort rather than ability. Group feedback was identified as an anxiety reducing strategy as this means that the focus of the class is not on an individual student. The findings therefore agree with Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020) that group feedback can be used to reduce anxiety in the classroom. Furthermore, giving individual feedback in private was also found to be a strategy used to reduce FLCA. By giving individual feedback in private, students cannot be negatively evaluated by their peers. These findings therefore support Alnuzaili and Uddin's (2020) suggestion that individual feedback given in private can help to reduce anxiety. Next, delayed feedback was perceived to reduce anxiety. Delayed feedback allows students to complete speaking exercises without disruption subsequently reducing embarrassment. The findings confirm suggestions from other studies that delayed feedback helps to stop the loss of face and embarrassment for students (Vo et al., 2017; Shabani & Safari, 2016). Finally, an anxiety reducing strategy found in this study was to give feedback based on effort rather than ability. Focusing solely on ability might cause anxious students to lose self-confidence, as their ability is often lower than their peers. Positive feedback on effort can help to boost self-confidence when it is warranted. The anxious students might also have felt that this was a fairer reflection of their work. Little research has looked at the effect of effort and ability feedback on anxiety. The effectiveness of this strategy might therefore be worth investigating further. Teachers can use delayed feedback, group feedback, and give individual feedback in private to help avoid embarrassment. Furthermore, it may be beneficial for teachers to make sure that they praise students' effort.

Finally, teachers need to understand strategies that they can use to make their feedback more comprehensible. Two strategies were found to reduce anxiety through helping students understand their feedback. These were through speaking clearly and using L1. The teacher participants stated they help students understand feedback and reduce their anxiety by speaking clearly, slowly and by using simple vocabulary. These are similar to the findings of other studies that have noted that students' anxiety levels are reduced when the teacher speaks slowly and makes sure that every student understands (von Wörde, 2003). Similarly, Alnuzaili and Uddin (2020) also suggest that only error corrections that can be understood by students should be given, so that students have a chance to correct their work. Relatedly, using L1 when giving feedback was also found to be a strategy used to reduce anxiety by increasing understanding. There has been little research that has examined the effects of feedback on anxiety when given in L1. However, von Wörde (2003) found that teachers using L1 in the classroom helped to alleviate anxiety. Anxiety can be reduced by making sure that is given in an understandable manner which can be achieved through speaking clearly and using L1. Teachers should use their discretion as to when they should use L1 when giving feedback and should seriously consider using L1 when feedback is complicated or difficult.

Overall, the findings of this study show that the teachers' perceptions of FLCA through feedback were similar to the student perceptions identified in other studies. The teacher participants recognised the significant impact that feedback has on FLCA and describe numerous different strategies to reduce FLCA through feedback. The findings of this study can help novice and experienced teachers to identify feedback reducing strategies. Furthermore, future researchers can examine the effectiveness of the FLCA reducing strategies identified in this study in different classroom situations.

CONCLUSION

Teachers should have knowledge of the numerous strategies at their disposal to reduce FLCA when giving feedback. Based on the findings of this study and previous studies, recommendations for giving feedback to anxious students are suggested. First, teachers need to be aware of the disruptive nature of immediate feedback and therefore should give delayed feedback during speaking activities. Secondly, teachers should give group feedback as opposed to individual feedback when possible. However, when individual feedback is necessary, it should be given in private. Thirdly, it is important for teachers to give feedback in a manner that is easily understood by students. It is recommended that teachers speak clearly, slowly and use appropriate language. Furthermore, where necessary, teachers can use the students' L1 to give feedback. Next, teachers need to make sure enough feedback is given to allow students to identify and correct their mistakes. Finally, praise can help create a positive learning environment and subsequently reduce FLCA. Teachers should give regular praise and make sure that they present themselves in a friendly manner through their body language and tone of voice. Teachers also need to make sure that they praise students' effort regardless of their ability level. This is not a definitive list and there may be other strategies that teachers can use to reduce FLCA through feedback that have not been identified in this study. Furthermore, due to individual learner characteristics, teachers should take note of how different students react to feedback that is being given and make changes accordingly.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

There are some limitations to this study that must be addressed. Firstly, as this was a qualitative study, there were only a limited number of participants. Therefore, the results cannot be generalised to other English teachers. Furthermore, certain causes of anxiety for students and strategies to reduce anxiety may not have been mentioned by the participants in this study. Finally, this study took place at a Thai university, and therefore the strategies mentioned in this study might not be applicable in other environments such as in schools or in other countries.

There are some recommendations for future research. First, to identify data that might have been missed in this study, a quantitative data analysis using a large number of participants should be carried out to identify both perceptions of causes of FLCA through feedback and strategies used to reduce FLCA through feedback. Secondly, as this study identified strategies used by teachers to reduce FLCA, future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies by involving student participants.

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Appendix

Interview questions

Part A – Background information

1. What's your name?
2. How old are you?
3. How long have you been teaching English?
4. How long have you been teaching at KMUTT?

Part B – General questions about anxiety and feedback

5. How important is giving feedback in the classroom?
6. Do you give feedback differently to different students? How? Why?
7. Are you able to recognize anxious students in the classroom? How?
8. Do you give feedback differently to anxious students than your other students? How?

Types of feedback

Part C – Positive feedback

9. Do you give anxious students praise in the same way that you would give praise to other students?
10. How do you give praise to anxious students?
11. How often do you give praise to anxious students?
12. Do you feel that you praise anxious students enough?
13. Do you think that it is important to praise anxious students? Is it useful for them?
14. How do you think anxious students feel when you praise them?

Part D – Negative feedback

15. Do you correct anxious students in the same way that you correct other students?
16. How do you correct anxious students?
17. How often do you correct anxious students?
18. Do you feel that you correct anxious students enough?
19. Do you think it is important to correct anxious students? Is it useful for them?
20. How do you think anxious students feel when you criticise them?
21. When giving feedback to anxious students, do you tell them the correct answer directly, or, try to help them find the correct answer by themselves? Why?

Part E – Individual and group feedback

22. How often do you give individual feedback to anxious students?



23. How do you give individual feedback to anxious students?
24. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive individual feedback?
25. How often do you give group feedback (either as a class or in smaller groups) to your students?
26. How do you give group feedback to anxious students?
27. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive group feedback?
28. Do you think that anxious students prefer individual or group feedback? Why?

Part F – Ability and effort feedback

29. Do you ever give feedback on student's English language ability? How often?
30. How do you give feedback about ability to anxious students?
31. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive feedback about their ability?
32. Do you ever give feedback on student's effort in class or on a piece of work? How often?
33. How do you give feedback about effort to anxious students?
34. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive feedback about their effort?
35. Do you think anxious students prefer to receive feedback about their ability or effort? Why?

Part G – Immediate vs Delayed feedback

36. Do you ever give immediate feedback to students (such as immediately after making a mistake or completing a task)? How often?
37. In what situations would you give immediate feedback to anxious students? Why do you give immediate feedback in these situations?
38. How do you give immediate feedback?
39. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive immediate feedback?
40. Do you ever give delayed feedback to students (such as waiting till the end of an activity, the end of class or in a future lesson)?
41. In what situations would you give delayed feedback to anxious students? Why do you give delayed feedback to students in these situations?
42. How do you think anxious students feel when they receive delayed feedback?
43. Do you think anxious students prefer immediate or delayed feedback?

Part H – General attitudes towards giving feedback to anxious students

44. Do you use any specific techniques or strategies to help reduce students' anxiety when giving feedback?
45. Do you feel that you give enough feedback to anxious students in class? Why?
46. How do you think the students would feel if they received more feedback?
47. How do you think the students would feel if they received less feedback?
48. What do you think the biggest cause of anxiety is for anxious students when receiving feedback?



49. Do you feel that you have a good relationship with your students? How do you think this affects their anxiety levels?
50. Do you feel that anxious students understand you when you give feedback? Why? How does this affect their anxiety levels?
51. What do you think you could do to help reduce anxious students' anxiety levels when giving feedback in the future?